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Vietnamization a Failure?

PRESIDENT NIXON'S admirable speech last week nevertheless leaves us with the difficulties that crawl through the text, haunting the reader.

Ninety-five percent of the fighting men who were there when Mr. Nixon took office are now gone. Instead, the South Vietnamese are carrying the full military load on the ground. And it is a very considerable load.

THEIR LOSSES last week were the highest of the entire war. At 4000 dead and wounded you would need to visualize 50,000 American casualties to get a comparable figure.

Now the idea of Vietnamization was that we would withdraw *pari passu* as the South Vietnamese built up their army. One American soldier out, one South Vietnamese soldier in.

But suddenly with the great spring offensive of North Vietnam we discover that things are not that way at all. It may be, as the President has assured us, that we will win. But it is unquestionably the case that the enemy is getting away with the kind of thing it would never have ventured during the period the United States Army was there. I mean: full-blown, tank-led, open invasion by a dozen military divisions.

They are doing to South Vietnam what we hoped and prayed they would try to do during the long years we were there, fighting an infiltrators' war. Already we see that Vietnamization has not worked militarily.

And then the President said: "Our air strikes have been essential in . . . assisting the South Vietnamese." "Essential." Then he said that General Abrams said that the enemy will fail. Then he said "we can now see the day when no more Americans will be involved (in South Vietnam) at all."

So. Vietnamization is already and palpably a partial failure. Our air support having proved essential to the South Vietnamese at this juncture, it would presumably prove essential to the South Vietnamese at any future juncture—at the crisis of, say, 1974, or 1976.

There are no known plans to give the South Vietnamese an air force that would permit it to bomb Hanoi and Haiphong, in the absence of which there is no way for us to neutralize Hanoi and Haiphong as major launching bases for fresh attacks in the future.

Therefore, we most precisely cannot "now see the day when no more Americans will be involved" while simultaneously pledging that we "will never surrender our friends to Communist aggression." It is one or the other: either perpetual American involvement, through our air force and navy; or the surrender of South Vietnam.

And everybody knows the political situation. Two years from now Congress would simply not permit us to do what we are doing now. The doves are on the march, and Richard Nixon knows it. That being the case we can confidently look forward to the return of all our men from the Indochinese area, and just about as confidently look forward to the North Vietnamese conquest of South Vietnam and so much for our friends, and for the fate of our friends.

UNLESS . . . Mr. Nixon told a confederate, in 1967, that only someone who has seen the daily reports of the National Security Council and the CIA, as he did for eight years as Vice President, could know what were the pressure points of the Soviet Union, and of Red China, on a day by day basis, and that the Vietnam war could only be won by playing on those pressure points.

What are the indications that he has mastered that great console?