

Urgent Call for Peace

The 57-to-38 majority by which the Senate has once again passed Senator Mansfield's amendment for withdrawal of all United States forces from Indochina within six months—a cutdown from the original time limit of nine months—reflects spreading national disillusionment with President Nixon's Vietnamization policy. The vote is an impressive demonstration of the determination in Congress to reassert legislative authority, if necessary, to bring the war to the early end the President has promised but not delivered.

The bankruptcy of Vietnamization is everywhere evident—in the one-man electoral farce scheduled for Sunday in South Vietnam, in the deteriorating military situation on the Cambodian border, in the renewed air war against the North and in the frozen peace talks in Paris.

President Thieu's heavy-handed suppression of his non-Communist opposition has shattered the last vestige of justification for American support of the Saigon regime. The Administration's uncritical support for this unchallenged election runs counter to President Nixon's own repeated pledge to seek self-determination for the people of South Vietnam.

Mr. Thieu may temporarily cow the opposition by such tyrannical tactics as his recent "shoot to kill" order against demonstrators protesting the one-man vote, but his repressive measures merely underscore the flimsiness of the political base the United States has invested so many lives and resources to sustain.

The hasty dispatch of American ground and aerial support to embattled South Vietnamese troops along the Cambodian border raises fresh questions about the vaunted accomplishments of last year's massive expansion of the war into Cambodia and last spring's major thrust into Laos. Similarly, the renewed American aerial assaults against the North indicate the deepening peril of United States ground forces still left in Vietnam as the President pursues his incompatible policies of gradual withdrawal and continuing support for President Thieu's proclaimed goal of military victory. Tragic experience has demonstrated that air power cannot make up for fundamental weaknesses on the ground, both military and political.

The adverse turn in the allied military situation in Indochina renders hollow Ambassador Porter's warning to the Communists in Paris yesterday that their military position is unfavorable. The reality remains that neither side can contemplate a military solution to a problem that remains, as it always has been, fundamentally political, requiring a political solution at the peace table.

It is time that President Nixon recognized, as a majority of Senators have done, that Vietnamization is a failure, daily eroding the prospects for a negotiated settlement that would assure the safe and honorable return of American troops and prisoners from Indochina. Senate revival of the Mansfield amendment gives the President another chance to turn away from unrealistic and perilous policies and to enlist the cooperation of Congress in a resolute turn toward peace.