

James Reston Reports

Nixon's Plea to Moscow

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Washington

The President has now defined his Vietnam policy more precisely than ever before. His policy is not only to get the American troops and prisoners out of there, but to defeat the Communist invasion, and "to prevent the imposition of a Communist regime on the people of South Vietnam against their will . . ."

In short, Mr. Nixon will not leave the outcome to a test of arms between the North Vietnamese, backed

by Moscow and Peking, and the South Vietnamese, backed by far more arms from the

United States, with a South Vietnamese Army of more than a million men, a South Vietnamese Air Force of more than 1000 planes and more than 500 helicopter gunships, and total control of the air.

ISSUE

"We will not be defeated," Mr. Nixon said, "and we will never surrender our friends to Communist aggression."

Well, "never" is a long time, especially in an election year, but Mr. Nixon sees the defeat of the enemy invasion and Communist aggression not only as a military issue between the two Vietnams, but as a moral issue for America which involves the honor of this nation, and maybe even the peace of the world, and nobody can say this is not a policy.

In fact, Mr. Nixon has now said, in effect: This is where I stand, and if you want to change the policy, you will

Heavy Toll in Viet Fighting

Saigon

North Vietnam's onslaught inflicted the heaviest South Vietnamese casualties of the war last week and the heaviest in six months to American forces, the allied commands reported yesterday.

The South Vietnamese command said 1149 government troops were killed in action and 3376 wounded.

The U.S. command reported ten Americans killed in action, eight missing and 78 wounded. Four more died of nonhostile causes.

The total of North Vietnamese dead dropped sharply, however, from 7117 two weeks ago to 4890 last week,

according to the South Vietnamese command.

In all, 17,820 North Vietnamese, South Vietnamese and American troops have been reported killed in the past three weeks of the North Vietnamese offensive. There is no estimate of the number of civilian casualties.

Thirty - four Americans have been reported killed during that period and 173 wounded, plus 37 more missing.

The total number of American casualties reported last week was the highest since October 2, when 21 Americans were reported killed and 117 were wounded.

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seem to be trapped in the psychology of the cold war even more than Mr. Nixon.

There was a time when President Nixon, on the urging of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, thought about getting out of the Vietnam war with American bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang, which would maintain Western power in the Pacific after the Japanese had regained Okinawa, the British had pulled out of Singapore, and the Chinese had taken over Taiwan and come into their treaty rights at Hong Kong. But this is not the situation now.

Even those of us who have opposed the President's Vietnam policy and his bombing of Hanoi and Hai-phong and his commitment to defend the Saigon regime against aggression, no matter what happens, ought to be fair about his concessions and his limited objectives.

PLEA

Mr. Nixon is asking now to get out without being humiliated. He is asking Brezhnev and Moscow not to push him too far. He is even saying that he was wrong in the past and would like to go on now to the really important questions of world politics, and arguing that the "great powers" have a common interest in ending the tragic distraction of Vietnam.

Maybe Moscow cannot control Hanoi, but it has made its point to Mr. Nixon that it will not allow the defeat of the North Vietnamese, and now Mr. Nixon has accepted this and is asking them not to insist on settling the struggle by force of arms.

The President is being pressed now by his opponents for the presidency to make more concessions, and

have to change the President. This is fair enough, and not a bad offer, but November is a long way off at the present rate of killing, and meanwhile somebody has to find a way out of this trap and try to change the question.

Presumably this is one important reason why Henry Kissinger was sent to Moscow. He was trying to find out whether Mr. Nixon couldn't get a little help from the Soviet Union, which is supplying the modern arms to Hanoi, to bring this war in Vietnam to an end, so that the major powers could get down to the really important world questions of controlling arms,

avoiding war in the Middle East, establishing a security system in Europe, reorganizing the trade and monetary systems of the world, and easing the misery of the majority of the human race in the poor nations.

QUESTION

This is a fair question. When are we going to hear from the leaders of the Soviet Union on these larger elemental world questions? They have struggled out of unspeakable miseries and have now come up into the pinnacle of world power, all in the lifetime of Leonid Brezhnev, Alexei Kosygin and Andri Gromyko. They have not only survived but triumphed, yet they still

to put the unification of his country ahead of his support of Saigon, and with good reason, but Moscow, as one of the two great power centers of the world, also has its responsibilities, and so far, it has been even less flexible than the President.

The immediate problem is fairly clear. It is to end the killing and the diversion of Vietnam and get on to the really important questions of controlling military arms, population, and poverty. What Mr. Nixon has done in his last speech is merely to state the old questions, and dramatize the old confrontation. But he is trying, after his fashion, to get on to the

larger questions, and he has asked the Soviet leaders: When are you going to help? When are Washington and Moscow going to get down to the questions that unite the world instead of a secondary question, like Vietnam, that divides the great powers? The Nixon visit to Moscow next month may very well give us an answer to these fundamental questions.
