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# McCloskey's Challenge

By WILLIAM V. SHANNON

WASHINGTON, April 5—Representative Paul "Pete" McCloskey Jr., the California Republican who has raised the flag of rebellion within the G.O.P. against President Nixon's war policy, leaves today for Vietnam. Asked why he is going, he replies, with quiet intensity, "to get the facts."

McCloskey, 43, is handsome, square-jawed, with close-cropped curly hair and of medium height but he seems taller because of his ramrod posture and taut, athletic style. Like Eugene McCarthy, who fought President Johnson in the 1968 primaries, McCloskey is of Irish descent (though he is not a Catholic), has almost no money and no party organization support. Otherwise, it is hard to think of two men who make a sharper contrast.

McCarthy assumed that people knew all they needed to know about Vietnam, and he attempted to arouse them to the significance of what they knew, to solicit their moral judgment. McCloskey believes that President Nixon's Vietnamization policy is founded upon public misunderstanding and that facts are needed to penetrate the confusion. McCarthy, an ex-professor, talked reflectively. McCloskey, an ex-



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see also SFChronicle,  
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Nixon.

Marine, hammers away at specific facts at a staccato pace.

"The American people do not know that it is official policy to wipe out every village in northern Laos controlled by the Pathet Lao. We are using cluster bombs which spew out projectiles at varying altitudes and directions. A single bomb devastates 25 acres. Cluster bombs are designed to kill and maim as many people as possible.

"We are using napalm with an effective diameter of 150 feet. It burns at a temperature of 2,000 degrees for ten or fifteen minutes.

"We are using these sophisticated weapons against defenseless villages. If I confirm on my trip everything that I have read, then I say we are engaged in war crimes. Such bombing violates the Hague Convention, never mind anything decided at Nuremberg."

Pete McCloskey is from a background that does not normally breed rebels. He served a brief Navy hitch after World War II, worked his way through Stanford, was graduated in 1950, and volunteered for infantry duty with the Marine Corps when the Korean war began. In May, 1951, Second Lieutenant McCloskey was wounded leading a bayonet charge, but he and his platoon captured the hill that was their objective. McCloskey was awarded the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart. In subsequent fighting, he won the Silver Star.

After graduation from Stanford Law School, he pursued a quiet law career in San Mateo County, south of San Francisco. In a special Congressional election in 1967, McCloskey was an upset victor over Shirley Temple Black. Except on conservation issues, he has a moderately conservative voting record in the House. He made his first visit to Vietnam just before the Tet offensive in early 1968. A year later, he wrote the first of six letters to President Nixon urging him to abandon the illusion of military victory in Vietnam.

"I hand-carried the first letter to John Ehrlichman, the President's assistant, who is a personal friend of mine. Ehrlichman telephoned and asked me to see Henry Kissinger.

"Kissinger told me to wait sixty days because they were working on a plan to end the war. I saw him again in September '69 and he said the first plan hadn't worked, but they were working on another one.

"I wrote a letter to the President every five or six months thereafter but I never received a substantive reply."

McCloskey hopes not to have to run for President. He has talked with Mayor Lindsay, Senator Hatfield of Oregon, Senator Mathias of Maryland, John Gardner and other Republican leaders who, he thinks, would make better candidates. He has little hope that any of them will run.

Is there a constituency in the Republican party against the war?

"There is in the voting booth. Since the Republican party is inherently a minority party, the members don't want to speak out against the President, but they know the war is wrong. Their consciences are challenged.

"To talk as the President does of winding down the war while he is expanding the use of air power is a deliberate deception of the American people. The whole thrust of my challenge is against a President who describes himself as a dedicated Quaker and who promises a generation of peace but who is actually intensifying the war and killing thousands of helpless, homeless civilians.

"I'll probably get licked but I can't keep quiet."