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EXTRACT FROM AN ADDRESS BY GENERAL MAXWELL D. TAYLOR
BEFORE THE YACHT CLUB OF NEW YORK AT THE CANNONBALL TRIVILLE.

JANUARY 5, 1966

SEVERAL CRITICS OF OUR CURRENT STRATEGY IN SOUTH VIET-NAM HAVE COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF A "HOLDING STRATEGY" CALLING FOR A PERMANENT CESSION OF THE BOMBING OF TARGETS IN NORTH VIET-NAM, A HALT TO FURTHER UNITED STATES REINFORCEMENTS, A WITHDRAWAL OF UNITED STATES GROUND FORCES TO (THAT IS, DEFEND BASE AREAS) ENCLAVES ALONG THE COAST AND A RENEWAL OF EFFORTS TO FIND A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS OR AT GENEVA.

THE ADVANTAGES CLAIMED FOR A "HOLDING STRATEGY" ARE THAT IT WOULD PERMIT US TO LIMIT OUR TROOP COMMITMENTS WHILE MAINTAINING A MILITARY PRESENCE IN COMPARATIVE SAFETY ALONG THE COAST OF SOUTH VIET-NAM AND WOULD AVOID THE DANGER OF ESCALATION INTO A WAR WITH CHINA FOUGHT IN THE WRONG PART OF ASIA—MANCHURIA BEING REGARDED AS A BETTER THEATER OF OPERATIONS FOR THE APPLICATION OF MILITARY FORCE. ONCE ESTABLISHED IN THESE ENCLAVES, WE WOULD THEN HOPE TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT WITH OUR COMMUNIST ADVERSARIES.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION SEEM SO SERIOUS AS TO MAKE A "HOLDING STRATEGY" EQUIVALENT TO THE ACCEPTANCE OF A CRUSHING DEFEAT OF INTERNATIONAL PROPORTIONS WITH THERE IS NO REASON FOR SUCH A CAPITULATION. IT SUGGESTS FEELING LIKE THE WICKED "WHEN NO MAN PURSUETH." AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT WOULD RESULT IN THE ABANDONMENT OF MANY OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WHOM WE HAVE PROMISED TO DEFEND, EXCEPT THOSE LUCKY ENOUGH TO LIVE WITHIN THE RANGE OF THE GUNS OF OUR COASTAL ENCLAVES. THE EFFECT OF SUCH A RETREAT ON THE MORALE OF OUR PROUD UNITED STATES FORCES

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(WHO HAVE NO DOUBT AT ALL OF THEIR ABILITY TO COP WITH THE VIET CONG) AND ON THE ATTITUDE OF OUR SOUTH VIETNAMESE ALLIES WITH WHOM WE ARE NOW LINKED IN THE COMRADESHIP OF THE COMMON BATTLEFIELD WOULD BE DISASTROUS. WHETHER ANY VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT COULD SURVIVE SUCH CONDUCT BY ITS AMERICAN ALLY OR, IF IT SURVIVED, WHETHER IT WOULD RESIST THE URGE TO SEEK AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE VIET CONG WHILE TIME REMAINED IS HARD TO PREDICT. IT SLEWS QUITE CERTAIN, HOWEVER, THAT NO OTHER ASIAN COUNTRY ON THE CHINESE PERIPHERY-- MALAYA, THAILAND OR THE PHILIPPINES FOR EXAMPLE--WOULD EVER FEEL INCLINED TO ACCEPT UNITED STATES FORCES ON THEIR SOIL--INDEED, THROUGHTOUT THE WORLD, RELIANCE ON US AS AN ALL-WEATHER FRIEND AND PROTECTOR WOULD RAPIDLY DISAPPEAR WITH DISTURBING EFFECTS ON EVERY ALLIANCE TO WHICH WE BELONG.

WHAT WOULD CONSTITUTE A GREAT DEFEAT FOR US WOULD BE AN EQUALY GREAT VICTORY FOR HANOI-Peking AND A VAST ACCESSTION TO THE COMMUNIST PRINCIPLE. IN FLEETING A CONFRONTATION WITH CHINA IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WE WOULD SOON FIND THAT THE LINES OF CONTACT ADVANCED AS WE RETIREN. THE "WAR OF LIBERATION" WOULD HAVE BEEN VINDICATED AS THE SUICIDE FORMULA FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNIST EXPANSION AND WE COULD EXPECT TO KFET IT AGAIN AND AGAIN IN ASIA, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA JUST AS THE COMMUNIST LEADERS HAVE BEEN PREDICTING. THIS COUNTRY CAN NOT ESCAPE ITS DESTINY AS THE CHAMPION OF THE FREE WORLD--THERE IS NO HAVING AWAY FROM IT. THIS IMPULSE TO WITHDRAW OUR TROOPS INTO SAFE ENCLAVES IN SOUTH VIET-NAM HAS MUCH IN COMMON WITH THE ERECTED YARDINGS FOR SAFETY BEHIND DEFENSES AT OUR COASTLINES AND IS EQUALLY ILLUSORY.

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AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCEPTABLE NEGOTIATIONS FOLLOWING THE ADOPTION OF A "HOLDING STRATEGY", IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND A GLIMMER OF HOPE. IT IS HARD ENOUGH TO NEGOTIATE WITH COMMUNISTS FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH. TO ACCEPT DEFEAT PRIOR TO NEGOTIATIONS AND THEN EXPECT TO LEAVE THE TABLE WITH SOMETHING MORE THAN DISHONOR SEEMS BEYOND THE HOPE THAT REASONABLE MEN MAY ENTERTAIN. IF OUR NEGOTIATORS REFUSED TO ACCEPT DISHONORABLE TERMS, WE WOULD HAVE NO RECOURSE UNDER THE "HOLDING STRATEGY" BUT TO ASK OUR TROOPS TO SWEAT INDEFINITELY IN THEIR TROPICAL ENCLAVES, UNABLE TO USE EITHER THEIR VAUNTED MOBILITY OR THEIR MODERN FIRE POWER-- ALL OUT OF CONCERN FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF RESISTING THE AGGRESSION OF ONE SMALL COMMUNIST ASIAN COUNTRY. I WOULD NOT LIKE TO BE THE COMMANDER OF AMERICAN TROOPS WITH SUCH A MISSION. WHILE IN SUCH A SITUATION THE PRINCIPAL DANGER OF OUR FORCES WOULD BE EXPOSED, IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT THEY MIGHT BE OVERRUN ON OCCASION, PARTICULARLY IF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES DEPLOYED IN NUMBERS TO THE VIET CONG AS WOULD BE ENTIRELY POSSIBLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. IT IS INTERESTING TO REFLECT THAT THE FRENCH ONCE TRIED OUT THIS DEFENSIVE ENCLAVE CONCEPT AT A PLACE CALLED DIENBIENPHU AND THE RESULT SHOULD NOT ENCOURAGE US TO IMITATION.

ALTHOUGH WE SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE CONCERN OVER A POSSIBLE ESCALATION OF THE WAR, WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY HANOI AND PEKING SHOULD WISH TO AVOID ANY WIDENING OF THE CONFLICT. APART FROM THE OBVIOUS DANGERS ARISING FROM THE MILITARY CONSEQUENCES OF A HEAD-ON COLLISION WITH US, BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAVE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHICH

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MUST TEND TO DAMPEN ANY EAGERNESS FOR ESCALATION. TO HANOI, CHINA IS THE TRADITIONAL, DISTRUSTED ENEMY AND THE VIETNAMESE LEADERS WILL GO FAR TO AVOID CREATING ANY SITUATION WHICH MIGHT RESULT IN THEIR HAVING TO ACCEPT SUCH MASSIVE AID FROM PEKING AS TO MORTGAGE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THEIR COUNTRY. IN THE MEANTIME, THEY RECOGNIZE AND CAN APPRAISE PEKING'S OBVIOUS READINESS TO FIGHT TO THE LAST NORTH VIETNAMESE AND WILL HARDLY WANT MATTERS TO ESCALATE THAT FAR.

PEKING LIKEWISE HAS GOOD REASONS TO WANT TO LIMIT THE WAR. AFTER PROCLAIMING WIDELY THAT A "WAR OF LIBERATION" IS THE SAFE WAY TO EXPAND COMMUNISM WITHOUT DANGER, A SERIOUS MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES IN VIET-NAM WOULD, AT A MINIMUM, INVALIDATE THIS DOGMA, DEMONSTRATE THE SUPERIOR VIRTUES OF THE RUSSIAN FORMULA OF "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE" AND CONVICT THE CHINESE LEADERS OF A SERIOUS BLUNDER WHICH THEIR SOVIET RIVALS COULD ENJOY. THE CHINESE ARE ALSO AWARE OF THE LOSSES WHICH THEY WOULD SUFFER IN SUCH A CONFRONTATION AND MUST GIVE SERIOUS THOUGHT TO THE EFFECT SUCH LOSSES WOULD HAVE ON THEIR POWER POSITION IN RELATION TO THEIR MOSCOW COMPETITORS.

THIS, WE SEE THAT BOTH OF OUR ADVERSARIES HAVE THEIR PROBLEMS--IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO LOSE SIGHT OF THEM IN CONCENTRATING SOLELY ON OUR OWN.

IN CLOSING THE DISCUSSION OF THIS MATTER, LET THERE BE NO IMPRESSION THAT THE "HOLDING STRATEGY" RECEIVES THE SUPPORT OF ANY SUBSTANTIAL SECTION OF OUR MILITARY LEADERSHIP. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY SHADERS OF OPINION

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