

Text of Nixon's Speech on Indochina and

Following is a transcript of President Nixon's address last night, as recorded through the facilities of A.B.C. News:

Four years and two months ago, when I first came into this office as President, by far the most difficult problem confronting the nation was the seemingly endless war in Vietnam. Five hundred and fifty thousand Americans were in Vietnam. As many as 300 a week were being killed in action. Hundreds were held as prisoners of war in North Vietnam. And no progress was being made at the peace negotiations.

I immediately initiated a program to end the war and win an honorable peace. Eleven times over the past four years I have reported to the nation from this room on the progress we have made toward that goal.

And tonight, the day we have all worked and prayed for has finally come.

For the first time in 12 years, no American military forces are in Vietnam. All of our American P.O.W.'s are on their way home.

The 17 million people of South Vietnam have the right to choose their own government without outside interference. And, because of our program of Vietnamization, they have the strength to defend that right.

We have prevented the imposition of a Communist government, by force on South Vietnam.

There are still some problem areas: the provision of the agreement requiring an accounting for all missing in action in Indochina; the provision with regard to Laos; the provision prohibiting infiltration from North Vietnam into South Vietnam have not been complied with.

We have and will continue to comply with the agreement.

We shall insist that North Vietnam comply with the agreement and the leaders of North Vietnam should have no doubt as to the consequences if they fail to comply with the agreement.

But despite these difficulties we can be proud tonight of the fact that we have achieved our goal of obtaining an agreement which provides peace with honor in Vietnam.

And on this day let us honor those who made this achievement possible, those who sacrificed their lives, those who were disabled, those who made everyone of us proud to be an American as they returned from years of Communist imprisonment, and everyone of the two and a half million Americans who served honorably in our nation's longest war.

Never have men served with greater devotion abroad with less apparent support at home.

Let us provide these men with the veterans' benefits

order to break the deadlock.

The Voices of Opposition

On each of these occasions, the voices of opposition we heard in Washington were so loud they at times seemed to be the majority. But across America, the overwhelming majority stood firm against those who advocated peace at any price—even if the price would have been defeat and humiliation for the United States.

And because you stood firm, stood firm for doing what was right, Colonel McKnight was able to say for his fellow P.O.W.'s when he returned home a few days ago, "Thank you for bringing us home on our feet instead of on our knees."

Let us turn now to some of our problems at home.

Tonight, I ask your support in another battle, but we can be thankful this is not a battle in war abroad but a battle we must win if we are to build a new prosperity without war and without inflation at home.

What I refer to is the battle of the budget—not just the battle over the Federal budget, but even more important, the battle of your budget—the family budget of every home in America.

One of the most terrible costs of war is inflation. The cost of living has skyrocketed during and after every war America has been engaged in.

We recognized this danger four years ago. We've taken strong action to deal with it. As a result of our policies we have cut the rate of inflation in half from the high point it reached in 1969 and 1970.

And today, our rate of inflation in the United States is the lowest of any industrial nation in the world.

But these positive statistics are small comfort to a family trying to make both ends meet. And they are no comfort at all to the housewife whose sees meat prices soaring every time she goes to the market.

The major weak spot in our fight against inflation is in the area of meat prices.

I have taken action to increase imports from abroad and production at home. This will increase the supply of meat and it will help bring prices down later this year. But what we need is action that will stop the rise in meat prices now.

And that is why I have today ordered the Cost of Living Council to impose a ceiling on prices of beef, pork and lamb. The ceiling will remain in effect as long as it is necessary to do the job. Meat prices must not go higher and with the help of the housewife and the farmer they can and they should go down.

Economy

This ceiling will help in our battle against inflation. But it is not a permanent solution. We must act on all fronts. And here is where the Federal budget comes in.

I have submitted to Congress for the next fiscal year the largest budget in our history — \$268-billion. The amount I have requested in this budget for domestic programs in such fields as health, housing, education, aid to the elderly, the handicapped, the poor, is twice as big as the amount I asked for these items four years ago.

Notes Congressional Critics

However, some members of Congress believe the budget in these areas should be even higher. Now if I were to approve the increases in my budget that have been proposed in the Congress, it would mean a 15 per cent increase in your taxes, or an increase in prices for every American. And that is why I shall veto the bills which would break the Federal budget which I have submitted.

If I do not veto these bills, increased prices or taxes would break the family budgets of millions of Americans, including, possibly, your own.

'The Buck Stops Here'

This is not a battle between Congress and the President. It is your battle. It is your money, your prices, your taxes I am trying to save.

Twenty-five years ago, as a freshman Congressman, I first came into this office. I met Harry Truman, who was then President of the United States.

I remember he had a sign on the desk. It read: "The buck stops here." Now that

meant, of course, that a President can't pass the buck to anyone else when a tough decision has to be made.

It also means that your buck stops here.

If I do not ask to stop the spending increases which Congress sends to this desk, you will have to pay the bill.

I admit there is an honest difference of opinion on the matter of the Federal budget. If you are willing to pay the higher taxes or prices that will result if we increase Federal spending over my budget—as some in Congress have proposed—you should ask your Senators and your Congress to override my veto.

But, if you want to stop the rise in taxes and prices, I have a suggestion to make.

I remember when I was a Congressman and a Senator I always seemed to hear from those who wanted government to spend more. I seldom heard from the people who had to pay the bills—the taxpayer. And if your Congressman or Senator has the courage to vote against more Government spending so that you won't have to pay higher prices or taxes, let him know that you support him.

Winning the battle to hold down the Federal budget is essential if we are to achieve our goal of a new prosperity. Prosperity without war and without inflation.

I ask you tonight for your support in helping to win this vitally important battle.

Let me turn finally tonight to another great challenge we face.

As we end America's longest war, let us resolve that we shall not lose the peace.

During the past year we've made great progress toward our goal of a generation of peace for America and the world. The war in Vietnam has been ended.

After 20 years of hostility and confrontation we have opened a constructive new relationship with the Peoples Republic of China where one-fourth of all the people in the world live.

We negotiated last year with the Soviet Union a number of important agreements, including an agreement which takes a major step in limiting nuclear arms.

Now there are some who say that in view of all this progress toward peace, why not cut our defense budget?

Well, let's look at the facts. Our defense budget today takes the lowest percentage of our gross national product that it has in 20 years. There's nothing I would like better than to be able to reduce it further. But we must never forget that we would not have made the progress toward lasting peace that we have made in this past year unless we had had the military strength that commanded respect.

This year we have begun new negotiations with the Soviet Union for further limitations on nuclear arms. And we shall be participating later in the year in negotiations for mutual reduction of forces in Europe.

If prior to these negotiations we in the United States unilaterally reduce our defense budget or reduce our forces in Europe, any chance for successful negotiations for mutual reduction of forces or limitation of arms will be destroyed.

There is one unbreakable rule of international diplomacy. You can't get something in a negotiation unless you have something to give.

If we cut our defenses before negotiations begin, any incentive for other nations to cut theirs will go right out the window.

If the United States reduces its defenses and others do not, it will increase the danger of war.

It is only a mutual reduction of forces which will reduce the danger of war.

And that is why we must maintain our strength until we get agreements under which other nations will join us in reducing the burden of armament.

What is at stake is whether the United States shall become the second strongest nation in the world.

If that day ever comes, the chance for building a new structure of peace in the world would be irreparably damaged and free nations everywhere would be living in mortal danger.

A strong United States is not a threat to peace. It is the free world's indispensable guardian of peace and freedom. I ask for your support tonight for keeping the strength which enabled us to make great progress toward world peace in the past year and which is indispensable as we continue our bold new initiatives for peace in the years ahead.

Praise for America

As we consider some of our problems tonight, let us never forget how fortunate we are to live in America at this time in our history.

We have ended the longest and most difficult war in our history in a way that maintains the trust of our allies and the respect of our adversaries.

We are the strongest and most prosperous nation in the world. Because of our strength, America has the magnificent opportunity to play the leading role of bringing down the walls of hostility which divide the people of the world, in reducing the burden of armaments in the world, of building a structure of lasting peace in the world.

And because of our wealth, we have the means to move forward at home on exciting new programs, programs for progress which will provide better environment, education, housing and health care for all Americans, and which will enable us to be more generous to the poor, the elderly, the disabled and the disadvantaged than any nation in the history of the world.

The Challenge of Peace

These are goals worthy of a great people. Let us therefore put aside those honest differences about war which had divided us and dedicate ourselves to meet the great

challenges of peace which can unite us.

As we do, let us not overlook a third element. An element more important even than military might or economic power because it is essential for greatness in a nation. The pages of history are strewn with the wreckage of nations which fell by the wayside, at the height of their strength and wealth, because their people became weak, soft and self-indulgent and lost the character and the spirit which had led to their greatness.

As I speak to you tonight I am confident that will not happen to America, and my confidence has been increased by the fact that a war which cost America so much in lives, money and division at home has as it ended provided an opportunity for millions of Americans to see again the character and the spirit which made America a great nation.

A few days ago in this room I talked to a man who had spent almost eight years in a Communist prison camp in North Vietnam.

For over four years he was in solitary confinement. In that four-year period he never saw and never talked to another human being except his Communist captors. He lived on two meals a day, usually just a piece of bread, a bowl of soup. All he was given to read was Communist propaganda. All he could listen to was the Communist propaganda on radio.

I asked him how he was able to survive and come home standing tall and proud, saluting the American flag.

He paused a long time before he answered.

And then he said, "It is difficult for me to answer. I am not very good at words. All I can say is that it was faith. Faith in God and faith in my country."

If men who suffered so much for America can have such faith, let us who have received so much from America renew our faith — our faith in God, our faith in our country and our faith in ourselves.

If we meet the great challenges of peace that lie ahead with this kind of faith, then one day it will be written: this was America's finest hour.

Thank you. Good evening.