

From Mr. Agnew's Speech

The following is excerpted from Vice President Agnew's speech at Cleveland.

THE VIEWS I have cited thus far are the views of inveterate politicians tacking to the prevailing winds. Let us turn now to some of the architects and engineers of American policy in Vietnam—individuals now trying, through copious writings and speakings—to cover their tracks—to clean up the mess they have made—and to rewrite history in the process.

The first such study is Mr. Clark Clifford, who now claims that as far back as March of 1968 he began to entertain grave doubts about America's effort in the war. Yet, months later in May of 1968, as Secretary of Defense he told congressional committees in hawkish terms that he believed deeply in our continuing commitment in Southeast Asia. On Sept. 10, he reiterated the same position, announcing we intended to build toward a force of 549,500 men in Vietnam.

Mr. Clifford's current writings seem to emanate from a deep desire to convince his friends that he was an early convert and not a late-blooming opportunist who clambered aboard the rolling handwagon of the doves when the flak really started to fly.

On Jan. 28, 1968, Mr. Clifford was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "If we pull out of South Vietnam there will be the most incredible blood bath since Hitler killed six million Jews."

On Oct. 15, 1968, the Washington Star reported that Clifford stated that Sen. Charles Goodell's proposal to withdraw all American troops from South Vietnam by Dec. 1, 1970, was "both unrealistic and impractical," and would result in a "bloodbath" in that country, in the "collapse of the military and the collapse of the government" and that "the resulting 'bloodbath' would be on our conscience . . . for a long period of time."

Not long ago, Mr. Clifford, writing in Life magazine asserted:

"The national security of the United States is not involved in Vietnam, nor does our national interest in the area warrant our continued military presence there . . ."

"It is time now to end our participation in the war. We must begin the rapid, orderly, complete and scheduled withdrawal of United States forces from Indochina."

Such things as the national "consciences" and the "bloodbaths" have become peripheral considerations in Mr. Clifford's anxious campaign to reinstate himself in the good graces of his old friends.

When Mr. Clifford was Secretary of Defense, on Sept. 10, 1968, he said, and I quote:

"We had no plan to reduce the number of troops in Vietnam at all . . . I could not predict the return of any troops in 1969. I want to today reiterate that position. We have not yet reached the level of 549,500 in South Vietnam. We intend to continue to build toward that level. We have no intention of

lowering that level either by next June (1969) or at any time in the foreseeable future."

Yet when President Nixon in 1969 took office, pulled out 65,000 troops and announced the withdrawal of the 115,500 American men he has now withdrawn—he earned from Clifford the snide criticism that he was not moving fast enough. Like an overconfident attorney, bested in court, the Clifford responses carried the unmistakable sting of envy and the aroma of sour grapes.

On Aug. 15, 1968, Clifford, speaking as the Secretary of Defense, protest against the concept of enemy sanctuaries in Vigorous terms.

"I think," he said, "it unwise to sit back in protected areas and just permit the enemy to mount its offensive exactly as he sees fit; that is, to mass his men at certain areas, to mass his supplies at certain areas, without any interference from us."

Yet when Mr. Nixon took what the widely respected Asian expert Denis Warner has termed "one of the boldest and bravest political acts of our time," to clean out these Cambodian sanctuaries from which American men were being slaughtered with impunity—the great Clifford wrote in Life magazine, ". . . I cannot remain quiet in the face of his reckless decision."

WHEN THE United States went to the negotiating table at Paris in May of 1968, we were confronted by the toughest of negotiators—revolutionaries of a brutal Communist regime that had battled for power for a decade—the aces in Hanoi's

diplomatic deck. Against them we dealt Harriman and Vance—a couple of deuces.

As one looks back over the diplomatic disasters that have befallen the West and the friends of the West over three decades at Tehran, Yalta, Cairo—in every great diplomatic conference that turned out to be a loss for the West and freedom, one can find the unmistakable footprints of W. Averell Harriman.

It was Mr. Harriman as our Ambassador at Moscow who told the Polish Committee of National Liberation that the United States would not oppose Russian wishes on the Polish question—which effectively doomed any chance for the freedom of Poland, which of course was why the war had begun. A month after returning to the United States from his wartime chores in Moscow, Mr. Harriman was the grateful beneficiary of two fine thoroughbred horses—compliments of J. V. Stalin.

The disastrous wartime conference with the Soviets was not the last time that Mr. Harriman's penchant for trusting Communists has cost some peoples their freedom and others their lives. Speaking of the 1962 Geneva Agreement—where Harriman

bought the package deal of Hanoi and Moscow—Mr. Harriman stated, we got "a good agreement, better than I thought we would work out."

Mr. Robert Elegant of the Los Angeles Times describes it today a bit more accurately:

"The Geneva Agreement Ambassador Harriman signed in 1962 wilfully ignored the certainty of Hanoi's using the [Ho Chi Minh] trail to invade South Vietnam—and made the conflict there inevitable . . . The Communists' chief channel for supplies and reinforcements, now doubly important . . . is sometimes—unkindly, but accurately—called the Averell Harriman Memorial Highway."

Down Mr. Harriman's highway have come half a million North Vietnamese troops to bring death to thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese.

In 1968 we sent this negotiator to Paris to bargain for peace—and he succeeded in booting away our greatest military trump—the bombing of North Vietnam—for a mess of porridge.

Let me read you briefly what Mr. Harriman stated in Paris in 1968 in high praise of our government ally in South Vietnam:

"The Government of the Republic of Vietnam, in the face of terror and subversion, and despite the disruption and destruction of the war, instigated and directed by North Vietnam, has advanced steadily toward representative government. In September 1966, a constituent assembly was elected. In April 1967, a new constitution was promulgated. In September 1967, national elections for the Presidency and the Senate were conducted, and in October the Lower House was elected. On Oct. 31, 1967, a new government took office."

This is the high praise that Mr. Harriman

showered on the Government of South Vietnam—when he, Harriman, was negotiating at Paris.

Now that his personal failures at Paris are evident for all the world to see, Mr. Harriman has turned on that same government, and a short time ago he cried aloud that President Nixon's program for peace depends on "an unpopular and repressive military government." Now I would call that a rather self-serving opinion adjustment.

IN MY opinion the principal failure of the West and the United States in the post-war years has been that when the diplomatic stakes were the blue chips, we sent dandies of the old school tie instead of men of the stripe of George Meany or Conrad Cooper to the bargaining table.

Yet it is Harriman, Vance, Clifford, the men who were bluffed, raised, called, whipped and cleaned out at the tables by the enemy at Paris—who are the ones who now stand behind President Nixon yelling, in effect, "Fold, fold." Well, the President is not going to fold.

We are not going to heed the counsel of the Harrimans and Vances and Cliffords—whom history has branded as failures; and we are not going to heed the counsels of a Kennedy, a McGovern, a Fullbright or an O'Brien. Most of these have admitted defeat so often and have called for retreat so many times that one suspects they may now have developed a psychological addiction to an American defeat.