

STALLING PEACE TALKS? Defense Secretary Clark Clifford suggested, on Dec. 15, that South Vietnam was contributing to the delay in Paris negotiations by "squabbling," along with Hanoi, over such procedural details as the shape of the negotiating table.

Clifford's remarks brought a retort from the Prime Minister of South Vietnam which, in turn, brought strong words from Senator McGovern of South Dakota:

"While Ky is playing around in the plush spots of Paris and haggling over whether he is going to sit at a round table or a rectangular table, American men are dying to prop up his corrupt regime back home.

"Haven't we had enough of this little tinhorn dictator who wastes American tax funds in Paris and American blood in Vietnam.

"Let us in the name of humanity and common sense stop the killing and tell General Ky that if he wants the war to continue, he is welcome to give up his plush accommodations in Paris and go back to take charge of his troops, but without the help of any more American blood and treasure."

BOMBING HALT THREATENS SAIGON One American working in Saigon reports that "President Thieu organized two street demonstrations to protest the bombing halt and then went on radio to advise against taking to the streets." This was to create the impression that the demonstrations were spontaneous.

Don Luce noted that President Johnson's decision to halt the bombing of North Vietnam led to a wave of Anti-Americanism in governmental circles, although most Vietnamese people welcomed the halt and recognize that the government must talk with the NLF.

One refugee woman told Luce that peace is at hand. "But the government does not allow it. You Americans should leave and then the government would have to negotiate. They would no longer have your troops to protect them. Then we could go back to our farms."

Don Luce, a veteran of nine years in Vietnam with International Voluntary Services, observed: "The mood in Saigon is that peace

must come soon and that the government of Nguyen Van Thieu is only interested in its own personal preservation..."

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WHAT After a lengthy discussion of who will recognize whom
DOES at the bargaining table in Paris, and what the shape of that
THIS table could be, Time (Dec. 6, 1968, p. 29) has a most
MEAN? interesting paragraph.

"Once the modalities are arranged, the negotiators will enter an even thicker diplomatic jungle. General Creighton Abrams, the U.S. commander in Viet Nam, expects Hanoi to start right off with a demand for a cease-fire in place--a move opposed by most policy-makers in Washington and Saigon because it would leave the Viet Cong in control of too much territory. Others foresee serious talks on a mutual troop withdrawal." (Emphasis supplied.)

Is the foregoing statement an indication that, contrary to administration rhetoric, that the Vietnam war has been going badly, and that the opponents have, in fact, been relatively successful in the rural areas? Is that statement a plausible explanation for the reluctance of the Saigon regime to get down to the serious business of negotiating in Paris? Does it suggest why the Saigon regime feels threatened?

BIAFRA Dr. Channing B. Richardson, Bristol Professor of
AND International Affairs at Hamilton College, recently
NIGERIA gave an analysis of the background and politics of the current struggle between the break-away region of Biafra and its parent, Nigeria.

Its roots lie in the historic past. First, people along the coastal areas have been exposed to European and Christian influences for a very long time. 50% of the Ibos (the predominant tribe in Biafra) are Christians. These people took to Christianity, education, and modernization.

Second, the British made a pact with the Hausa of the North not to upset Arabic culture and Moslem faith, but to rule through traditional native rulers. Thus the North to this day, has been insulated from modernizing influences and a 16th century feudal society has continued. Modern jobs in railroad transportation, etc., were held by Ibos rather than by Hausa.

Third, when Nigeria was given independence, it was on the basis of a federal system with three regions. Political parties were sectional in character (and also tribal) rather than national.

While the North had an absolute majority of all Nigerians, it was a coalition of Ibos (in the Eastern region) and Hausa (in the Northern region) who ruled the country and prevented the ascendancy of the Yorba (of the Western region). The Ibos dominated the coalition. However, leaders of the North picked up a satellite party in the Western region which opened up possibilities of a new coalition to govern the country. The Ibos became frightened, and there was antagonism between the Eastern and Western regions over who would dominate the country.

In January, 1966, Army officers, mostly Ibos, assassinated Federal officials, mostly northerners and took over the country. In July non-Ibo Army officers reacted and struck back, killing Ibo Army leaders. The new Army coalition broke up the three regions into twelve states, and the Ibos became disturbed. This was accompanied by a wave of killings of Ibos in the North, and of Hausa in the Western region. By May, 1967, the secession of the Eastern region had been proclaimed.

The war, says Professor Richardson, was precipitated by French President Charles DeGaulle's efforts to smash English and American oil interests on the Nigerian coast, France having been frozen out of concessions. In reality, France is seeking to smash vestiges of British influence in West Africa by breaking up the largest legacy of British colonialism.

Other nations have concerns. The United States wishes the problem would evaporate but supports England which is behind the Nigerian government. The U.S. fears the balkanization of Africa (proliferation of mini-states). The Russians also support the Nigerian government because they feel the Nigerian government will win and they want its future friendship.

Meanwhile Biafran resistance is made possible by the flow of French Arms, some of which come through on "food" flights from French, Spanish, or Portuguese territory. Biafra has recently called for Communist Chinese support and Chinese may now be training Biafran guerrilla fighters.

Only an exertion of joint U.S. and English pressure can produce a cease fire. Meanwhile relief operations are necessary.

There may be more people in need now in Nigerian hands than there are in Biafra. Relief operations are a "masterpiece" of inefficiency, wasted materials and wasted manpower." Well meaning Europeans and Americans have shipped to Biafra foods that are strange (and not apt to be used) or which are in supply in the area.

In assessing the future, Richardson said, "Fortunately there remain moderates among both the Nigerians and Biafrans who...can cooperate once a cease-fire is achieved."

N.B. There are now indications that the U.S. government will take a more active role in seeking a cease-fire.

BIRTHDAY PARTY The annual Birthday Party of the Syracuse Peace Council is scheduled for Wednesday evening, January 29th at the First Presbyterian Church in Syracuse, beginning at 6:30 PM. The speaker will be Dr. Rlph C. Chandler, Secretary for International Affairs of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. His topic will be "Peace or a Sword in Latin America?".