

Mr. Nixon's 'Plan for Peace'

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President Nixon disappointed the nation's hope for a reordering of American priorities with a "plan for peace" that looks more like a formula for continued war. He proposed no new American initiative at Paris or in South Vietnam, preferring instead to reiterate the American position in terms reminiscent of those used by President Johnson and Secretary Rusk.

The President in effect committed this nation to defend the present Government of South Vietnam until it can defend itself. This is at best a remote prospect judging by the record of the past fifteen years. It also seems to contradict Mr. Nixon's own Asian doctrine under which, according to the President, the United States would leave with Asian governments the primary responsibility for their own defense.

There is justification for Mr. Nixon's impatience with Hanoi for its intransigence in the Paris talks and in private negotiations that have now been revealed for the first time. However, Mr. Nixon failed to mention even the possibility of such proposals as a cease-fire or a democratization and liberalization of the Saigon Government.

President Nixon has offered a plan for Vietnamizing the war. What is needed is a program for Vietnamizing the peace.

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Nixon's Mystifying Clarifications

By JAMES RESTON

On various occasions since the Nixon Administration came into office, its leaders and spokesmen have advised observers to watch what the Administration does rather than what it says. This is not a bad tip for anybody trying to analyze the President's latest speech on Vietnam.

Words are treacherous weapons, which can be used either to clarify or confuse, and this Presidential speech is one of the classic mystifying clarifications of recent years. Taken in by the eye and ear over television, it was a memorable performance — good theater and maybe even good domestic politics, but was it good diplomacy? Did it achieve his objectives? Did it moderate the Vietnam critics and thus persuade the enemy of our unity, or arouse the critics and thus provoke more demonstrations of disunity, and thus play into the hands of the enemy?

One wonders. The speech did not really clarify the President's policy.

At one point, Nixon said that "we have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all United States combat ground forces and their replace-

ment by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable."

But at another point in the same speech he said he would withdraw not only all American "combat ground forces" but that he would withdraw "all our forces." The difference between all American combat ground forces and "all our forces" is over a quarter of a million men.

Going or Staying?

Meanwhile, again in the same speech, the President said that he was going to carry on the effort to maintain a stable government in South Vietnam. "We are not going to withdraw from that effort," he said. "In my opinion, for us to withdraw from that effort would mean a collapse not only of South Vietnam but Southeast Asia. So we're going to stay."

A few paragraphs later on, he said he had a plan "which will bring the war to an end regardless of what happens on the negotiating front... a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all United States ground forces..."

The speech clearly mobilized the opposition to the anti-war faction that wants peace immediately. The President pre-

sented some solid arguments here. It is true that quitting the war suddenly would, as the President says, have devastating human and political repercussions, but he tried to identify all his Vietnam critics with the anti-war extremists who want to cut and run, and this is not only unfair but raises a fundamental point about President Nixon and this speech.

This was no ghost-written job. We are told and it is probably true, that he wrote it himself. He was worried about what he calls the "vocal minority" in the universities and the press who have been opposing him, and felt that the "silent majority" was with him — though how he knows he had the majority if it was "silent" is not clear. So he set out to confound his critics and arm his "silent majority" with effective political arguments.

Nixon's Blunder

Like all writers, he was obviously impressed with the logic of his own argument. His sincerity was almost terrifying. He put Spiro Agnew's confrontation language into the binding of a hymn book, and asserted he was different from Lyndon Johnson while sounding just like him.

Nevertheless, his actions are not Johnson's, and this is the

point his violent critics have missed. His words are familiar but his actions are really different. Mike Mansfield, the Democratic Senate Majority Leader, got the point.

He noted that while the President said he had a "plan" but didn't disclose it, Vice President Ky of South Vietnam indicated that there was more to the Nixon speech than most Americans would hear. There would be nothing new in the President's speech, General Ky said before it was made; it would be addressed to the American audience, but he added a significant thing. Next year, he said, South Vietnam could replace 180,000 American troops.

The President has a very large audience with many different constituencies. He needs the "silent majority" to counter what he calls the "vocal minority of critics," but in dealing with his domestic political problem he has created a really dangerous diplomatic problem. For he has committed himself to support the Saigon regime and to respond to the military actions of the enemy and, in the process, he may very well have limited his freedom of action and provoked the anti-war opposition he was trying to silence.