

DEMOCRATS REBUT FORD IN CONGRESS ON INDOCHINA AID

Mansfield Asks Conciliation, but Some Who Backed Policy Are Now Harsh

BYRD VOICES CRITICISM

He Rejects Attempt of Some to Blame Legislators for Saigon Debacle

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WASHINGTON, April 7—Senate Democrats, on their first day back after the Easter recess, rebuffed today what they took to be suggestions from President Ford that Congress could be held responsible for the deteriorating situation in Southeast Asia.

Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Democratic leader, opened the Senate at noon with a conciliatory speech, saying that there was enough blame to go around and encouraging "Congress and the President to work together in the area of foreign as well as domestic policy."

But Senators Robert C. Byrd, John O. Pastore, Jennings Randolph and Russell B. Long, who until recently generally supported United States policy in Indochina, used harsh language to rebut Mr. Ford and to emphasize their opposition to further military help for South Vietnam and Cambodia.

Ford Voiced Frustration

Mr. Ford said at a news conference in San Diego on Thursday that he was frustrated by laws preventing military intervention and said that only by providing more military aid could Congress assure that the Americans killed in the war did not die in vain.

President Ford has asked Congress for \$300-million in additional military assistance for South Vietnam and \$222-million for Cambodia.

Senator Mansfield said there would be no further Congressional action until after President Ford's foreign policy address to a joint session of Congress on Thursday.

Even then, according to Congressional experts in foreign affairs, it is doubtful that Congress will approve the money that Mr. Ford wants.

The Democratic-controlled Congress is reluctant to approve even a symbolic act on behalf of what Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas, chairman of the Appropriations

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Committee, described last week as a lost cause.

Senator Byrd, a West Virginian, who is the Assistant Democratic leader and often adopts the role of party spokesman, today criticized "the tendency on the part of some" to blame Congress for the debacle in South Vietnam.

In response to statements by Mr. Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger that the United States has an obligation to assist allies in Indochina, Mr. Byrd declared:

"Three hundred million dollars can never instill will and determination and discipline in any people. 'Sometimes commitments are invented where no commitments exist and then Congress is blamed for not living up to those commitments.'"

Senator Randolph and Senator Long, two influential Senators with contrasting styles, rose to make the same point—that their constituents would not tolerate further United States involvement in Southeast Asia.

Senator Randolph, also a West Virginian, who speaks so softly that his colleagues have to lean forward to hear him, said the people in his state were "questioning more than they have ever questioned the advisability of further participation by the United States in a variety of foreign assistance programs, especially military assistance."

Long Is Opposed

Senator Long, a Louisianan, who is one of the Senate's most flamboyant debaters, said:

"Not just one President but a number of Presidents felt they could pursue the high-minded policy of making the United States the policeman for the whole wide world. The American people simply do not want to support that policy any more."

Senator Pastore, who comes from Rhode Island, agreed.

"I know there is a bloodbath going on," he said, "but I don't think we have the will in this country to change it in the least."

President Ford's policies were defended by two Republican Senators, Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the Assistant Republican Leader, and Robert Dole of Kansas.

Mr. Griffin said he thought Mr. Ford had not meant to point the finger of blame at Congress. Mr. Dole questioned the wisdom of providing "millions for surrender and not a cent for freedom."

In the House, Representative G. V. Montgomery, a Mississippi Democrat, who has long been one of the staunchest supporters of policy in Indochina, said today that "the South Vietnamese can blame only themselves for their present situation."

Reagan Assails Congress

LONDON, April 7 (AP) — Former Gov. Ronald Reagan of California said today that Congressional failure to support Saigon was "the most irresponsible action of the Congress of the United States in the last 100 years of our history."