WORLD AFFAIRS

Johnson Bars Renomination, Limits North Vietnam Bombing

Unilateral Peace Move. Pres. Johnson announced in a TV speech to the U.S. Mar. 31 that he would not seek or accept nomination for another term as President. He announced simultaneously that he had ordered—"unilaterally" —a halt to air and naval bombardment of North Vietnam "except in the area north of the demilitarized zone where the continuing enemy build-up directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movement of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat."

"The area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90% of North Vietnam's population and most of its territory," Mr. Johnson said. "Thus, there will be no attacks around the principal populated areas, or in the food-producing areas of North Vietnam." He asserted that "even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end—if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi." The President called on North Vietnamese Pres. to Chi Minh "to re-establish peace and友善 to this new step toward peace."

The President's 40-minute address was devoted almost entirely to the subject of the war in Vietnam. In the speech he announced he was sending 13,500 more U.S. troops to South Vietnam. Some of the additional forces would be members of Reserve units he was ordering to duty. Further defense expenditures—$2.5 billion in fiscal 1968 and $2.6 billion in fiscal 1969—were also requested by the President to meet the costs of the troops build-ups and military supplies since the beginning of the year and the cost of re-equipping the South Vietnamese forces and of meeting "our responsibilities in Korea."

The budget increases, the President said, "will bring into sharper focus the need for enactment of a tax bill "together with future budget controls that the Congress may desire and dictate." He shall approve appropriate reductions in the January budget," he promised, "when and if Congress so decides that that should be done." It was "mistakably clear," he said, that the deficit "just must be reduced."

Among details of the major pronouncements of the President's speech:

Withdrawal from political race—Mr. Johnson's decision not to seek renomination had been a carefully guarded secret that he revealed only at the end of his address. He shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President," he said. He preceded this disclosure with a call for unity within the nation and a statement of his decision that "I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing by the military.

Throughout his 37 years of public service, Mr. Johnson said, "I have followed the personal philosophy that I am a free man, an American, a public servant and a member of my party—in that order—always and only. . . . I have put the unity of the people first. I have put ahead of any divisive partisanship. And in these times, as in times before, it is true that a house divided against itself by the spirit of faction, of party, of region, of religion, of race, is a house that cannot stand. There is division in the American house now. There is divisiveness among us all tonight. . . . I cannot disregard the peril of the progress of the American people and the hope and the prospect of peace for all peoples, so I would ask all Americans whatever their personal interest or concern to guard against divisiveness and all of its ugly consequences. . . . What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion and distrust and selfishness and politics among any of our people."

"With American sons in the fields far away," the President said, "with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal political interest. This is an urgent cause to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office—the Presidency of your country. . . . Let men everywhere know, however, that a strong and a confident and a vigilant America stands ready tonight to seek an honorable peace; and stands ready to do everything there is to do to see to it that whatever the price, whatever the burden, whatever the sacrifice that duty may require.

Asking for the "help" and "support" of the American people in this effort toward peace, the President said: "We must always be mindful of—whatever the trials and the tests ahead, the ultimate strength of our country and our cause will lie, not in powerful weapons or infinite resources or boundless wealth, but in lie in the unity of our people." [See p. 102F-B2]

Bombed limitation—Pres. Johnson preceded his announcement of bombing restrictions with a new call for Hanoi to enter into peace talks. "We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations," he said. "So tonight, in the hope that this action will need to early talks, I am taking the first step to de-escalate the conflict."

"Our purpose in this action," the President said, "is to bring about a reduction in the level of violence that now exists. . . . It is to permit the contending forces to move closer to a political settlement." He reaffirmed his pledge to withdraw our forces from South Vietnam as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, stops the infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides.

Peace talks—The President appealed to the Soviet Union and Britain, as co-chairmen of the Geneva conferences and as permanent members of the UN Security Council, "to do all they can to move" his proposal "toward genuine peace." He designated Amb.-at-Large W. Averell Harriman as his personal representative "to any forum, at any time, to discuss the issue of bringing this war to an end." Amb.-to-USSR Llewellyn Thompson was on call to join Harriman at Geneva or any other suitable place just as soon as Hanoi agrees to a conference," Mr. Johnson said.

He expressed hope that North Vietnam, after years of fighting that has left the issue unresolved, will now cease its efforts to achieve a military victory and will join with us in moving toward the peace table," Mr. Johnson declared. Hanoi "should be in no doubt of our intentions. It must now calculate the pressures within our democracy in this election year. . . . The United States will never accept a fake solution to this long and arduous struggle and call it peace."

The President said "the precise terms of an eventual settlement could not be foreseen, but a settlement could be based on "political conditions that permit the South Vietnamese—all the South Vietnamese—to chart their course free of any outside domination or interferences, from us or from anyone else."

South Vietnamese efforts—The President said there was need for further effort by the South Vietnamese, who must carry "the main burden of preserving their freedom" themselves. Although "substantial progress" had been made in the past 3 years, he said, the South Vietnamese must still expand their armed forces, "move back into the countryside as quickly as possible," increase taxes, "select the very best men they have for civil and military responsibility," "achieve a new unity within their constitutional government" and . . . include in the national effort all those groups who wish to preserve South Vietnam's control over its own destiny."

Mr. Johnson promised that the U.S. would "accelerate the re-equipment of South Vietnam's armed forces" and thus "enable them progressively to undertake a large share of combat operations against the Communist invaders." [See pp. 100B8, 61C3, 57F3-58F2]

REFERENCES in brackets give location of background information in this & preceding volumes
Pres. Johnson on Vietnam & Presidential Race

(Abridgment of Mr. Johnson's Mar. 31 address)

A

But if peace does not come now through negotiations, it will come when Hanoi understands that our common interest is not advanced by the maintenance of the status quo. Tonight, we and the other allied nations are contributing 600,000 fighting men to assist 700,000 South Vietnamese troops in defending their little country.

Our presence there has always rested on this basic belief. The only way to improve the security of our friends in their free world is to work them—by the South Vietnamese themselves. We and our allies can only help to provide for the long-term security of the people of South Vietnam can survive and can grow and develop as a free people. The expected death toll of the Saigon South Vietnamese survivors that is rapidly repairing the nation that it wrought.

The South Vietnamese know that further efforts are going to mean that they will end their own armed forces; to move into the countryside as quickly as possible; to increase their taxes; and to select the very best men in the nation to military responsibility, to achieve a new unity within their constitutional government, and to include the broadest possible range of pay-people or very close to—equilibrium. We must have a responsible fiscal policy in this country.

The passage of a bill with express provision that the Congress may desire and dictate, is absolutely necessary to protect this nation’s security and to ensure prosperity and the needs of our people. Now, what is at stake is 7 years of unparalleled prosperity.

B

But tonight I renew the offer I made last August to the people of South Vietnam: he plans to reach as soon as possible a total military strength of more than 800,000 men.

C

Tonight I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to move toward the North in the area of the demilitarized zone where the continuing enemy build-up directly threatens allied lives and the equipment and the movement of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

D

The area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90% of North Vietnam’s population, and most of its territory. Thus the tanks that are pillaging the principal population areas, or in the tactical situation, the food-producing areas of North Vietnam.

E

Even this limited bombing of North Korea could come to an end if the restraint is matched by more meaningful restraint in Hanoi. But I cannot in good conscience stop all bombing so long as we have 1500 miles of land and the enemy’s territory.

F

Our purpose in this action is to bring about a reduction in the level of violence that now exists. It is to save the lives of innocent civilians and to save the lives of innocent women and children. It is to permit the enemy to move closer to a political settlement.

G

And tonight I call upon the United Kingdom and I call upon the Soviet Union and all permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—to do all they can to move from the unilateral tactics that have been the basis of the official policy toward peace in Southeast Asia.

Now, as in the past, the United States is ready to seek new avenues to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this ugly war to an end. I am designating one of America’s most experienced diplomats, Mr. William Harriman, as my personal representative for such talks. In addition, I have asked Mr. Llewellyn Thomas of the American University, and another diplomat, to be available to join Mr. Harriman at Geneva or any other suitable place—just as soon as Hanoi will allow to come.

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Thursday, Mar. 28—Wednesday, Apr. 3, 1968
So tonight I reaffirm the pledge that we made at Muscatatuck that we are prepared to withdraw our forces from South Vietnam, because the other side with its forces in the North, stops the infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides.

Our determination for a political accommodation in Vietnam is directly related to the future of all of Southeast Asia, where much has happened to inspire confidence.

At Johns Hopkins University about 3 years ago, I announced that the United States would take part in the group of nations working on a Southeast Asia Initiative, including the Mekong valley, for all the people of that region.

Our determination to help build a better land and political future for men on both sides of the present conflict—has not diminished in the least. Indeed, the ravages of war, I think, have made it more important than ever before. And in the United States again tonight what I said at Johns Hopkins—that North Vietnam could take its place in the group of Southeast Asian countries, if it stopped infiltration and violence.

Over time, a wider framework of peace and security in Southeast Asia may become possible. The new cooperation of the nations of Southeast Asia could be a great foundation stone. Certainly friendship with the nations of such a Southeast Asia is what the United States seeks—and that is all that the United States seeks.

During the past 45 years, it has been my fate and my responsibility to keep our commitment in the Southeast of Asia. I have lived daily and nightly with the cost of this war. I knew the pain that it has inflicted. I knew perhaps better than others the bringing of a million bicycles to the security of Southeast Asia. But it is vital to the security of every American.

And we have treaties which we must respect. Surely, we have commitments to the all-important people of the world and in Southeast Asia. But the heart of our involvement in South Vietnam under three different Presidents, three separate Administrations, has always been America's own security. And the larger purpose of our involvement has always been to help the nations of Southeast Asia find a way larger to the world—by establishing a self-sustaining community of states, at peace with themselves, at peace with their neighbors, and the hope and the world—will be far more secure than it is tonight.

I believe that a successful Asia is far nearer to reality because of what America has done in Vietnam. I believe that the men who endure the dangers of battle, fighting for us for tonight, are helping the entire world avoid far greater conflicts, far wider war, far more destruction, than this one.

The possibility to let the Commander in Chief, I have lived daily and nightly with the cost of this war. I knew the pain that it has inflicted. I knew perhaps better than others the bringing of a million bicycles to the security of Southeast Asia. And the hope and the world—the world—will be far more secure than it is tonight.

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Hanoi Scores U.S. Move. Pres. Johnson’s decision to restrict the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward peace was assailed by Hanoi Apr. 2 as “fraudulent.”

The North Vietnamese army newspaper, Quan Doi Nhan Dan, asserted that the “disciplinary limitations” on the raids were an attempt to deceive world opinion, that the U.S. still failed to comply with North Vietnam’s demand for a complete and unconditional bombing halt.

The North Vietnamese Communist Party newspaper, Nhan Dan charged that the United States was only trying to maintain its colonialism and increasing its troops to reconstruct the South Vietnamese puppet regime and troops. The United States is attempting to increase the bombing of North Vietnam, and the so-called fraudulent proposals for peace talks are aimed at getting rid of isolation from the people of the world.

FACTS ON FILE

Other Foreign Reaction. The Soviet press agency Tass Apr. 2 assailed Mr. Johnson for not having ordered a complete halt to the air raids. “Refusing to fully stop the barbaric bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam,” the United States, as before, is ignoring the lawful demands of the DRV (North Vietnamese) government and all the world public insisting on a full and unconditional end to the bombing and all acts of war against the Vietnamese people,” Tass said.

The statement also complained that the President “did not mention specific steps to end the attacks.”

A Moscow radio statement later Apr. 2 reiterated the Soviet view that Pres. Johnson’s decision on the bombing had failed to meet North Vietnamese demands for a total and unconditional halt in the air attacks as a precondition for peace talks. The broadcast assailed the President’s decision not to seek renomination as a “pre-election maneuver.”

Canadian Prime Min. Lester B. Pearson hailed Pres. Johnson’s order to reduce the bombing. He said “it is now strictly up to the Communist side to reciprocate and show their desire to end the war by negotiation rather than by force.”

Raid Curb in Dispute. Pres. Johnson’s decision to restrict the bombing of North Vietnam went into effect Apr. 1. But U.S. air strikes carried out that day ranged as far as 205 miles north of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) where a radar site was struck near Thanhhhoa, 81 miles south of Hanoi.

As a result of these air strikes deep in North Vietnamese territory, Pres. Johnson was criticized in Congress and elsewhere for misleading the public in his announcement of bombing restraint.

Following the outcry, the Administration explained Apr. 2 that the bombing limitation meant that there would be no raids with the 205-mile radius, which were 225 miles north of the DMZ.

After the Apr. 1 raid near Thanhhhoa, a Defense Department official had insisted that the attack had not constituted a breach of the terms of Pres. Johnson’s bombing limitation order. He said, "Any raid that has been conducted since the President’s speech are obviously within the framework of the President’s speech.”

In reply to newsman’s questions as to whether the 20th Parallel and the target near Thanhhhoa were intended to be part of the bombers “area north of the demilitarized zone,” as defined in the President’s speech, White House Press Secy. George Christian said Apr. 2 that "this was the intent of the President’s statement and order.

The Defense Department said in a more detailed explanation later Apr. 2: In accordance with Pres. Johnson’s...