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A Time for Sadness

by William Randolph Hearst, Jr.

[First part of column concerns
death of J. Edgar Hoover.]

THIS BRINGS ME to the tragic situation in the northern provinces of South Vietnam, where wanton aggression has destroyed both peace and law.

I'm not at all convinced that the show is over in Vietnam. The thundering hordes of trained, professional North Vietnamese army divisions have cut a wide and deadly swath across the northern and central provinces against green South Vietnamese forces that have only recently been recruited from civilian life.

But the North can be stopped. Two similar events come to mind that happened in World War II which I covered as a correspondent.

The first was the performance of our green troops in Africa. We literally got the hell kicked out of us for a while until the boys got the hang of it and Gen. George Patton showed them how to do it.

A few years later in Europe in the winter of 1944-45 the front line remained practically stationary for a few months. Then one dawn many German divisions poured out through the Ardennes Forest and literally overran a great number of our troops in and around Bastogne. Like the recent breakout in Vietnam, they took advantage of the weather and the element of surprise and for a while it looked like they were headed for Paris. Again it was George Patton who came to the rescue and before many days passed the spearlike drive was cut off at the base. A few more months passed and the Germans sued for peace.

What is sickening today is to hear some Americans gloat over the setback in South Vietnam and suggest that the time for surrender has arrived.

Just as it is too early to accept defeat, it was not too early last week for the President to break off the so-called peace talks in Paris.

When those talks first began four years ago this month, I was there with Bob Thompson, our national editor, and Milt Kaplan, who now is president of King Features Syndicate, to cover the event. Nothing happened to promote peace while we were there and nothing has happened to promote peace since then.

We have negotiated in good faith since that first day, when Averell Harriman and Cyrus Vance sat down with the delegates from Hanoi. But they have made no attempt to negotiate in good faith. Instead, they have used Paris as a base from which to spread Communist propaganda around the globe.

As long as the opposing sides in this dispute use the same words — like peace and negotiate — but give them entirely different meanings, there is no chance that peace can be achieved in Paris. Therefore, there is not much sense in our side continuing to sit across the table from a group of aggressors whose only interest is in haranguing and insulting the United States.