

RFK Urges Talks, Halt In Bombing

Suggests Agreement Against Any Buildup During Negotiations

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Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) proposed yesterday that the United States halt the bombing of North Vietnam and declare its willingness to open peace talks with the Communists "within the week."

The Senator said the United States must make it clear that if these negotiations begin, they could not continue for a prolonged period without an agreement that both sides will refrain from substantially increasing the "size of the war in South Vietnam—by infiltration or reinforcement."

Kennedy said international teams could be asked to verify whether the Hanoi regime engages in "any large buildup of troops or supplies" after the start of negotiations. This, he noted, could be done either through the United Nations, or an expanded International Control Commission.

U.N. Supervision

Finally, Kennedy envisioned a settlement, under which the U.N. would supervise the gradual withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam and their replacement by "an international presence."

The Kennedy position given in a speech in the Senate, differed from Secretary of State Dean Rusk's contention that the United States could not cease bombing without first receiving firm assurances of a reciprocal military action by Hanoi.

President Johnson immediately — although indirectly — south to diminish the impact of the Kennedy speech.

Letter Released

His reply came through a letter to Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), which was released just before Kennedy
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Partial text of speech.
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spoke. The letter stressed the Administration's resolve to continue bombing the North "until those who've launched this aggression are prepared to move seriously to reinstall the agreements whose violation has brought the scourge of war to Southeast Asia."

Although Kennedy sent an advance copy of his speech to the White House, the President did not read it. It was forwarded by the Congressional liaison office to Walt W. Rostow, special assistant for national security affairs, who dispatched the 13-page text to the State Department.

Kennedy's proposals—which he bound together as an "intimately related" package—marked his first broad statement on the Vietnam war since Feb. 19, 1966. At that time, Kennedy was condemned by members of the Johnson Administration for suggesting that the Vietcong be offered "a share of power and responsibility" as a means of reaching a negotiated peace.

In taking the Senate floor yesterday, the brother of the late President carefully refrained from making any direct assault upon the policies of the Johnson Administration.

Thus, before advancing his peace proposals, Kennedy characterized President Johnson as a man who has long "dedicated his energies in an effort to achieve an honorable peace."

Furthermore, he noted that nearly all Americans are united in favor of remaining in Vietnam "until we have fulfilled our commitments." Then he added:

"Three Presidents have taken action in Vietnam. As one who was involved in many of

those decisions, I can testify that if fault is to be found or responsibility assessed, there is enough to go round for all—including myself."

Kennedy secretly advanced substantially the same peace proposals he made yesterday to Mr. Johnson during a 45-minute conversation at the White House that took place on Feb. 6. It proved to be a difficult and strained confrontation.

Without mincing words, the President told Kennedy at the Feb. 6 meeting that he was not prepared to accept the Senator's recommendations.

Reciprocity Stressed

The Administration, it was made clear to the Senator, would not unilaterally and indefinitely cease its two-year-long bombing of North Vietnam unless Hanoi reciprocated with a tangible de-escalation of its own military effort.

Kennedy dwelt at length in his speech yesterday on the Kosygin overture. "This declaration," the Senator said, "comes from a man of enormous authority in the Communist world, whose country helps sustain North Vietnam's effort."

Brunt of Speech

Thus, the brunt of the Kennedy speech was a request to the Administration to accept, at face value, Kosygin's public statement that "to enable" talks to begin, the United States should stop bombing.

Without adding any words of criticism, Kennedy observed that the "escalation of the last week may have already stiffened our adversaries' position and dimmed the prospect for peace" raised in the earlier Soviet declarations. He was

alluding to the Administration's recent decision to shell North Vietnam from the sea and to mine that country's waterways.

Kennedy waited until the day after the Senate passed a special \$4.5 billion Vietnam military authorization bill to deliver his speech. He voted for the war measure.

It was known that he did not want to become associated in his remarks with the more vocal Senate critics of the Administration's Vietnam policy, who had held the floor for much of the debate.

When Kennedy's turn to speak came in mid-afternoon yesterday, a larger than usual group of Senators were in attendance to hear him. His wife, Ethel, and a group of her friends were seated in the family gallery.

The Senator also stressed in his speech the changing nature of a once monolithic communist system.

"A Communist state," he said, "can no longer be assumed to be the automatically obedient instrument of expanding Russian or Chinese power. North Vietnam, like North Korea, Rumania, Yugoslavia and others can be encouraged to assert its own independence."