

Senators Open Hearing on Ending War

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WASHINGTON, April 20—

Before an applauding audience of veterans of the Vietnam war, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee opened hearings today on "how to end the war."

The session was given over to such outspoken antiwar senators as George McGovern of South Dakota, Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon and Vance Hartke of Indiana. They criticized the Administration's policy on Vietnam as ambiguous and ambivalent and they contended that it would not assure the total withdrawal of American troops or the release of American prisoners of war.

The purpose of the hearings, as enunciated by Senator J. W. Fulbright, committee chairman, was to give President Nixon "advice" on how best to accomplish his goal, stated in a speech, April 7 of "total American withdrawal from Vietnam."

Early Deadline Proposed

Before the committee moves to limit or end American involvement, among them a McGovern-Hatfield proposal that would require the withdrawal of all forces by the end of this year and Hartke resolution calling for immediate withdrawal.

In contrast to past hearings, the Foreign Relations Committee is under some pressure to report a specific proposal to end or limit the war. An underlying purpose is to rally Congressional and public opinion against the war once again and thus to bring pressure on the President to commit himself to a withdrawal timetable.

In an opening statement, Senator Fulbright likened the Congressional movement to what he described as the way the French National Assembly forced the French Government to withdraw from Indochina in 1954.

The hearings coincided with new demonstrations here against the war. About 150 veterans, most in fatigues, crowded into the relatively small hearing room, some of them standing for more than two hours to hear the testimony.

'Hi There, Senator Dove!'

With a lenient gavel from Mr. Fulbright, they greeted Mr. McGovern with cheers and cries of "Hi there, Senator Dove!" They cried "Right on!" and held up their fingers in the peace sign as arguments were made against the Administration.

Occasionally there were hisses from the veterans, almost all of whom were white, as when Senator Clifford P. Case, Republican of New Jersey, suggested that withdrawal by the middle of 1972 might be more realistic.

The veterans were from among some 1,200 brought to Washington by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War for five days of demonstrations.

A mass rally is planned for Saturday by the National Peace Action Coalition, the successor to the group that sponsored demonstrations in 1969. In the following week a series of demonstrations designed to disrupt the Government is planned by a group called Mayday.

The hearing provided a forum for answers to Mr. Nixon's assertion that a withdrawal deadline would undermine the Paris peace negotiations, endanger the withdrawal and fail to secure the release of prisoners. His critics, noting that the Communist side had repeatedly expressed willingness to enter into negotiations on the prisoners once the United States had set a deadline, maintained that their proposals offered greater

promise of securing safe withdrawal and release of the prisoners.

Mr. McGovern said that Mr. Nixon's Vietnamization policy virtually guarantees that our prisoners will remain in their cells, that our troops will remain in danger, that the negotiations will be stalled and that the killing will continue.

By making a flat commitment to withdrawal, he said, "we can break the negotiating stalemate in Paris, get discussions started on the release of our prisoners and secure assurances of safety for our forces while they are being withdrawn."

Senator Hatfield, a leading Republican dove, complained that the Administration's policy had been characterized by a lack of clarity, particularly on whether it was committed to total withdrawal.

"This pattern of calculated ambiguity, this reluctance to

be candid with the American people, has seriously eroded confidence in the Administration's ability to lead us out of this war," he said.

The "most distressing aspect" of the policy of Vietnamization, he added, is that "we seem committed to the concept that American life is valued far more than Asian life."

Senator Hartke said that on the basis of conversations this month with the Communist side's negotiators in Paris, he was convinced that the prisoner issue would be "resolved very speedily once the withdrawal date is set."

The lone committee dissenter on the withdrawal deadline was Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, who expressed concern that a deadline imposed by Congress would intrude upon the President's power as well as leave the war unsettled.