

Thant Says World War Threatens

He Blames U.S.; Fears Vietnam Is First Phase

By Robert H. Estabrook
Washington Post Foreign Service

UNITED NATIONS,
N.Y., May 11—U.N. Secretary General U Thant warned today that the initial phase of World War III may already have started in Vietnam. He left no doubt that he principally blames the United States.

Continuation of the Vietnam conflict will make a direct confrontation between the United States and Communist China "inevitable," he told a luncheon meeting of the United Nations' Correspondents Association. The mutual defense pact between Moscow and Peking is still in force, he added.

Thant said his most recent proposals of March 1 beginning with a general standstill truce are "no longer under consideration" because "neither side has fully and unconditionally accepted them."

This contradicted the U.S. announcement that it had accepted the plan. In a statement issued after Thant's remarks, Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg said the American answer was "forthcoming and affirmative."

Goldberg continued: "A comparison of the tone and content of our reply with that of North Vietnam would be enlightening. Judging from public radio dispatches of Hanoi its response was... constituted a rejection of the Secretary General's proposal."

Thant reiterated his conviction that only an unconditional stop to the American bombing of North Vietnam would create conditions for meaningful peace talks. The bombing has had "no effect either in stopping infiltration or reduc-

ing infiltration," he asserted, adding that it only stiffens attitudes in Hanoi.

At the same time Thant acknowledged that he had no authorization from Hanoi for his repeated prediction that a bombing halt would be followed by talks within a few weeks.

In his reply Goldberg said the U.S. shares Thant's desire for a peaceful settlement but not his "current assessment of the situation in Vietnam."

Goldberg repeated the American offer of Sept. 22, 1966, to take the first step and order a cessation of all bombing of North Vietnam "the moment we are assured privately or otherwise that this step will be answered

See THANT, A20, Col. 4

promptly by a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side."

At no time in Thant's hour-long commentary response to questions did he criticize North Vietnam's actions in the South or indicate that President Johnson may have exercised restraint against demands for more intensive bombing. Instead, his frustrations at American escalation appeared to boil over.

"The fact that the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam, a developing nation, is continuing to withstand the pressure of an enormously superior power has been and still is the essential factor which has prevented an enlargement of the conflict beyond the frontiers of Vietnam," he asserted.

Thant's Replies

In answer to questions Thant also:

• Said that North Vietnam has not been willing to talk with the United States since American bombing began on Feb. 7, 1965. He declined to comment on the apparent con-

tradiction between this statement and reports that Hanoi had not made a halt to the bombing a condition of its agreement, later withdrawn, to talk secretly with U.S. representatives in Warsaw last December.

It would not be in the public interest to disclose details of the negotiations about the talks in Warsaw, he explained.

• Observed that he agrees "to a large degree" with the approach of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the problem of Vietnam, "without the slightest intention of poking my nose into the affairs of a member-state."

• Urged an extension of the prospective May 23 truce in Vietnam on Buddha's birthday as conducive to peace talks but said the responses so far have not been very encouraging.

• Said he could see no way in which the United Nations can be "effectively involved" in settling the Vietnam conflict.

In comparing the Vietnam conflict to the beginning of

World Wars I and II, Thant said that the psychological climate is similar today. He is "really concerned," he added, because he knows "the moods, not only of the principal parties, but also of some of those not in" the war at this time.

Yet, he asserted, since the Jan. 28 interview given by North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Ngygen Duy Trinh, and more recently, Hanoi has emphasized that if American bombing were halted there could be talks.

"It may be assumed that this was taken with the full knowledge of the positions" of North Vietnam's allies Thant explained, "and I regard this as a very important development."

Thant appealed for use of "all the processes for peaceful settlement" envisaged in the 1954 Geneva agreements which "were probably one of the most important achievements in the field of international relations since the end of World War II."

A return to the spirit of these agreements, he added, would open the way "for new,

imaginative and constructive steps towards peace." States is prepared to engage in talks making use of the Geneva framework. Goldberg said the United

New Army Role Dismays U.S. Civilians in Vietnam

By Ward Just

Washington Post Foreign Service

SAIGON, May 11. — American civilian officials were dismayed today by the announcement of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker that the advisory effort in Pacification will be placed under Gen. William C. Westmoreland, in the channels of the military command.

The civilians have now ceased to operate as an independent element in Revolutionary Development (Pacification's more fashionable synonym), except through the person of Robert W. Komer, the White House official named Westmoreland's deputy for pacification with the personal rank of ambassador.

Details remain to be worked out, but as a practical matter the program will be directed at the crucial corps level by American military officials, with civilians as their deputies. Reports that used to move through both civilian and military channels will

now move through the military staff system.

Pacification is the program to develop allegiance among the people in the countryside for the government.

Civilian reaction today ranged from the bitter ("We don't think they can do their own job—how can they do ours?") to the resigned ("I'll be a good soldier and go along") to the very optimistic ("We've finally got a civilian in among the generals"). Almost nowhere was there much enthusiasm for what Bunker called "a unique experiment in a unique situation."

Nor was there jubilation at the American military command. Westmoreland, who wanted to take charge of the Pacification program two years ago, is now reported to be deeply skeptical of the possibility of producing the kind

See PACIFY, A19, Col. 1

of quick results the White House apparently wants.

"I did not volunteer for the job," he is reported to have said privately this morning. "But now that I've got it, I'll do my best with it."

Not Factual

One responsible official in the field today was flat in his assessment of what the new chain of command would mean.

"We are going to be unable to give factual reports, if they are critical," he said. "Of course, you can reach the zenith of paranoia around here, and declare that the reason for all this is a political necessity for good news."

Few here would go so far, but serious officials — both civilian and military — realize there are limitations on how far an officer will go in reporting "negative" information, and how hard a civilian, now his subordinate, will fight for realism.

Discussing the matter today, officials declared that it was not a matter of inveterately realistic diplomats and optimistic colonels, but the pressures on both. Civilians in South Vietnam almost take a perverse delight in finding the hole in the doughnut, while military men, who have more to protect, are often more optimistic. A civilian's career was never short-circuited because he gave a negative report, and as events have shown, pessimists have never gone hungry in South Vietnam.

The dismay among civilians has several sources, not least of them the implication that the soldiers are taking over the Revolutionary Development program because the civilians are incapable of running it — an implication not without some truth. The official rationale is that the central component of Pacification is military security and that the Pacification programs are all heavily dependent on military logistics and support.

The crucial questions to the

civilians, however, is not whether the military can supply the means to win the war, but whether they have an accurate appreciation of what the war is about. The difference is the difference in mentality between a diplomat and a colonel.

Excessive Optimism

Critics say that the military compulsion is to paint rosy pictures, and give optimistic appraisals whether or not they are warranted. These critics contend that officers who are critical of either the American or the South Vietnamese effort are chided by superiors for being "negative" and "not on the team."

Two recent examples give weight to the critics' case:

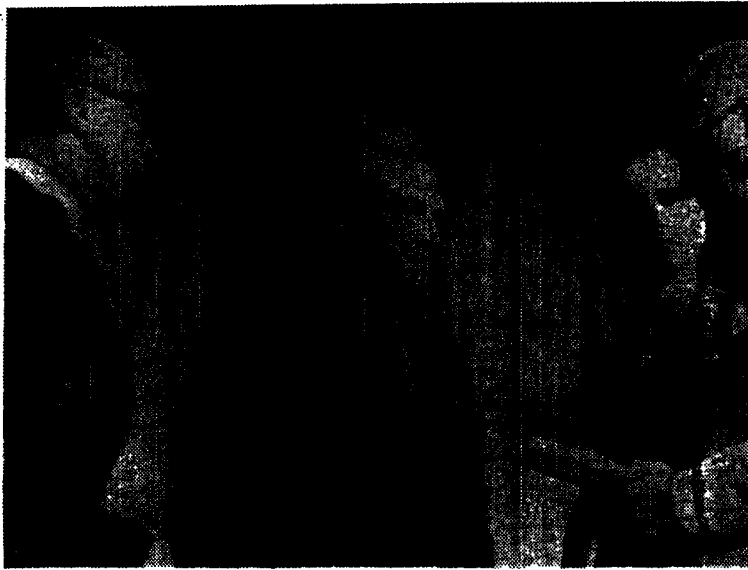
In Haunghia Province, west of Saigon, an American advisor was "verbally slapped," and removed from command after he wrote a report critical of the 2d Brigade, U.S. 25th Infantry Division. Later, Lt. Gen. Bruce Palmer—who was then the Corps commander—sent a letter to his advisers declaring that in the future they would not speak badly of any American unit.

In Binhduong Province, north of Saigon, an American adviser to the 5th South Vietnamese Infantry Division was asked by his superiors to rewrite a report on the division's 7th Regiment. He was asked to change the tone from negative to positive.

Saigon's understanding of the situation in the countryside is largely drawn from official reports from the four Corps areas. These have been joint military-civilian efforts, with ample space for dissent and amplification. To the extent that the reports are inaccurate, Saigon's view of the war will be inaccurate.

Part of the problem, which is now Komer's problem, is that there has never been a plausible yardstick by which to measure the winning of the war in Vietnam. It is difficult enough to assess the significance of a battle—where, at least, there is a body count—and nearly impossible to fied and Revolutionary De-assess when a village is pacelvelopment a success.

Under the new regime the



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MILITARY TAKEOVER—U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker announces at a press conference in Saigon that South Vietnam's pacification program will be taken over by the military. Listed are, from left, Robert W. Komer, G. I. Ham C. Westmoreland and Deputy Ambassador Engene M. Locke.

reports from Corps will bear one imprint, that of the senior military commander. That report, it is understood, will be an agreed report and move to Komer, and thence to Westmoreland, through traditional military channels.

Officials today sought to mitigate the effect of the announcement by saying that Komer and his staff, physically located in the American military compound in Saigon, will be in a far better position to influence the course of Pacification than he would among "all the guys with glasses and sack suits" in the Office of Civil Operations.