



John P. Roche *Post* 7-14-71

HHH Belongs Among the Men

THERE ARE certain issues that separate the men from the boys, and in the course of the last few weeks Hubert Humphrey's reaction to the paranoia engendered by the Pentagon papers has shown that he belongs among the men. The notion that President Johnson tricked everybody into going to war has provided marvelous cover for various Democratic politicians who were seeking to get out from under on Vietnam. While I disagree very strongly with Senator Humphrey on present policy in Southeast Asia, his courage in denouncing the conspiracy theory—which doubtless has hurt him in his quest for the nomination was admirable.

Various commentators have indicated that in 1965 Humphrey opposed our intervention in Vietnam, while others have noted his militant defense of the policy and indicated he was somehow dishonest. Since I drafted every major speech the Vice President gave on Vietnam during that period, I would like to take this opportunity to straighten out the nuances of his position. Let me emphasize that these speeches were drafted by me because the Vice President and I shared the same position—H.H.H. was never out of a speech-writers' hands.

FIRST OF ALL, we have to clarify a crucial distinction, that between strategy and tactics. On the overall strategic level, Hubert Humphrey completely supported the containment of aggressive Asian communism. His views were those of the veteran liberal Cold Warriors who had joined with him in creating Americans for Democratic Action in 1947; they were those expressed by President John Kennedy and the high command at Camelot. Indeed, it was a strategic posture taken for granted among liberals —

witness John Kenneth Galbraith's bellicose reaction to the Red Chinese invasion of India.

Where Humphrey deviated from the line of the Johnson administration was on the question of *how* you could most effectively contain Hanoi's aggression in Indochina. Here the key consideration was the tactic of bombing North Vietnam

in the hope that such "punishment" would deter further aggression. I was then national chairman of Americans for Democratic Action and in that capacity gave a speech, subsequently published in *The Washington Post* and elsewhere, arguing that bombing was precisely the wrong tactic, that our first priority was the development of a viable South Vietnamese government and army.

And I argued (this was in February, 1965) that we should immediately put substantial ground forces into the South to provide a shield for what is now called "Vietnamization."

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY and I discussed this article at great length and there was no doubt in my mind that he generally agreed with my diagnosis. But that didn't make him a "dove," any more than it made one of me. This is one of the most frustrating experiences in government—to agree with an objective, but disagree with the route employed to reach it. What do you do? To my own case, because the President of the United States did not make me chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should I have taken my ball and glove and gone home? Or gone off to carry a spear in Gene McCarthy's production of "Gotterdammerung"?

No, I happened to believe, as did Humphrey, that the freedom of 16 million South Vietnamese and the credibility of American commitments elsewhere in the world were at stake in the war in Vietnam. And I kept hoping that President Johnson would shift tactics, as indeed he did after Clark Clifford replaced Robert S. McNamara, and suddenly Vietnamization became the order of the day.

The real irony—which has kept me out of the "I was smarter than the President" league—is that a rereading of my 1965 speech suggests that where I was prophetic, it was usually for the **wrong** reasons. Both Humphrey and I expected, for example, that the war would create dissension, but we anticipated it from the right, not the left! Only those who have read and appreciated the book of Ecclesiastes can really survive in politics.

© 1971, King Features Syndicate, Inc.