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A Bombing Pause And Reasons Why

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WITH THE URGENCY infinitely greater than it was two and a half months ago, Sen. John Sherman Cooper has again called for moderation and reason, in an effort to get negotiation in Vietnam. Speaking for neither extreme in the dove-hawk spectrum, he asks for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam.

But this time, in a moving address prepared for Senate delivery, he called for an immediate and unconditional cessation, rather than a phased stop. He would limit bombing to infiltration routes in and near the demilitarized zone. This is the answer to the military, who say that to cease the bombing altogether is to permit the movement of men and materiel into the South, endangering the 470,000 American ground troops in Vietnam.

Put alongside the proposal of Rep. F. Bradford Morse and seven other House members, here is evidence of Republican initiative to try for a pause before the war gets completely out of hand, in a conflict involving Russia and China with the United States. It is not, however, a partisan issue, since an increasing number of Democrats are looking for a way to limit the expanding American commitment with the hope of eventually finding a way out of the trap.

AT ONE LEVEL and another in the State Department, various proposals for de-escalation have been circulated since Cooper made his first speech on May 15. These proposals, according to word reaching concerned Senators, have been blocked by Secretary of State Dean Rusk. He has apparently been unwilling for the President to consider them, repeating the old formulas about the refusal of Hanoi to signal any willingness to negotiate and the prerequisite of "reciprocity."

The hardest of hard-liners in the White House, Walt Rostow, has backstopped Rusk. This means that, even if Johnson were of a mind to consider a new approach, he has, if information obtained by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is correct, no options spelled out before him.

One reason Cooper is repeating his call for an end to the bombing in the North is a conviction he shares with others about an aspect of the Glassboro summit meeting. Premier Alexei Kosygin repeated to the President what he had said in London in February. This is that, if the bombing is ended unconditionally, negotiation with North Vietnam can begin within a relatively short time. As in London, it was put virtually as a guarantee.

If reports from a variety of sources are correct Kosygin, together with his partner, Leonid Breznev, are engaged in a power struggle in the Kremlin. Several hard-liners have been shunted aside after what was said to have been a fierce debate growing out of the Mid-East debacle, but including Vietnam policy as well.

Holding out against expanding the war and for a kind of competitive coexistence with the United States, Kosygin must show that his policy can result in easing tensions and producing, at the very least, a pause enabling the Soviet Union to get on with its own economic development.

The second rapidly accelerating danger, as Cooper and others see it, is Red China. Many of those who assured the country that China would not intervene in the Korean War—Rusk among them—are saying today with equal assurance that the Chinese cannot and will not enter the Vietnam war.

They base this on mounting signs that Mao is in such grave trouble that China is approaching a condition of anarchy. But this very same evidence can be taken to support the thesis that Chinese "volunteers" will come into the war in the pattern of Korea.

BESET by wide opposition and a host of troubles, Mao could use intervention against the wicked American imperialists as a means of forcing unity on the country. History bristles with the record of dictators resorting to foreign adventures to solve seemingly unsolvable problems at home.

"My proposal was made," Cooper said, "as an alternative to an escalation of the bombing, an escalation of forces, and of the total war which would reach a point when North Vietnam would be compelled to ask the Soviet bloc for volunteers and Communist China to come to its aid, and when China would intervene to prevent the defeat of its Communist neighbor."

In the past two and a half months that escalation has gone forward. The risks in the course Cooper advocates are not as great, he argues, as more and more and more escalation.