

Reparations A Ticklish Question Post-War Aid: A Good Investment?

By STEVE WEISSMAN
Alternative Features Service

Should the United States continue to provide economic aid to South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia? Should we help rebuild North Vietnam?

President Nixon, Professor Kissinger and POW spokesman Col. Robinson Riser think we should; Congress remains unconvinced while anti-war radicals just aren't sure. But almost no one has yet tackled the tough, overriding question: What policy objectives would Washington use the aid to pursue?

The answer is far from clear. Dr. Kissinger, for example, told NBC that the United States would not object if the Communists unified Vietnam through "peaceful and democratic means," while some observers believe that he expects the Communists to do just that within a year or two at most. If that is true, then Washington evidently agreed to contribute

"to healing the wounds of war and the postwar reconstruction" either as "reparations" to obtain a face-saving agreement from the Communists, or to keep open future options with a Communist Vietnam.

This, however, would not explain why Washington rushed to build up Saigon's air force and army in the days prior to the cease-fire, or why President Nixon is so willing to risk his political capital getting the unpopular \$7.5 billion aid package through an already-hostile Congress. Nor does the "reparations" view understand that the idea of aid came not from Hanoi but from Washington, where it has been under high level study ever since 1966.

On balance, then, it seems that Washington, while prepared to accept a possible Communist victory, still intends to use the new peacetime aid to pursue its old wartime goals: a permanent di-

vision of Vietnam and a secure and independent non-Communist South Vietnam.

Washington also hopes to pursue these goals less overtly than before, working with Japan and the Europeans through either a United Nations agency or some specially-created international mechanism. This multilateral approach is what the aid package's loudest "critics" favor. Senators Fulbright and Proxmire, for example, have blasted the idea of "American aid," while at the same time offering to support multilateral aid. "My purpose in making it (the aid) multilateral would be to disengage the American presence from Indochina and to allow them to settle their differences among themselves," explained Senator Fulbright. "I do not think it's our responsibility to continue to dictate how this part of the world should be run."

Whether Nixon is pulling the wool over Fulbright's eyes, or

Fulbright is pulling the wool over the eyes of his anti-interventionist supporters, is unclear. But when we remember that former Pentagon chief Robert McNamara now heads the World Bank, and that former Bank of America president Rudolph Peterson—who has glowingly spoken of the profitable investment opportunities in South East Asia—heads the United Nations Development Programme, the uses of multilateral aid become clear.

Under such auspices, any aid to North Vietnam would be a far cry from either "reparations" or the recent "no-strings" private contributions to rebuild the Bach Mai Hospital. In his February 23 press conference, Dr. Kissinger described aid to Hanoi as "an attempt to enable the leaders of North Vietnam to work together with other countries, and particularly with Western countries, in a more constructive relationship, and to provide in this manner an incentive toward a more peaceful evolution." That, of course, presumes that the Communist leadership, or at least an element, thereof, shares Kissinger's vision.

More important, though, by supporting aid to the Communists in the North, Nixon and Kissinger have further strengthened their case for a continuing commitment to the anti-Communists in the South. No doubt they could have forced through some aid to Saigon in any event, but not at anything like their proposed billion dollar levels. Nor could they have so effectively silenced the criticisms of the many anti-war activists who now find themselves applauding aid to Hanoi.

The actual aid to South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia will likely follow familiar patterns. Back in 1964, for example, CARE, Catholic Relief Services and the International Rescue Committee cooperated with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency to build up pro-government support among the 900,000 refugees. Now, though possibly under contract to some international agency, the same

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Gray Says Official Lied; White House Denies Talk

WASHINGTON (AP)—The White House has denied a statement by acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III, who said President Nixon's official lawyer probably lied to an agent probing the Watergate wiretapping.

Without mentioning Gray's testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee, the White House issued a statement Thursday saying that Counsel John W. Dean III "flatly denies that he ever misled, or as Sen. Byrd of West Virginia suggests, lied to an agent of the FBI."

The statement said the reference to Dean, made earlier in the day at the Judiciary hearing on Gray's nomination to be permanent FBI director, was "reprehensible, unfortunate, unfair and incorrect."

Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., an opponent of Gray's confirmation, said in questioning the nominee that last June, Dean had

told an FBI agent he would have checked whether E. Howard Hunt had a room in the White House executive offices.

Byrd said this was only three days after Dean had the safe in Hunt's office in the Executive Office Building opened and the contents removed.

"He lied to the agent, didn't he?" Byrd asked Gray.

"After looking back and making a minute examination of the record, I would have to conclude that that's probably correct," Gray responded.

The White House statement said:

"Mr. Dean recalls that in June of 1972, as FBI agents were departing his office, he was asked whether or not they could visit Mr. Hunt's office.

"He said he would check—the question as Mr. Dean recalls did not relate to whether Mr. Hunt

ever had an office in the Executive Office Building."

Hunt is one of seven persons to be sentenced today in connection with the break-in and wiretapping of Democratic national headquarters in the Watergate building last June. He had been security chief for Nixon's re-election effort.

The Judiciary Committee, in considering Gray's nomination, earlier voted unanimously to invite Dean to testify. But Nixon said he would not allow any White House aide to testify, on grounds no conversation between a president and his advisers is subject to question by Congress. Dean has offered to answer selected questions in writing.

The committee is anxious to hear from Dean because Gray testified he turned over to the White House counsel various FBI papers relating to the Watergate investigation.

Shortly before the White House statement was issued, the Judiciary Committee completed its questioning of Gray amid signs of increasing confidence by opponents that his nomination can be defeated. No date for resuming the hearings was set.

Several opponents are now calling for an early yes-or-no vote in contrast to earlier reluctance to force a showdown.

However, Chairman James O. Eastland, D-Miss., said he still thinks Gray is going to be confirmed by the Senate. He has backed the nomination all the way.

Nixon Budget Cuts Forcing Shutdown Of Freeport Plant

FREEPORT (AP)—The federal government's first plant to convert salt water into drinking water closes today, a victim of budget cutbacks by the Nixon administration.

The 12-year-old plant that has been supplying about one-third of Freeport's water supply has been a scientific success but a financial failure.

"We'll start the shutdown about 9 a.m. by shutting off the steam and should have the job completed by 4:30 p.m.," said John Newton, manager of the plant the past four years.

"The government's position is we have been successful in developing the materials and processes for taking salt out of water and that it is now time for private industry to take over and start building plants."

Efforts by Texas congressmen to extend the plant's operations at least through the heavy water consumption summer months were unsuccessful but Freeport officials foresee no problems in that arrangement for replacement supplies have been completed.

"We've got things in hand," said City Manager Bill Pennington.

The desalination plant the late President John F. Kennedy opened on June 21, 1961, by pressing a button in the White House closes after processing 2.3 billion gallons of water. The capital investment approximates \$5.5

million and annual operating expenses approximate \$1 million.

The shutdown results from a budget cutback from \$27 million to \$2.5 million for the Interior Department's Office of Saline Water. Also closing are plants at Webster, S.D., and Roswell, N.M. A San Diego, Calif., plant will continue operating at least temporarily in that San Diego shared the capital cost. There are no plans to close a fourth facility, a Wrightsville Beach, N. C., plant which Newton says specializes in pilot plant operations for new processes.

While federal officials say the plant has developed materials and processes, Freeport was not interested in buying the Texas facility in that it still costs about \$2 to process 1,000 gallons. Freeport has been buying from 800,000 to 700,000 gallons of the plant's 900,000-gallon daily output at three cents per 1,000.

The remainder of Freeport's water supplies come from deep wells at a cost of about 15 cents per 1,000 gallons.

The desalination plant is on property owned by Dow Chemical Co. and Freeport has contracted to obtain alternate supplies from Dow. A canal links the sprawling plants of Dow's Texas Division with a fresh water reservoir about 15 miles inland.

Tying the canal into the same main line that has been carrying water from the desalination plant requires only 200 feet of pipe.

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RHA Backing Student For Mankind Walk

The Residence Hall Association voted Thursday night to sponsor Paul Gugenheim, vice president for programs, in the Miles for Mankind walk Saturday.

A pledge of \$5 per mile was made by the association. Gugenheim plans to run three miles and walk three miles in the 20 mile event designed to raise money jointly for local improvements and for international aid.

The RHA also decided to place a large mobile billboard in the area in front of Sbias Dining Hall the day of student elections. It will urge students to "get out and vote." Also planned are flyers to be distributed the night before elections listing polling places, times and what the student needs to be able to vote (fee slip).

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