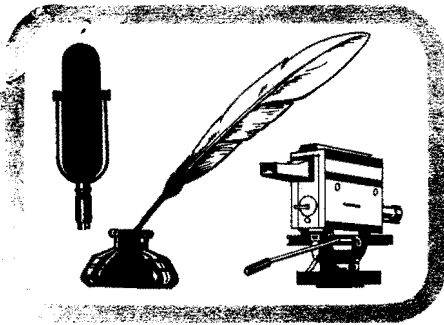


**The original documents are located in Box D30, folder “Rotary Club, Ionia, MI, September 2, 1970” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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CONGRESSMAN  
**GERALD R. FORD**  
HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER

**NEWS  
RELEASE**

--FOR RELEASE AT 12 NOON--  
Wednesday, September 2, 1970

Excerpts from a Speech by Rep. Gerald R. Ford before the Ionia Rotary Club

We are steadily moving toward peace in Vietnam and the Middle East and toward arms control in Vienna.

We are making real progress toward the goal of peace in Vietnam. It is not a light at the end of a tunnel. It is a reality which we are in the process of achieving. We are on the road to a peace that makes sense, a valid peace, a peace which is in the best interests of the United States and the entire Free World.

We have withdrawn 115,000 men from Vietnam on the road to that peace, and we will withdraw another 150,000 by next May. What this amounts to is that we will end our front-line combat role in Vietnam by next spring. Meantime, our South Vietnamese allies are growing ever stronger as they battle to thwart Communist aggression in Indochina.

This is the best answer to those Americans who would have us chuck it all for what they call "peace now." Their peace would destroy South Vietnam and lead to the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of anti-Communist South Vietnamese. Their peace would destroy American credibility throughout the world. America's word would be worth no more than a shrug of the shoulders, and the barriers against Communist expansionism would crumble all over the globe.

Consider the problem that Vietnam posed for President Nixon when he took office in January 1969. He was faced with three alternatives. All of them were bad.

One was further escalation of the war in an effort to "win" it. The American patience at home was thin. If indeed the war was winnable, a policy of escalation would have destroyed the new Administration before it got started.

A second choice was to build up the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves while American forces in Vietnam were withdrawn over a period of months. This was a course which did not write off the previous investment of American lives and treasure in Vietnam.

The third choice was immediate withdrawal. This almost surely would have destroyed South Vietnam. And it would have caused the collapse of American credibility among other nations whether it calmed the American people or not.

The President chose the middle course--Vietnamization of the war. While

(more)



avoiding the catastrophic consequences of immediate withdrawal, it reflected the majority view in America that U.S. ground fighting in Vietnam should be ended.

The effort to Vietnamize the war went well until the North Vietnamese increased the tempo of their incursions into Cambodia down the Ho Chi Minh trail through Laos and along the border between South Vietnam and Cambodia. This was a clear move to outflank American troops in South Vietnam and raid them from the sanctuary of so-called neutral territory. This territory was neutral only in a technical sense because it was under the military control of the North Vietnamese.

The military situation of the Americans and South Vietnamese would have been untenable if the North Vietnamese had succeeded, because they then would have had to protect their whole western flank.

President Nixon, as Commander-in-Chief, made the difficult decision to save his existing commitment of manpower in South Vietnam by protecting its flank. He decided that American and South Vietnamese forces must keep the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong from consolidating their positions in Cambodia. Only then could Vietnamization proceed, along with American withdrawal.

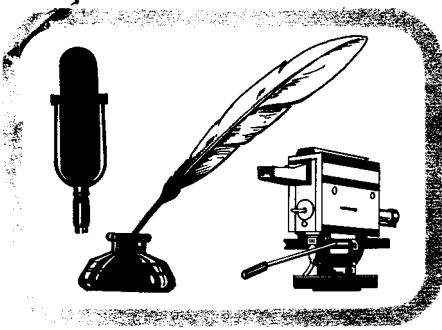
President Nixon's lonely decision has proved wise. Vietnamization is continuing with less external interruption. The level of fighting in Vietnam has dropped to the lowest point in four years. And American withdrawals are continuing as planned.

The Cambodian Operation was a great success despite the domestic furor it caused. The Communists lost vast stores of supplies, a fact which is reflected in the current low level of fighting in Vietnam. And now the Communists see a marshalling of South Vietnamese, Cambodian and Thai forces to resist the reestablishment of Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia while U.S. air power continues to interdict their supply routes.

Events in Cambodia have not widened the war. It has been an Indochina War ever since the Communists violated the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia to pursue their designs on South Vietnam. What has been widened is the commitment of the people of Cambodia and Thailand to resist a threat to their own security which had been tolerated too long.

Those who shout "peace now" and would drop everything and run are wrong. They mean well but they are choosing to ignore the dire consequences of such a course. The so-called Amendment to End the War is really an Amendment to Lose the Peace. I cannot be a party to that. It would be far more than a military defeat. It would be a defeat for Americans as a people who believe in justice and decency. It would be a shattering blow to the principles on which our Nation was built.

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