

By Theodore C. Sorenson

According to the Republican National Committee (RNC) and the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP), their files do not support the widespread belief that candidate Nixon in 1968 claimed a "secret plan" to end the Vietnam war. Inasmuch as they are better known for rummaging around in other people's files than producing facts from their own, I gladly offer the following to save the locks on my doors.

On March 5, 1968, a candidate in the New Hampshire primary named Richard Nixon, generally identified with the Nixon now occupying the White House despite their widely conflicting statements, paused long enough in his denunciation of price controls, deficit spending, the People's Republic of China and other permanently unacceptable horrors, to state unequivocally: "If in November this war is not over, I say the American people will be justified in electing new leadership, and I pledge to you that new leadership will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific."

On radio he added that his administration was "not going to tolerate this war going on and on." To The Associated Press he hinted mysteriously that he had "some specific ideas on how to end the war . . . primarily in the diplomatic area." But when reporters pressed for details, none was disclosed.

Now either Mr. Nixon had a plan to end the war in 1968 and concealed it on the ground that it should remain secret, or he had no plan whatsoever and was deliberately deceiving the American voters into believing his pledge was something more than hot air. Most of the press and public have generously rejected the notion of deliberate deception and assumed instead that he had a "secret plan." He and his associates do have, after all, a penchant for the secret — including secret \$10-million campaign funds, secret raids to bug Democratic headquarters, and secret proposals for a new national sales tax after the election. But if RNC-CREEP insist there was no secret end-the-war plan in 1968, I will take their word that it was just plain old demagoguery and deception. Of course, Mr. Nixon could always deny that he was ever in New Hampshire!

Quotation marks around the words "secret plan," incidentally, are still appropriate. RNC-CREEP may be unfamiliar with style manuals, but they consistently recommend quotation marks to enclose misnomers; and repeatedly calling a non-existent plan "secret" is certainly a charitable misnomer.

That a pledge without a plan is worthless is clear from the fact that Mr. Nixon has not ended the war. Ending it, not merely reducing American troops, is what he promised. To be sure, he has altered the war's character, spreading it into Laos and Cambodia, replacing American combat troops with increased American bombing, and expanding the list of acceptable nonmilitary targets. But he has not ended it. The war drags on and on, killing and maiming our young men and Vietnam's, facilitating the flow of Asian heroin into our cities, undermining respect for our military, building isolationism among our citizens and distorting both our economic and our moral values in a way that feeds the domestic fires of alienation, inflation, violence and urban neglect.

Mr. Nixon could have ended it. He could have informed Saigon at the start of his term that the national security of the United States, now that the two sides had been brought

Nixon Vows to End War With a 'New Leadership'

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.

Special to The New York Times

NASHUA, N. H., March 5—Richard M. Nixon pledged today that "new leadership" in Washington—by which he presumably meant a new Republican Administration headed

by himself—would "end the war" in Vietnam.

Mr. Nixon has said several times during the last seven days of his campaign for the Republican Presidential nomination that the American people would be justified in electing a new President if the present Administration failed to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion by November.

to the negotiating table accompanied by a massive North Vietnamese troop withdrawal, justified no further support of the Thieu regime, and that we were therefore departing in honor and letting the Vietnamese north and south determine their own future. But he insisted instead on propping up General Thieu at all costs, a plan guaranteed not to end the war but to perpetuate it.

Mr. Nixon was not President when the war began, nor can Hanoi's responsibility for its continuation be ignored. But as Commander in Chief elected with a specific pledge to end

the war, he must take responsibility for the 125,000 American youths killed, wounded or imprisoned since the day he took office.

His March 1968 statement gave

President Johnson only seven months to end the war. Fair enough—a government that has made up its mind to withdraw does not need four years, as de Gaulle demonstrated in Algeria with no loss of national honor or influence. That is why today all of us, regardless of party, can agree with the opening words of Mr. Nixon's 1968 statement: "If in November this war is not over . . . the American people will be justified in electing new leadership. . . ."

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