THE STRATEGIC MANIPULATION OF AMERICAN OFFICIAL
PROPAGANDA DURING THE VIETNAM WAR, 1965-1966,
AND BRITISH OPINION ON THE WAR

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT


This thesis examines the American official propaganda campaign on the Vietnam war, and its impact on both the British Government, America's main non-combatant ally, and British public opinion, from the time of the escalation of the war, in February 1965, to mid-1966.

Concentrating on Administration statements, the study assesses the Administration's knowledge of events in South Vietnam and its secret planning on the war, compares this knowledge and planning with its propaganda, and evaluates the truth and accuracy of Administration propaganda. An assessment is also made of U.S. propaganda techniques and the utility of American official propaganda themes.

The thesis then examines the information on the war that was available to the British public on a daily basis in the British press. The role of the press during the war is assessed both as an information medium, and as an audience for American official propaganda - an audience which then disseminated its own analyses of the war and U.S. propaganda.

The British Labour Government's reaction and opinion on the war is traced in relation to its own policy of support for its U.S. ally, and the domestic political difficulties that this policy caused. British public
opinion on the war during this period is evaluated through public opinion polls, and press accounts of opposition to the war, including accounts of demonstrations.

The theme of this thesis is that when the war began escalating in February 1965, the British Government, the public, and much of the press, supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam. But by mid-1966, the British Government had dissociated from the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam's oil storage depots, henceforth offering qualified support to its ally; the British public no longer supported U.S. action in Vietnam; and sections of the British press opposed U.S. involvement. The British Government's dissociation was a blow to the U.S. Administration, and thus the American official propaganda campaign had failed to retain the desired degree of support from its British ally.
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INTRODUCTION

America's involvement in the Vietnamese War was one of the most important events in the post-World War II period. It was the leitmotiv of the 1960's, when its impact was felt in every corner of the globe, in many aspects of international and national life. The political, social and military consequences of both American involvement and defeat are keenly felt in America and the international community to the present day.

America's position as leader and guarantor of the Western Alliance ensures that America's rhetoric, actions and their consequences, past and present, reflect on America's allies and form the major point of reference for opponents. One of the reasons the war became so important was that America chose to make Vietnam the battleground for a 'decisive' confrontation, on behalf of her free democratic bloc, with the 'unfree' Communist bloc. Without American intervention it seems unlikely that the outcome of a conflict in a remote (from Europe) part of the world would have been the focus of such widespread attention. American perceptions of the importance of the Vietnamese conflict also tended to alter the initial perceptions of other nations, whether friendly or hostile, just as America's actions raised the stakes of success or defeat for both sides.
American involvement in the Vietnam War required explanation and justification, as is usually the case with most conflicts, and though commentators vary in their estimates of the degree of importance that propaganda can now attain generally in the modern world, it still appears that the presentation of a government's position in the best possible light, to both its home audience and foreign observers, is an important feature of policy. The information² that Lyndon Johnson's Administration felt compelled to issue is illustrative of this contemporary feature.

During the Vietnam War 'presentation' was of particular importance due to a number of factors, which can be divided into those concerning South Vietnam and the war itself and those centring on advances in communication. The first group of factors concerned Vietnam's remoteness from the American continent, which made it difficult to uphold the U.S. Administration's claim that it was an area vital to America's national security.

The second factor was that the length and nature of the conflict was bound to strain the propaganda apparatus to the utmost given that America itself was not directly under attack: this poses the question for how long can a democratic government keep the supportive interest of its people and allies when that nation is not directly threatened?
Third, the type of regime that America was supporting in South Vietnam (mostly ever-changing military juntas lacking legitimacy and popular support) contradicted all the political and human ideals that the American Administration professed to be preserving and pursuing in South Vietnam and was also seen as making a mockery of America's own allegiance to these ideals.

Fourth, because of the secrecy and low-key approach which characterized American involvement in this area in the beginning, most observers of the conflict became aware of the extent of the American commitment only when the war was escalating. At this time the Administration had decided that America's prestige and credibility were at stake, not to mention South Vietnam's physical existence. So against a background of allied ignorance, publics in both America and Britain (to deal only with those of interest to this thesis) awoke to find their governments already committed to a war - though obviously committed in different degrees and with different roles. The American Administration was caught in a trap of its own making and the British Government shared in some of the consequences because of close support for American policy.

Concerning the second group of factors, the spread of modern day communication networks while enlarging the Administration's communication scope also enlarged the potential number of rival viewpoints that the Administration might have to counter, and limited the possibilities for the successful promotion of distinctive
propaganda campaigns in different parts of the world. For instance, official American statements made in Saigon to reassure their South Vietnamese allies were frequently in real, or apparent, contradiction to American statements made to reassure America's Western allies. Not surprisingly, when the conflicting statements were compared considerable confusion and dismay resulted among America's allies.

The speed of communications ensured that it would be difficult to contain the damage caused when propaganda errors committed in one area were transmitted to other arenas.

A.) Primary lines of enquiry

The major concern of this thesis is the interaction of U.S. official propaganda with British opinion, both public and governmental. The aim is to examine U.S. official information about the war in a period comprising the first two years of escalation and encompassing different climates of opinion. It will then be possible to trace the Administration's pattern of response to different events in relation to their efforts to influence opinion on the war. This should also reveal whether opinion on certain events in turn influenced the Administration's handling of information.

There are a number of reasons for studying the relationship between American official propaganda and British opinion. First, the British have theoretically, and usually in practice, been close allies of the United
States, whether or not a 'special relationship' exists. During the period under examination, after refusing to participate militarily in the conflict, the British Government was the staunchest supporter of American policy in Vietnam.

Second, Britain was co-chairman, with the Soviet Union, of the Geneva Conference in 1954 which 'settled' the First Indo-China War. Thus Britain was intimately connected with the earlier diplomatic agreements and certain sections of the British public therefore expected the current British Government to involve itself in diplomatic initiatives to end the current war. On the other hand, Britain's ability to act as a mediator in the crisis was frequently held to have been undermined by her identification with American policy.

There are three main lines of enquiry in this study, embracing the basic theoretical and empirical problems which need to be addressed. The first objective is to examine the change in British public opinion on the war. This change was apparent in the ever-larger protests staged by active opponents of American involvement in the war, and more widely in responses to opinion polls measuring the views of the general public. A study of the role of the media as principal conveyors of information to the public will form a central part of the thesis. The scope of the enquiry and volume of material to be examined will be reduced by concentrating on a limited number of events and themes.
The second objective is an assessment of the nature and effectiveness of the Administration's propaganda effort and divides into two parts. The first part focuses on the basic justifications used in American official statements. The second part focuses on the information available in the British press on a day to day basis about certain events and certain long term themes and the way in which these were handled by the Administration. The events are selected on the basis that they required a special effort to justify them (often as a result of past Administration statements) and, or, that they had a special significance for Britain.

The third objective is to draw conclusions from the above studies as to why British opinion changed, why the Administration's propaganda effort failed and whether there might have been ways to prolong acceptance of the Administration's viewpoint, or conversely whether the Administration would always have failed in this endeavour. Finally more general conclusions are drawn about a propaganda campaign directed at a foreign audience.

Within this broad framework special attention will be focused on the following questions and issues: First, at what point did a credible alternative point of view emerge to challenge the Administration's view and why? Second, when did the propaganda audience begin to disbelieve the Administration? Third, what role did the Administration assign to propaganda during the war and what degree of effort at what level went into coordinating the
information and presenting it? Fourth, how suitable were American propaganda themes and techniques for their purpose? Fifth, were there any American information errors of particular magnitude which helped to turn the tide of public opinion and, or constituted a turning point? Sixth, what were the effects of the military situation on the audience's reaction to Administration propaganda and how was the military situation reported? Seventh, what level of effort did the Administration direct towards keeping the British Government informed compared with America's other allies? Eighth, how important were extraneous factors such as general anti-Americanism in forming opposition to the war?

B.) Period of the Study

The period 1965-1966 is being examined for several reasons, but overall, in terms of a propaganda campaign these years virtually pre-select themselves. To begin with, 1965 was the year in which the U.S. began bombing North Vietnam and U.S. troops were committed to combat. Due to these actions, the Administration had to contend with increasing press and public interest in the conflict, after some years of effective public unaccountability. The Administration had to 'sell' a number of alarming events and had to try and justify American involvement in this area; and it also had to weather two serious incidents concerning the conduct of the war: the gas warfare episode and negotiations that the Administration was involved in immediately prior to escalation of the conflict. The
incident concerning the use of non-lethal gas against enemy troops, while being objectively unimportant (and a failure in practice) was immensely important politically: the United States was roundly condemned worldwide and the Administration and its propaganda organs showed themselves both incapable of understanding the reasons for the furor and incapable of dealing with the consequences in such a way as to limit the political damage. This pattern of events was to be repeated time and again.

In concrete terms, 1965 was the year when North Vietnam was first subjected to aerial bombardment; the American presence in South Vietnam grew from approximately 23,000 military advisers, at the beginning of the year, to 180,000 combat troops by the end of year; there were some public demonstrations in America against the war and the 'teach-in' became fashionable, spreading quickly to Britain.

Between 1965 and 1966 the war escalated rapidly. The American Administration poured men and equipment into South Vietnam and mounted energetic diplomatic and military recruiting drives amongst its allies. On the other side, the Vietcong received increasing assistance from the North Vietnamese, Chinese and Russians. As the war expanded in scale and intensity, so it grew in brutality. Obviously all this increased the burden of explanation and justification that the Administration had assumed in 1965 and the sheer passage of time very soon constituted another propaganda problem.
Concerning Britain, these years witnessed a change in British public opinion and press coverage from support for the American involvement in Vietnam to hostility. In 1965 opinion polls registered a broadly favourable reaction to American handling of the war and the British Government's response. By mid-1966 these polls were monitoring a considerable degree of public dissatisfaction with the British Government's policy on Vietnam and its continued support for U.S. policy.

The events highlighted in this period trace the development of the Administration's information campaign and the growth of a counter-press view from the time of escalation in 1965 to the U.S. bombing of the North Vietnamese oil installations in June 1966.

There are two major episodes to be studied in 1965. The first is the American bombing of North Vietnam in February and the successful shift in emphasis on the nature of the bombing, from being a reprisal for a specific guerilla attack to being a method of fighting the war. The second episode in mid-1965 concerns the increase in American troops bound for South Vietnam and the transformation of their role in the war from defence to combat. Once the idea and fact of American participation in the war had been accepted, as it generally was, it became possible, and easier, to both escalate the war and justify successfully that escalation.

As mentioned earlier, two incidents occurred in 1965 which epitomize the pitfalls that the Administration's
propaganda campaign was subject to and indeed, on occasions, helped to create. They also illustrate the shortcomings of the American propaganda machine and fore-shadow the two most persistent queries directed at the Administration: on the practical conduct of the war and the Administration's attitude to negotiations. The 'gas warfare' episode took place in March 1965 and despite being of no military significance and somewhat comical in character, it created a world-wide furore lasting several months. In November 1965 it became known that just before escalation of the war in March 1965, the Administration had apparently turned down an opportunity to meet the North Vietnamese. The meeting had been proposed and arranged by the UN Secretary General in December 1964. This lost opportunity would probably not have mattered except that in April 1965, in his Baltimore speech, President Johnson helped foster the impression that it was the North Vietnamese alone who would not discuss the conflict. Until November 1965 the prevailing opinion of the press had been that the Administration was genuinely ready to negotiate (though not unconditionally) but was encountering Communist intransigence. The revelation of Washington's earlier reluctance to meet the North Vietnamese disturbed this image and was the subject of much press comment.

In June 1966 the war was extended when the Americans bombed Hanoi and Haiphong. The British Government had always stated publicly that it would not support an
American attack on the North Vietnamese capital - whatever the target. Following its previous warnings, Her Majesty's Government for the first time issued a statement dissociating itself from the American action, although reaffirming its support for American limited objectives as defined in the President's Baltimore speech. By this time the British public no longer supported American policy. It seems likely that the combination of the bombing and the British Government's avowed disapproval (if the reference to the Baltimore objectives was ignored) could have affected public support.

C.) Themes of the Study

The themes which will be covered will be those which appeared repeatedly in the press: the Administration's attitude to negotiations; the image of successive South Vietnamese Governments; and the conduct of the war.

Concerning negotiations, only those peace initiatives involving the UK Government will be examined. The UK Government's principal peace move in this period, took place in June 1965. There was also a UK/USSR peace initiative in January/February 1967, which will not be examined in detail, being outside the period of this thesis, but it is considered briefly in relation to the UK Government's dissociation from the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam's oil installations in 1966. For the UK dissociation engendered a lack of trust in President Johnson which affected the 1967 peace initiative, and the confusion, suspicion and American high-handedness that
attended this abortive initiative, soured Anglo-American relations in private for some time.

The image of successive South Vietnamese Governments was a theme of great importance in the media. Merely to count the number of governments that had come and gone since America first supported South Vietnam, seemed to contradict the simplest American justification of aiding an allied government by invitation. The press were quick to point out the contradictions between the American justification and their policy, which resulted in support for any government in Saigon (long after the original government America had pledged to aid had vanished), regardless of how it achieved power or how little popular support it commanded.

The other principal subject of media comment was the way the war was conducted by the South Vietnamese and the American armies. The media questioned both the methods used to fight the war and the predictions about the progress of the war issued by the American Army command on the basis of current operations and statistical data gathered from the combat zones. For instance, one of America's main methods of fighting the war was the use of bombing campaigns to destroy North Vietnam's war-making capacity and Vietcong supply lines; this was a method which was particularly abhorrent to Britain after her Second World War experiences as the target of German bombing campaigns. Furthermore, as the war continued there was mounting evidence provided by the media that far from
damaging enemy morale and their will and ability to continue the fight, the bombing raids were achieving precisely the opposite result. Thus, at a relatively early stage of the war, the utility of a major American tactic was questioned; later the morality of such a method was raised.

D.) Sources of the Study

Newspapers comprise the major primary source of information on the Administration's propaganda campaign, for they carried both 'news' and 'news analysis' to the public as well as the text of important official speeches. Newspapers were also the most prolific disseminators, initially, of the official point of view, but as their support faded, the newspapers constituted a powerful opponent of the Administration, relaying an alternative view of the war to the public.

While being of interest, the role that television and radio broadcasts played in the war was basically the same as that of the newspapers and has therefore not been studied in this thesis. In general, news bulletins on radio and television were then much shorter than today's bulletins and although television had its 'news' programmes, by comparison, on a daily basis newspapers carried far more 'news' and analysis than the other two media branches. Also, in this early period, information on the war disseminated in the British media tended to come from sources in Washington, and television equipment and technology was then far more cumbersome and resulted in
far fewer programmes from South Vietnam itself. Of course in the later stages of the war there were British journalists stationed in South Vietnam. In any case, at this time public reactions to television programmes of note, were manifested in letters to the British press. A further reason for not studying the role of television lies in the fact that access to the BBC's archives is extremely difficult and expensive. As the nature and impact of U.S. official propaganda and British reactions to this propaganda can be fully studied from press sources, the absence of a study of television and radio broadcasts does not impair the thesis.

The publication of the *Pentagon Papers* in 1971 provided an invaluable yardstick by which to measure the Administration's propaganda campaign. In the light of America's adherence to Western liberal democratic principles, it is of immense importance to distinguish between Administration propaganda based on honest belief, including misperception, and propaganda based on deliberate deception. The *Pentagon Papers* enable such a distinction to be made to some extent by allowing a comparison of public statements with private information. The *Pentagon Papers* also detail the Administration's awareness of image problems it might face and its attempts to control potentially awkward public announcements. They thus give some idea of the Administration's attitude to mediation efforts and contain some information on relations with allies.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


2. Information is used interchangeably with propaganda throughout this thesis - therefore does not establish the accuracy or inaccuracy of statements merely because it is used.


5. The Baltimore Speech was given on 7 April 1965 at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In it Johnson defined U.S. objectives in the war - a South Vietnam free from Northern aggression, stated that the U.S. sought no wider war and offered economic aid to Southeast Asia, including North Vietnam. See Chapter 2, Section A ii.) and Chapter 4, Section A, B and C for further analysis of this speech.
CHAPTER 1

THEORY AND ORGANISATION OF PROPAGANDA

A.) Theoretical aspects of propaganda

For the purpose of this study the amoral definition of propaganda formulated by T. H. Qualter in Propaganda and Psychological Warfare will be used:

"Propaganda is thus defined as the deliberate attempt by some individual or group to form, control, or alter the attitude of other groups by the use of the instruments of communication, with the intention that the reaction of those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist."

There are other definitions which claim to be less narrow - and it is stated, more accurate - than Qualter's, but definitions of propaganda will not be examined exhaustively for the following reasons:

(i) As the Johnson Administration was fighting a war - even if undeclared and limited to start with - by 1965, it is reasonable to assume that it had every intention that its view of the conflict should prevail (one of the most basic propaganda goals) and that it therefore directed some effort to this end. That is to say, the context of war now predetermines the use of propaganda, for then every government is possessed of the desire to persuade others of the justice of its case.

(ii) Other definitions which claim to be more accurate than Qualter's also run into problems when they are examined closely. For example most definitions centring on
persuasion and reaction could equally well be applied to fund raising activities on behalf of charities, or the Salvation Army, as to the activities of government information departments.

Because of the pejorative connotation still attached to 'propaganda' by the public it might be argued that, though in war every government wishes to put its case most favourably, nevertheless Western democracies could still put out 'information' as opposed to 'propaganda'. This distinction arises from the equation of 'propaganda' with the manipulation or suppression of the 'truth' and thus manipulation of the audience. 'Information' tends to be equated (at least by the public) with 'fact' and 'truth' in the light of knowledge. But information, or even such a neutral term as 'communication' can have within definition an element of suppression and manipulation which is not immediately apparent.

In his essay "What is Information", in Communication and Culture, Anatol Rapoport gives an explanation of the term:

"As Warren Weaver has remarked, the amount of information in your message is related not to what you are saying but to what you could say. This relation links the amount of information in a message with the amount of pre-conceived knowledge about its content (i.e. if the contents of a message are already known or guessed the message has no information in it)...

"In order to define the amount of information in a message, then we must know the total number of messages in the repertoire of the source from which the message is chosen."

This is a somewhat unusual way of defining 'information' (as acknowledged in this work), which is
found in the mathematical theory of communication. But it does serve to illustrate the point that 'information' is not the neutral term it is thought to be. Discussing communication in "The Mathematics of Communication", Warren Weaver writes:

"In communication there seem to be problems at three levels: 1) technical (concerned with accuracy of information transmission from sender to receiver), 2) semantic (concerned with interpretation of meaning by receiver compared to the intended meaning of the sender) and 3) influential." *

And in explaining the problems of influence in communication, Weaver comes very close to a definition of propaganda:

"The problems of influence or effectiveness are concerned with the success with which the meaning conveyed to the receiver leads to the desired conduct of his part. It may seem at first glance to be undesirably narrow to imply that the purpose of all communication is to influence the conduct of the receiver. But with any reasonably broad definition of conduct, it is clear that communication either affects conduct or is without any discernible and provable effect at all" *

These are just definitions of the terms 'information' and 'communication'; add to this the way in which information (using it in its ordinary sense as a piece or body of knowledge) can be used and the distinctions between information and propaganda blur.

However, the unpleasant connotation of 'propaganda' and the popular image that it conjures up of mass audience manipulation through the use of, at best, slanted information and at worst, lies, means that governments in Western democracies refer to their 'information
programmes' instead of their propaganda output. In the view of Western publics, only opponents—particularly Communist governments—indulge in propaganda, both internally and externally. And the underlying moral and political principles on which Western democratic societies are based, restrain (or are supposed to restrain) the information/propaganda techniques that these governments may use.

Discussing propaganda and the morality of the techniques used, Qualter first defined the task of a modern-day propagandist in completely amoral terms:

"The propagandist is one seeking to control the attitudes of other groups for certain specific purposes. No considerations of the moral or political nature of those ends or of the means he adopts is relevant." 7

But Qualter then went on to discuss his idea of the role of a propagandist in democratic society, and came to a totally different conclusion:

"However, while the existing facts of human behaviour and the political world make some recourse to emotional propaganda necessary, the basic ideals to which the democrat owes allegiance make it impossible for him to make use of any and every propaganda tactic. Although he may colour his material to give it more popular appeal and to make it stand out in a competitive background... he cannot adopt practices that would make a mockery of his professed belief in the worth of human dignity. He must eschew tactics which would go beyond mere recognition of human weaknesses, which would tend to the further debasement of political morality. The moral limitation on the propaganda techniques available to the democrat is of fundamental importance in separating a democratic from a non-democratic approach to the use of propaganda." 8
Of the two versions that Qualter proposed, the latter does seem to sum up the popular feeling in Western society about the use of propaganda/information, even externally. And the consciousness of the dividing line between the democrat and non-democrat does seem to extend to some propagandists too. Even when information techniques have been within the accepted boundaries, an extension of the propagandist's role has been seen as contravening the democratic ethic. Rober Elder's study of the United States Information Agency (USIA), described the problems:

"In January 1967, Agency officials just back from Vietnam or about to visit there considered the level of USIA operations in Vietnam and Thailand fascinating, but were ambivalent in their feelings as to whether USIA should be carrying out what would normally be the domestic information activities of foreign governments. In fact USIA was drawn into its contemporary role because the job was not being done locally; and while the Agency is not really qualified to conduct such activist policies, it is in a better position than any other agency to do the required job, which supports the American military effort, though directed at civilians."

Internally, the spectre of Hitler and Goebbels and the loud condemnation of the techniques used by communist regimes ensure that Western democratic governments usually preserve a relatively low-key approach when 'educating' their publics. And of course the ideas and information these governments disseminate are by no means the only viewpoints and facts to be aired publicly. As well as political opposition and interest groups of every variety, the media itself, which carries the government's message to people, also offers comment and criticism.
Obviously there is a difference between these information centres (government and groups) in the ease with which the government and its agencies can command attention and make their views known simply by being the national focal point. Only the media itself can make its views known with this ease - other groups must compete for attention and coverage. However, on the whole modern Western democracies do foster and disseminate a plurality of opinions. This is one of the most fundamental attributes of a democracy - the obvious expression of freedom and the initial safeguard against political repression, which fact is recognised by those who seize or hold power undemocratically, for their first action is to establish and subsequently maintain an absolute monopoly of the instruments of communication and to suppress any expression of opposition.

However, the free expression of differences (articulated politically through the ballot box) so necessary to democratic life, is not the best mode of social and political organisation when fighting a war. This is a time when unity and conformity are needed to project a national image of strength; an image which is of great practical and political value to leaders in this situation. The knowledge of a united nation in the background frees the leader to face an enemy and concentrate purely on victory rather than facing two fronts at once - home critics as well as foreign opponents. In addition, an image of national unity offers
little in the way of obvious targets to an enemy propagandist.¹⁰

On the other hand, if national divisions and differences of opinion do emerge, as happens in democracy, even in wartime, then this is an obvious weapon and weakness which may be exploited by opponents. Much of a professional propagandist's task is concerned with identifying, prior to exploiting, such divisions in the ranks of the enemy. If differences emerge quite naturally as a result of the political system, then not only is the propagandist's job made easier, but also the propaganda targets (in this case the divisions in society) are obviously authentic, whereas the professional propagandist's speculations about possible differences in another society may be incorrect. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. anti-war groups and the arguments used to criticise U.S. involvement in the conflict were of value to the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. Here were ready-made divisions to exploit and arguments to use in addition to their own propaganda lines. This was probably doubly welcome in view of the vast differences in culture and society between America and Vietnam, which would pose the first problem for a propagandist, as stated earlier: understanding the enemy environment in order to attack it most effectively. The corollary of this though, is that a wrong assumption on the part of a propagandist and the resulting dissemination of a 'wrong' propaganda line to another society can have the effect of strengthening an
opposing united front where such dunity might have been fragile. The other result is to diminish the effectiveness of future propaganda, in proportion to the gravity of the original error.'"

In a state of war, a liberal democracy is thus usually at a practical disadvantage compared with more tightly controlled regimes, which practice censorship as a matter of course and suppress opposition, and can therefore create an impression of national unity whether or not it actually exists. When liberal democracies do introduce censorship it is an obvious departure from the norm, requires justification and may be regarded with suspicion. Nevertheless, it has been tolerated in wartime; justified on the grounds of denying the enemy information which might be useful in any way - a definition which can be interpreted very widely. And censorship can aid a propagandist considerably, allowing him to create the optimum picture of his own state and to suppress the dissemination of disturbing features - for example low morale or any difficulties experienced in maintaining the war effort, or containing the spread of enemy propaganda (total censorship being practically impossible to achieve in any society).'"

Given that liberal democracies have practiced censorship in war, even though this strikes at the foundations of democracy, the question must be asked as to whether there are different 'types' of war which make it more, or less, easy to justify - and to be accepted as
justifying - censorship and the loss of certain democratic rights.

The sort of war that has been waged twice in this century - the total wars of World Wars I and II - were seen by the democracies as justifying the sacrifice of all activity except that directed to pursuing and winning the war. The loss of complete freedom of expression, or the monopoly of information output by the government were accepted as part of the war effort. In World War II particularly, the danger to the nation was felt to be sufficiently acute (bombs do speak louder than words) to warrant the suspension of some democratic rights in order that the battle might be fought more effectively and thus allow the nation a better chance of survival.

This was the crux of World War II and the mark of its distinction; it was a matter of survival in the face of a direct threat - physical destruction - and the longer-term threat contained in the thought of defeat: the destruction by the enemy, possibly once and for all, of the life and values that had been accepted as of right. Both World Wars I and II, however, had an element in common with many other conflicts: they began, nominally, because of treaty obligations. But in the case of Britain and France, especially in World War II, the initial threat to an ally (Poland) was perceived as the beginning of a threat to their own physical existence. Whereas in other conflicts, the correlation has not always been so direct and immediate between treaty obligations, requiring
assistance to a beleagured ally, and the threat to home territory. In the latter circumstance, principles, without the threat of physical destruction, must be the basis for justifying the fight. This could have a number of consequences. Firstly, the reasons for fighting and the consequences of either victory or defeat may not be so clearcut, and therefore the case for entering the conflict— that is, the precise nature of, and reasons for obligations to an ally—must be all the more clearly explained. This applies even if the conflict involves only a professional volunteer army and not conscripts. If conscripts are concerned then the need for clear explanation becomes even more acute, for the war then touches more than just those who choose the possibility of fighting and death as a job— the ordinary citizen becomes involved.

Secondly, the very distancing of the conflict from home territory might tend to sharpen the focus on troop casualty rates and the reasons for the conflict. And thus, at a time when the political leadership may be emphasising the need for a united stand, using the media to convey its message, the media might also engage in a debate on the conflict. Though the media may well support the leadership's position— and is quite likely to initially if only because the first interpretation of events is likely to be the government's— the capacity obviously exists from the beginning for government and media to pull in opposite directions. The initial factors likely to
prevent this happening are the practical and emotional ones of backing the political leadership, particularly once it has set a course, and then backing the fighting troops. The urge to close ranks and not to undermine the war effort takes precedence and generates the endeavour to maintain morale at home and at the front. However, the length of a conflict, its nature and extent, and its remoteness (in terms of both distance and its isolation from domestic life) can make inroads on these emotional responses. This is the time when a more concrete/rational justification is most needed, in order to sustain emotion and morale. In particular the length of a conflict and troop casualties seem to be factors which can most affect public morale.  

In some cases, for example the Korean War, high troop losses may act as a stimulant to continuing the conflict (assuming negotiation/withdrawal is an option), for once troops are killed it becomes that much more difficult to withdraw, because to do so would appear to invalidate their deaths. The common reaction is to plough grimly on in order to justify the losses and gain something from the investment in lives. But in some other cases, even though heavy losses have been incurred, the length and nature of the conflict and its effects on society have eventually resulted in a serious split between those wishing to continue ploughing on, and those prepared by this time to cut the losses. The Vietnam War was the cause of such a split in American society.
From even such a cursory analysis as this, it is apparent that a number of factors may affect continuing support for, or hostility against, such a war. It is the handling of these factors, their inter-relationship and their effect on public morale that a propagandist seeks to control, within his general operational environment.

B.) Immediate Operational Environment

In chapter 4 of *Propaganda and Psychological Warfare*, Qualter sets out the factors a successful propagandist must take into account when planning a propaganda campaign:

1) The size and broad intellectual level of the audience.
2) The existing attitudes of the audience to both the situation envisaged by the propagandist, and their attitude to the latter himself.
3) The extent to which the audience has access to the various media of communication.
4) The presence of competing propaganda and other non-propaganda influences.'

These form both the immediate factors with which, and the parameters within which, a propagandist must work. To a large extent, whether or not they are accurately assessed, they shape the propaganda message. And this is, or should be, a continuous process, taking account of the constant flow of information, about public opinion (at home and abroad, and including the media here) and about other government's views. Only by checking reactions constantly can a propagandist assess whether his message
is having the desired effect; whether changes need to be made and in which direction; and which rival influences at any particular time it will be necessary to counteract.¹⁹

Within this broad framework both long term/strategic aims and short term/tactical manoeuvres are planned and executed. The long term optimum aim for a propagandist must be to have his interpretation of reality/events believed by his audience - no easy ask in a democracy with varied sources of information. Nevertheless, even if his interpretation of certain incidents is queried, it is vital (and still possible) to aim for, and maintain, the general long term goal of credibility. Without this attribute, even if rival propaganda does not hold sway or begin to gain ground (though this is unlikely), no propagandist's message will be fully believed, or possibly, believed at all.¹⁹

Assuming that an operational level of credibility exists (and although the ideal is to control completely the picture an audience receives) then according to the pressure of events, and probably, other viewpoints - both fluctuating variables - the emphases in a propaganda message can be altered to explain or counter particular points. These are tactical manoeuvres, and they may or may not be incorporated into the long-term propaganda message. In an ideal propaganda world, whether or not they endure would be under a propagandist's control: as the democratic environment is far from ideal in this respect, it can happen that what was envisaged as a short-term propaganda
palliative must become a long-term aim because the point is remembered and reiterated by influential sections of the audience, for instance, the media or other governments. This certainly happened during Vietnam War when the question of negotiations came up. The Administration made a statement on the matter, for a variety of reasons, partly tactical, partly as a response to public/media pressure, and thereafter had to keep relating and interpreting many of its subsequent moves in the light of its publicly expressed attitude to negotiations. Ultimately the gulf between the Administration's views on negotiations and its ways of achieving such talks - primarily through escalation - and its refusal of various opportunities for actual negotiations (for a variety of reasons which were not always entirely comprehensible to observers) proved impossible for the Administration to reconcile, or the public to accept.\(^2\) (The precise aims of the Johnson Administration's propaganda campaign, what it was trying to achieve and the methods it used, are delineated in Chapter 2).

The above forms the immediate working environment for a propagandist, but the fourth of Qualter's points contains a very important factor, in addition to competing propaganda: "other non-propaganda influences". Into this category come a whole series of inter-connecting factors, the most important of which is the international environment that a propagandist must work in. Interwoven
are historical, political and economic factors which affect the way other nations view another nation's foreign policy of war. And the way a particular nation's policy or war is viewed by others can go some way to helping or hindering that nation in its aims. In ensuring that his nation's foreign policy or war is viewed as favourably as possible by other nations, these other factors must be taken into account by a propagandist. Not to do so - unless the opinion of allies is of no interest (a rare phenomenon) - is to court disaster.

C. Organization of U.S. Propaganda

The principal agency for disseminating U.S. propaganda abroad is the United States Information Agency (USIA), with a headquarters in Washington and posts in U.S. Embassies overseas. This is the agency which is effectively intended to support the U.S. Administration's foreign policy objectives, and more generally aims to 'sell' America to the rest of the world. To aid USIA in its task of supporting American policy, USIA is represented in a number of committees and groups with a foreign policy-making function and thus there should be a USIA contribution about propaganda issues to the decision-making process. In theory this should provide an adequate framework for using USIA's expertise both on the likely reception of U.S. foreign policy decisions by foreign governments and publics and in planning and disseminating propaganda to foreign audiences, and for this expertise to influence U.S. foreign policy. However,
for a number of reasons it appears that during this period USIA's role in the foreign policy process was more that of a supporter of policies already determined by Johnson and his top advisers. Thus in his comparative study of the United States' and United Kingdom's propaganda agencies, Black noted that President Johnson used the formal foreign-policy making machinery - in which USIA was represented - less than his predecessor:

"President Johnson gradually tailored the system for conducting U.S. foreign relations to his own preferences. For example, he made even less use of formal National Security Council meetings than did his predecessor, preferring to meet his top national security advisers more informally."  

Concerning the role that the President played in USIA's status and role in the government, Black observed:

"The nature of the U.S. system of government places the focus of attention regarding the 'executive branch' on one man - the President. For the USIA, relations with the President are particularly vital since the Agency's status and place in the execution of foreign policy largely depends on the Chief Executive's view of its role and the support he provides. The USIA has no domestic constituency or pressure group to fight for it and hence the need for Presidential support and interest becomes greater."  

After describing the varying degrees of interest that former presidents took in USIA, Black then assessed President Johnson's view of USIA and its status under his Administration:

"Under President Johnson interest in the Agency again dropped and its status in official circles appeared to suffer somewhat as a result. From his days in the Senate, Lyndon Johnson had displayed a less than enthusiastic view of the Agency and its personnel and he tended not to hide these feelings. Perhaps it was simply a 'let down' after the 'high flying' years which immediately preceded, but under President
Johnson the USIA appeared to lose some of the 'self-confidence' it had begun to show only very recently before.\(^25\)

Thomas Sorensen, a former deputy director of USIA during Johnson's Administration put the case more bluntly, noting that Johnson's viewed USIA as:

"...an oversized mimeograph machine spewing out information, rather than as a source of expert counsel in Washington and a means of persuasion abroad."\(^26\)

Endeavouring to arrive at an overall assessment of USIA's role in foreign-policy making, after a reorganisation aimed at strengthening the Secretary of State's role in March 1966, Black offered the following estimate:

"Apart from the knowledge that the USIA was a full member of these various groups, it is as yet difficult to assess the role it played in their proceedings. It is probable, however, that Agency participation did not have any great impact on the particular policies under consideration, but at least it provided an opportunity to bring foreign opinion factors directly into the discussions."\(^27\)

Thus it appears that USIA, the Administration's formal propaganda apparatus, played a secondary, rather mechanical role during this period, with the President and his advisers maintaining firm control of policy. This estimate is corroborated in *The Pentagon Papers*, where there is considerable evidence of Johnson's top advisers considering the propaganda implications of decisions and planning the public relations/propaganda campaign accordingly.\(^28\) And in any case, as Black observed, the U.S. government structure concentrates attention on the President, and therefore, what the President, or his top advisers said, constituted the highest-level expression of
U.S. propaganda - USIA spread the word. Thus President Johnson's and his top advisers' speeches and activities, their press briefings and those of the departmental spokesmen, informal talks with journalists, meetings with other politicians, both domestic and foreign, all formed the fabric of the U.S. official propaganda campaign during the Vietnam War. Ultimately the primary burden of justifying U.S. involvement in Vietnam devolved on Johnson as Chief Executive. Thus domestic and foreign opinion focussed on these speeches and press briefings and the press reporting and analysis of them. Although USIA did eventually assume a greater propaganda role in South Vietnam, elsewhere in the field the Agency often appeared ill-equipped to support U.S. policy if events in South Vietnam moved at a faster pace than Washington's policy-making - as frequently happened. In this situation, not only was the Agency bereft of policy guidance, but the policy-makers themselves were left floundering and the U.S. propaganda effort suffered as a result.

However there was one other role which USIA played in addition to supporting U.S. foreign policy, and that was to act as a research service, commissioning public opinion surveys and analysing world media treatment of major issues from radio, wire service and Agency sources. Thus the Administration was supplied with analysis of foreign media reaction to its policies and actions concerning Vietnam.
D. Factors Aiding and Hindering American Propagandists

1. The Image of America

One of the major factors affecting the planning of a propaganda campaign is the way in which the propagandist's country is perceived by other countries, that is, the image that other countries hold of this country. This is important because in general terms images can facilitate or hinder the implementation of a state's policies, for example by forming one of the factors influencing a state's behaviour towards another state. In forming an image of a particular state decision makers take into account both the rhetoric and the current and past actions of a state.\(^1\)

In the case of America, one of the most potent images aiding U.S. propagandists was that of American 'invincibility'. This image was created primarily by U.S. participation in World Wars I and II, America being reckoned in each war to have made the decisive contribution that brought victory to her allies. Despite the post-World War II complexities of relations with the communist countries and occasional diplomatic 'defeats', at the time that U.S. involvement in Vietnam deepened into combat in 1965, America was popularly credited with never having 'lost' a war.\(^2\) In addition to this, the other enduring image associated with America, resulting from her history and strengthened by her participation in World War II against Hitler, was that of a state which pursued 'just' causes. Thus American involvement in Vietnam could
be seen in the framework of past American actions aimed, it was believed, at promoting 'justice' and ultimately 'peace'.

The foundation of American 'invincibility' lay in America's wealth and economic power, expressed in the form of world-wide commercial concerns, level of technology and possession of nuclear weapons. By virtue of the latter America was a super-power, a determining force in international relations along with the USSR. However, the image created by U.S. wealth and technology was potentially very much a double-edged weapon for U.S. propagandists. On the one hand this wealth bespoke huge resources to pursue such policies as the U.S. chose to espouse - including the Vietnam War - thereby adding to the image of will and capability. And on the other hand America's huge wealth could be seen as conferring a disproportionate advantage in a regional conflict, that is, America could be viewed as a rich 'bully' when facing smaller, poorer nations. Also America's far-flung commercial ventures, while being a natural part of a trading nation's concerns, could easily be portrayed as global exploitation and neo-colonialism by opponents of America. Overall, American wealth could be seen to be supporting an increasingly interventionist role in world affairs against the background of America's post-World War II foreign policy of 'containing' communism. It was primarily this image of American wealth allied to an active foreign policy that frequently activated the latent
anti-Americanism in other countries, an emotion that U.S. propagandists had to try and counteract.

Another important factor in the American image in the 1960's was the battle over civil rights. The civil rights disturbances forcibly highlighted the inequality and discrimination that existed in American society and focused attention on a particularly unsavoury aspect of this society. Much of the propaganda explaining U.S. support for South Vietnam, for example the claims about fighting for democracy and freedom, contrasted very strongly with events in America itself where a section of society was still fighting for basic democratic rights.

As U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War both embodied and affected most aspects of the American image, U.S. propagandists had a wide-ranging and complex task to either maintain favourable impressions of the U.S. or influence other states' perceptions of the U.S. in the desired direction.

ii.) British Factors Aiding American Propagandists

The British experience fighting the communist insurgency in Malaya proved to be useful for U.S. propagandists. Firstly, along with the Philippines insurgency, it was thought to demonstrate that the West could defeat a communist insurgency and thus boosted confidence that the U.S. could do the same in Vietnam - leaving aside the question of whether these sets of events were similar. Secondly, on the basis of the success in Malaya the Americans specifically sought to use
counter-insurgency techniques in South Vietnam that had been developed by the British in Malaya. In addition, President Kennedy and President Diem both used British advice and expertise in the form of the British Advisory Mission in Saigon. This Mission existed from 1961-1965 advising the South Vietnamese Government on pacification, and the Mission's head, R.G.K. Thompson also advised President Kennedy. When the Mission was disbanded in 1965, Britain continued to help train the South Vietnamese police through the British Embassy in Saigon. So from 1961-1965 there was a tangible British commitment to South Vietnam and this continued in a small way even after the war escalated in 1965. This small amount of aid that Britain granted to the South Vietnamese and Americans was still useful to U.S. propagandists in that it could be used to identify Britain with the South Vietnamese-U.S. cause, despite Britain's position as co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference.

Another factor aiding American propagandists with regard to Britain was the 'special relationship' between Britain and America. Although the warmth of this relationship has varied considerably in different periods, nevertheless in the 1960's British policy-makers acted on the assumption that a 'special relationship' did exist, indeed Harold Wilson took special pains to nurture the relationship as Paul Foot notes:

"...the December confrontation [with the US president] did not shake Wilson from his main scheme: that an economic military and diplomatic special relationship with the United States should form the basis of British foreign policy."
That had been the basis of Ernest Bevin's foreign policy from 1945 to 1950 and it had, as Wilson remembered it, worked very well indeed. It had also carried distinct advantages for Britain in the world's council chambers.\(^\text{27}\)

Thus in general terms U.S. propagandists could expect to encounter a more sympathetic climate in British official circles than they might in other countries. In addition, the close economic relationship that Prime Minister Harold Wilson desired certainly did materialise: the British economy was heavily dependent on American support, primarily to avoid any devaluation of sterling. Paul Foot sums up the results of this dependency:

"On 6 December, six weeks after he had assumed office, Wilson set off for Washington with one of the biggest retinues ever to accompany a Prime Minister on a trip abroad. He clearly regarded the confrontation with the American President as crucial to the whole of Labour's foreign policy - a foundation for the rebuilding of a 'special relationship' in a constructive and radical form. To his surprise, however, Johnson was abrupt, almost rude. He harped again and again on the sterling crisis and the dangers to the international monetary system in a British devaluation. He reminded Wilson that while in crisis Britain depended almost entirely on American support to keep sterling strong, and urged the British Prime Minister to construct a foreign policy in keeping with Britain's economic situation. Wilson gave assurances that Britain's 'commitments' in the Far East, the 'defence' of Singapore and other expensive idiosyncracies of Empire, would scrupulously be maintained. Above all, he promised support for the American cause in Vietnam."\(^\text{28}\)

The fact that Britain's economy was underwritten to such a large extent by America underlined the latter's role of senior partner in the relationship, with America obviously wielding the greater amount of influence and leverage. Wilson, however, had hopes that British support
for America in Vietnam would confer the ability to exercise some influence over U.S. policy in Vietnam. Despite being made aware at the earliest stages of escalation of the war that the U.S. had no intention of being swayed by its British ally, Wilson nonetheless persevered for some considerable time on these lines, until the Administration bombed oil installations near Hanoi and Haiphong in July 1966, and then helped to wreck a British peace initiative in early 1967. The sequence of events leading to the failure of this initiative further soured relations, to some extent, between the two countries. However, overall from 1965 to mid-1966 Britain's economic dependence on the U.S. coupled with Wilson's views on the 'special relationship' and on supporting his U.S. ally in the hope of political influence, meant that the official U.S. version of the war was generally publicly supported by the British Government.39

The accession to power in 1964 of the Labour Party with Harold Wilson as Prime Minister was also a particular boon to the Americans, in that the Labour government could support the U.S. without being instantly labelled war-mongering or neo-colonialist. Had the Conservatives been in power it would have been much more difficult for them - being identified with the right - to support the Americans in Vietnam, had they been so inclined. As it was, the Labour government, securely identified with peaceful international traditions, rendered what
assistance it wished to the Americans. In addition, Wilson was aided in his policy of supporting the U.S. by the fact that the first Labour government had a majority of only five in the House of Commons. This slender majority tended to define the limit of Labour MPs' - even left-wing Labour MPs - opposition in the House to the government's policies, since rebellion could have led to an unnecessarily early election.  

The above factors were of considerable importance to U.S. propagandists, but they formed only part of the picture, for there were also a number of British experiences and perceptions which posed difficulties for U.S. propagandists.

iii.) British Factors Hindering American Propagandists.

British factors hindering U.S. propagandists can be divided into perceptions about the U.S.; perceptions about U.S. war methods in Vietnam and about Vietnam in general; and Britain's diplomatic role during the Vietnam War.

Prior to America's involvement in the Vietnam War, a major source of British perceptions - particularly public perceptions - about the U.S. lay in American involvement in the two World Wars, especially the Second World War. At a time when American soldiers were stationed in Britain and were fighting alongside the Allies, the ordinary British people gained more acquaintance with 'Americans' than they would otherwise have been able to do. The relationship between the British population and the American troops and officials was complicated by the
higher standard of living generally enjoyed by American troops in Britain, for while the local population might benefit, British troops were said to resent the disparity. Although the conclusion reached by the British authorities was that public reaction was favourable, nevertheless there had been some anti-Americanism initially:

"The complaints and accusations levelled at the American troops were many. They were said to drink too heavily, to be boastful and contemptuous of the British armed forces...to be too highly paid, to corrupt young women, and to practise discrimination against their black comrades."  

It is possible that the anti-Americanism that existed for some time during the war could have grown again afterwards, with America's further growth in wealth and power. Thus British opinion polls on U.S. involvement in Vietnam could have tapped a latent anti-Americanism in some of the population rather than simple straightforward opposition to the war. The U.S. Administration was aware of this feeling in other nations when it followed opinion on the war through the channels at its disposal: contacts with foreign governments; Embassies; foreign media, both print and broadcast; and USIA surveys of foreign opinion on the war. Again, anti-Americanism, as well as attitudes to authority in the youth of the 1960's, helped fuel the anti-Vietnam War riots of this period.  

Resentment of American wealth did not end with World War II. On the contrary, America's rise in the world wealth and power structure coincided with, and was fuelled by, Britain's and the rest of Europe's decline. America's
economic strength and acquisition of nuclear weapons put her into the super-power category that Europe could not now attain after the devastation wrought by the two world wars. Thus both economically and politically Britain and the rest of Europe could not play the international roles they had done formerly: it was America which was now a principal international actor. America's role in the world was conditioned by and expressed through two major concerns: firstly, her widespread trading ventures, called neo-imperialism by some observers; and secondly her anti-communism, expressed as it was in the Truman Doctrine. Taken together these two concerns virtually guaranteed a 'high profile' American presence in world affairs. So in the 1960's American wealth and power could provoke the same resentment in some sections of the British population that it had during World War II, while her new world role, so different now from Britain's, could provoke accusations of interference in other nation's affairs.43

If the British public's attitude to America was sometimes equivocal, exhibiting both support and hostility, there was far less ambivalence about the attitude of some sections of the Labour Party to the America. Their political convictions were directly opposed to everything America epitomised and the Vietnam War was another issue to confront. Thus the Labour Government was likely to come under pressure from these sections because of its support for the U.S. on Vietnam.44
Concerning U.S. war methods, the British experience of bombing during World War II did pose some difficulties for U.S. propagandists. For, according to National Opinion Polls (NOP) in July 1966, although the British public thought the bombing of military targets in North Vietnam was justified, the public emphatically disapproved of any bombing of civilian targets. And this view was expressed when military targets around Hanoi and Haiphong - near the civilian population - had been bombed for the very first time. Interestingly, during this period of the war (1965-1966), apart from general questions on support for American policy or "American armed action" in Vietnam, neither of the major polling organisations (NOP and Gallup) in Britain investigated public reaction to U.S. bombing in South Vietnam, where civilian casualties in 1966 were already much higher. One possible reason for this apparent lacuna could be that it was assumed that what America did in South Vietnam it did with its ally's help and approval and was thus not a matter necessitating an opinion poll.

Officially the British Government viewed the U.S. bombing campaign as a legitimate method of fighting the war and having assured the U.S. Administration of support for the war it seemed unlikely that U.S. official propagandists would need to be unduly concerned about the reaction of this particular audience on this issue. However, there were clearly stated limits to the British Government's support for U.S. bombing: just as the British
public disapproved of North Vietnamese civilian casualties, so too did the Government. This meant that any change in U.S. bombing targets which might involve the civilian population could be expected to displease the British Government – a potential problem which the U.S. Administration had been made aware of by the British Government itself. Thus, although this stance of the British Government could pose difficulties for U.S. propaganda – Britain being considered America's staunchest supporter – there was advantage in the fact that the U.S. would have known for some time beforehand and would not therefore have been taken by surprise.

The bombing campaign was the most striking feature of U.S. warfare in Vietnam, but there were also other aspects which tended to focus attention more generally on the U.S. effort in Vietnam. Firstly, there was the sophisticated technology used, which was constantly developed throughout the war. Although North Vietnam came to possess a sophisticated air defence system which could pose problems for the U.S. bombers, overall, U.S. technology was ranged against an enemy using much more basic equipment in the field. Secondly, there was the way in which the U.S. military used this weaponry; in general their major concern was to maximise the weaponry's destructive capabilities, with apparently scant regard for the consequences of such a policy. The 'gas warfare' incident in March 1965 was reported to have been inspired partly by the desire of a U.S. troop commander to minimise civilian
casualties by declining to order a preparatory airstrike on a suspect village. But to Britain and the world the substitution of CS gas appeared scarcely more humane. The logic which the Americans applied to fighting the war seemed to leave little room for humanity, an approach which on occasions disturbed foreign observers, as in the case of this incident - ironic in view of the stated reasons for using the gas.47

Where perceptions of Vietnam generally were concerned, most of the British public's information came from media sources and was only as comprehensive as the source itself. Few people in Britain, apart from journalists had first-hand knowledge of Vietnam, either North or South. There were, however, a few Labour MP's who did possess such knowledge, having visited the country in 1957. These MP's thus had a different basis from which to view the U.S. involvement and escalation - a different yardstick by which to measure U.S. information, especially on the origins of the present conflict.48

Lastly, one of the factors that U.S. propagandists had to deal with and which should have tempered British support for U.S. policies in Vietnam, particularly military policy, was Britain's co-Chairmanship, with the Soviet Union, of the Geneva Conference of 1954. This was the reason put forward to justify Britain's refusal to accede to the U.S. request to send troops to Vietnam.49 The co-Chairmanship committed both countries to finding a diplomatic solution to the war even while they supported
opposing sides (though the degrees of support differed greatly), and in Britain the Government was frequently urged to negotiate an end to the war.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1


2. For example, see Baruch A. Hazan, Soviet Propaganda, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1976), P11 - 12.


4. Ibid, P43. (Emphasis in original.)

5. Ibid, P15.


7. Qualter, Propaganda And Psychological Warfare, P29.

8. Ibid, P152.


10. See below, Section B for a discussion of the environment in which a propagandist works, based on Qualter's observations.


12. For a portrayal of censorship in Britain during World War II see Michael Balfour, Propaganda In War 1939 - 1945, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), PP57 - 63 and PP78 - 79.


14. For Walzer's comment on consent for a war see ibid, PP25 - 32.

16. Ibid.


20. For examples of the Administration's rhetoric on negotiations see Chapter 4, 5 and 6, Sections A, B and C.


24. Ibid, P118.


28. See particularly Chapters 3 and 4, Sections A and B.

29. For instance see Chapter 3, Section C on the gas warfare episode.

30. U.S.I.A. Archives hold this weekly series dating back to 1966, see "World Media Treatment Of Major Issues", issued by the Office of Policy and Research, reference U.S.I.A./IOP/R.


32. For example the diplomatic 'defeat' of Kennedy and Khruschev's meeting prior to the Berlin crisis.


35. For reflections on the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam in the press see Chapter 4, Section C.


38. Ibid, P212.

39. In an interview Sir Harold Wilson claimed that his support was "negative support", but he also held the view that "the moment we had dissociated", "we'd have had no influence whatsoever". Interview with Sir Harold Wilson by author, London, 26 June 1981.

40. See Chapter 4, Section E.


42. See U.S.I.A. Surveys mentioned in Note 30. For U.S. Embassy analysis of opposition in Britain to the war see Chapters 4, 5 and 6, Section D.

44. See Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, Section E.


46. Chapters 3 and 6, Section D particularly reflect the concern of the British Government over this issue.

47. U.S. methods of fighting the war and the effect on the U.S. propaganda effort are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. For a discussion of the gas warfare incident see Chapter 3, Section C.

48. For example a Parliamentary Labour Party delegation visited North and South Vietnam in May 1957. The delegation was composed of William Warbey, Lena Jaeger (who wrote a column in The Guardian) and Harold Davies (who became Parliamentary Private Secretary to Prime Minister Harold Wilson in 1967).


50. See Chapters 3, 5 and 6, Sections C and E.
CHAPTER 2

MAIN LINES AND PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN PROPAGANDA ON THE WAR

The main problem that the Administration faced (a problem that it inherited but thereafter increased far beyond that legacy) and which made the Administration's propaganda campaign a complex operation, was that it was fighting an undeclared and remote war during peacetime. Though the North Vietnamese and Vietcong waged 'total war', the effort made by the South Vietnamese varied and the Americans certainly did not wage 'total' war. Except for those either fighting the war, administering it, or providing war materials for it, the majority of Americans were not directly involved in the war. The tempo of their lives continued undisturbed - unless they chose to concern themselves with the morality of the conflict. The economy of the country was not put on a war footing - guns and butter could be provided, so said the Administration - and politics revolved around a great many other problems in addition to that of winning the war.

This, together with the type of war fought, had a great impact on the type of information campaign that the Administration pursued at home and abroad. Of course propaganda policy was meant to complement the Administration's war policy. The results frequently backfired, but the initial aim, as with any such campaign, was to control public opinion and to create a climate
enabling the Administration to prosecute the war to its desired pattern. However, as the war dragged on the Administration's aim rather than controlling public opinion became increasingly that of placating public opinion.

Continuing the low key approach that had characterised past American involvement in South Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson's Administration initiated an information programme that laid great stress on information about the enemy - their culpability, tactics and ultimate aims - but which said far less about the Administration's aims and tactics. The former stress would be expected, in order to explain the reasons for the Administration's broad policy, but the lack of detail about the Administration's own policy was intended to conceal its plans for escalation and also avoid any possibility of public pressure. The aims that the Administration laid claim to in the early stages of the conflict in 1965 appeared to be quite modest: honouring its commitments (and previous administrations' commitments) to South Vietnam in the latter's fight to remain independent and free; standing firm against communist North Vietnam's aggression, although seeking "no wider war"; and generally ensuring America's own security in repelling aggression in Asia. In Johnson's simple language, the U.S. goal was "peace in Southeast Asia" which would "come only when aggressors leave their neighbors in peace."
These aims, as well as forming the Administration's early 'goals', also contained its initial public articulation of the Administration's perception of the conflict and will therefore be discussed in greater detail later, when the accuracy and utility of these perceptions will be assessed. The point here is that though the Administration gave some indication of its aims and reasons for involvement in South Vietnam, nothing was said publicly about how these vague phrases were to be backed-up. In this way the Administration laid the foundation for building up a picture of enemy aggression and infiltration into South Vietnam for its audience which would justify any future action of the Administration. At the same time care was taken to avoid either alerting or alarming the audience into thinking that a major war was in the offing. However, in case events should escalate, the blame for any escalation was shifted in advance onto the enemy, thus absolving the Administration of any war-like intent, hence the oft-repeated slogan of the Johnson Administration about seeking no wider war. Thus early American official propaganda concentrated on establishing a pattern of enemy action and American/South Vietnamese reaction. This approach initially minimised the American role in the war both as an initiator of events and policies and also as a fighting partner in the conflict.

This pattern of concentrating attention on the enemy was mirrored in the Administration's early method of
presenting information during 1965. Announcements about enemy actions or broad statements on American policy regarding commitments to allies, or later, on negotiations, were almost always the province of the top echelons of the Administration - usually the President or the Secretaries of State or Defense. Statements by these figures were of course guaranteed wide coverage by the media: the information -or lack of information - in their statements would be dissected carefully. By contrast, after the first reprisal bombing raids on North Vietnam in February 1965, which were announced by the White House and the President, information on the details of American policy and actions on a daily basis, including the Rolling Thunder bombing strikes, was frequently relayed by relatively minor officials to the public. This would have been a normal enough arrangement in a conflict, except for the fact that some major American policy decisions were introduced as mere changes in the details of a current policy by these minor officials. This 'low key' method of announcing major decisions frequently caused a furore in the press, thereby affording the Administration even more unwelcome publicity than would have been engendered by a top level announcement.

For instance, it was via a routine press conference in June 1965 that the State Department Press Officer announced the vital change in the role of American troops in South Vietnam, from static defence of American installations, to combat. Although initially the new role
of the U.S. troops was to support the South Vietnamese Army, when and where they were needed, this was recognized by the press to be the thin end of the wedge and to signal a major policy change. Not unnaturally the press, particularly in America, was uniformly astounded, and in most cases angry, to learn of this decision in this manner. This 'quiet' approach to public information by the Administration was also the subject of comment in British newspapers, though in not so caustic terms as the U.S. press, as befitted the press of a country not directly involved in the conflict. However, even the Daily Telegraph, a stalwart supporter of the Administration's Vietnam policy, suggested in an editorial that President Johnson would have to be more 'communicative', especially now that casualties would start to mount, unless he wished to find himself in serious trouble.  

Occasionally this pattern of public relations varied, but by and large the Administration's preferred strategy was to fight the war with as little publicity as possible, though of course negotiation offers from the Administration were usually well advertised. Unless a particular action was likely to be so dramatic that it could not be played down or disguised (and some of these types of action were not recognised early enough by the Administration) or unless the government had a particular reason for desiring widespread publicity, then camouflage was the usual practice.
The results of this policy were certainly criticised by the interested press in both America and Britain from an early stage. However this criticism, in most cases, was initially not levelled at the Administration in order to demonstrate opposition to it and the war, but to convey the feeling of confusion and uncertainty that the Administration was engendering in its audience, and to warn of possible adverse general public reaction if the Administration was not more communicative. It was later in the war that there was more general criticism in the British press, centring on the war itself and U.S. methods of fighting the war, for the British press did not have the emotional pressures to support the Administration and the war - come what may - that the American press obviously had°. Though there was a feeling on occasions that the Administration was being less than forthcoming and telling less than the whole truth, it was not until the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 that the extent of the Administration's efforts to control the public's perceptions of the conflict became apparent, and of course the meticulous planning accompanying most stages of the war.

So, for some considerable length of time the Johnson Administration was able to count on the goodwill of the press in America and Britain, resulting in a favourable interpretation being put on most Administration statements and actions. Any propaganda errors during this period therefore were purely the result of official ineptitude
and miscalculation, and not due to an intense and hostile press scrutiny seeking to stir up trouble for, or resentment against, the Administration and the war. Indeed, the feedback that the American Government received through the press should have been of great practical value in alerting it to the aspects of information policy requiring modification. Yet in comparatively few instances did official statements appear at the right moment in relation to public comment. Undoubtedly this is a difficult exercise to accomplish without falling into the trap of being accused of making statements purely for press and public consumption, intended only to allay public fears and not therefore intended to serve as a true indication of policy. But somehow the Administration, even though few of its statements were of such a timely nature, fell into this trap with consummate ease. By the end of 1966 the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger could write:

"Expansive rhetoric is the occupational disease of national leaders. But serious leaders preserve a relationship, however tenuous, between rhetoric and reality. One cannot remember a more complete disassociation between words and responsibility than in the United States Government today: Official speeches are always manipulative in part, but now they are almost nothing else."

Fortunately the press in America still generally supported the Administration's stated aims in South Vietnam and were therefore more inclined to give the Administration the benefit of the doubt — unlike Schlesinger — although their patience and faith were tried
hard. But by this time the British press had joined the opposition to American involvement.

In brief the aims of American official propaganda were:

First, to persuade its audience to perceive the conflict as the Administration wished it to be perceived, whether or not this view coincided with the actual perceptions of the policy-making members of the Administration.

Officially the war was a case of North Vietnamese aggression - backed by China - against South Vietnam. In setting the conflict within this framework the Administration required that its interpretation of a number of related facts be accepted: that the 17th Parallel marked the boundary between two separate countries, and that the North Vietnamese were therefore violating South Vietnamese sovereignty, that is, that the conflict was not a civil war. This view in turn required a reinterpretation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements which had stated that the 17th Parallel was a temporary demarcation line, until reunification was achieved. The assumption that the problem was caused by North Vietnamese aggression necessitated a new look at South Vietnamese history and current policies, in order to minimize the political unrest in the south that had existed almost as long as the state itself and to further deny the possibility that the conflict had an affinity with, and the roots of, a civil war. Additionally, the Administration obviously felt that
it had to produce evidence for its audience of North Vietnamese aggression and infiltration. This was expected to serve the purpose of absolving the Administration of responsibility for escalating the war: the blame for this was laid squarely on the North Vietnamese, while the Administration insisted that it simply reacted each time to a new, higher level of enemy activity. According to this view of events, it was assumed that enemy aggression conferred on the South Vietnamese the right to seek assistance from its ally America and thus translated their actions into self-defence.

The second requirement of American official propaganda was to convince its audience of the necessity for, and importance of, this war and the increasing American commitment to it. All wars must be justified to those required to fight it, even those wars in which the population is under physical attack and in which immediate catastrophe would follow defeat. A war fought as far away as Vietnam was from America, in a land to which America had not had a long-standing commitment, and during which the American population would never be attacked, required careful handling from the start. Thus the Administration emphasised the importance of the Vietnam war in an international context. The war was portrayed as a test case for all national wars of liberation rather than just a localised conflict, and was also effectively presented as being subject to the domino theory: to lose the Vietnam war, so the Administration's argument ran, would expose
the surrounding countries to communist subversion and subsequent conquest. The primary threat to U.S. and world stability was seen to come from China, and according to the Administration, what was threatened by Chinese ambitions in Southeast Asia was not only South Vietnam's independence, but also American national security and peace in general, and it was these high stakes that necessitated the commitment to Vietnam.¹⁴ President Johnson apparently believed in this thesis, for in his memoirs the UN Secretary General U Thant observed after meeting Johnson:

"I do not remember having met any head of state or head of government so informal and warm toward me, and at the same time so juvenile in his concept of international developments. He once told me that if South Vietnam were to fall to the communists, then the next target would be Hawaii!"¹⁵

The projection of a regional and then a global framework onto the conflict increased its importance beyond the immediate boundaries of the war. Those countries in the vicinity such as South Korea, the Philippines and two further away, Australia and New Zealand, felt themselves justified in actually joining in on the South Vietnamese side, on the assumption that if South Vietnam fell then they would be next in line. If on occasion a more concrete factor was needed for justification, then the SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation) Treaty was cited as the legal basis for intervention, requiring that allies render what assistance they could to South Vietnam.¹⁶
America's European allies, while far enough away to avoid being engulfed in the first wave of falling dominoes, nevertheless took a keen interest in the outcome and rendered all the verbal assistance that they felt America's efforts on their behalf demanded, apart from France which deplored the U.S. commitment. Occasionally the Administration made it known that it considered its European allies and audience - especially the British - to be taking insufficient action towards securing their own future in the face of the communist menace: diplomatic solidarity was the least the Europeans could provide, but troops would have been a more convincing indicator that they appreciated the importance of the war.17

One of the problems in pursuing this propaganda line though, was that while the Administration wished to raise its audience's consciousness of the war's importance in order to secure support, it did not want the audience too concerned about the possibility of a general conflagration resulting from America's involvement in Vietnam. Not, that is, if this resulted in public discussion of a possible World War III and so generated pressure on America to negotiate, rather than generalised pressure on the communists.18 This was a classic case for a test of a propagandist's skills: the need to be able arouse a sufficient degree of fear/concern in the audience and then to be able to control and channel the concern in the way desired by the propagandist, that is, to support the propagandist's policies.
The other strands in the Administration's arguments on the value of the war centred on its commitments to its South Vietnamese ally, and by extension, its commitments to its other allies. The Johnson administration justified its actions partly by referring to three previous President's pledges to South Vietnam, stating that this present administration had inherited the problem of Vietnam, not made it. The corollary to this view was that while the current policies for solving the Vietnam problem might differ in degree from previous policies, nevertheless they were essentially of the same kind. This line of defence was used by the Administration against any observers who questioned in any way the commitment to South Vietnam (the substance of such questioning is discussed later) and for a while this explanation was generally accepted by its audience.¹ Elaborating on this theme American official propaganda also wove in the idea that if the former commitment to South Vietnam were to be reneged on, then other allies around the world would immediately begin to doubt the American will to honour other treaty obligations. Defeat in Vietnam might then cause these same nations to doubt the American capability to help others.²⁰

Thirdly, the last broad goal of the Administration's propaganda effort was to try and convey the lasting impression - despite any actions pointing to a different conclusion - that its intentions were peaceful and that the use of force was a justified last resort. In this way
the escalation of the conflict was blamed on the communists: if the Administration desired peace, then war was obviously not its fault. Subsequent escalatory steps were similarly explained away with the added justification that each step was in search of peace. And the Administration certainly hoped that that each new escalatory step would bring 'peace' on its terms. The danger was that observers would finally realise that the Administration's actions could only be seen as straightforward escalation rather than 'peace' steps or reaction to communist originated escalation. This in turn would pose a problem for the Administration on the issue of negotiations, for if U.S. policy was perceived to be offensive rather than defensive then observers might also perceive U.S. policy itself as an obstacle to negotiations, and public pressure could then build up for the Administration to modify its policy in order to achieve such negotiations.

The lack of negotiations was publicly said to be the result of communist intransigence. The explanation for the communist attitude tied in neatly with Administration views on escalation. It was agreed that as long as the communists felt they could win the war outright (the monsoon season was said to be their best period) then they would not negotiate. So the logical outcome for U.S. policy of such a projection of the communists' strategic thinking was to demonstrate to them that they could not achieve a military victory. Hence the numbers of troops
poured in and the progressive tightening of the screw through air strikes: it was argued that once the North Vietnamese realised the error of their aggression and ceased fighting, then the Administration would stop the bombing that the communist had made necessary in the first place. There were two bombing pauses in this period, in May 1965 and December 1965/January 1966, during which the Administration said that it was waiting for a sign from the North Vietnamese that they were willing to bargain, but for one reason or another privately, and one reason publicly - the communist refusal to negotiate - these opportunities, came to nothing.

To further complicate the issue - and this issue did appear murky despite the Administration's repeated attempts to simplify it for public consumption - the attitude of China was initially assumed, by both the Administration and observers, to be crucial in determining the success or failure of negotiation bids. In addition, as Soviet aid to the North Vietnamese increased, the Administration had to ponder the Kremlin's ideas of what was in Hanoi's, and its own, best interests. The practical effect of apparently having to deal with at least two, and sometimes three countries' ideas on negotiations should have been a propaganda bonus for the Administration. For some considerable time it was, because the confusion and disagreement concerning the issue of negotiations that surfaced publicly from time to time between the communist countries involved - particularly in the context of the
ideological rivalry between Russia and China — was perceived to constitute an obstacle that would have to be overcome before negotiations could start. And while Hanoi was seen to be heavily influenced in its policy by Peking, which flatly rejected talks, then the Administration hardly needed to say much more to be able to put the onus on the communists for the lack of progress towards negotiations. While this was happening, Communist statements were invaluable for American propagandists.

The various devices that were used in American official propaganda to build up the desired image of the war will now be discussed in detail, together with the problems that U.S. official propagandists faced. Some of these problems were simply a part of the war, while others were created by the propagandists.

A.) Historical Aspects and Analogies

i.) The Geneva Agreements of 1954

The most striking feature of both the American and the North Vietnamese public negotiating positions was that they agreed that the Geneva Agreements of 1954 formed an acceptable basis for peace. Both countries argued that if the other side had honoured these Agreements then there would have been no conflict and hence, a return to the Agreements now would remove the cause for hostilities. However, this was as far as their mutual understanding extended: their interpretations of the provisions of the 1954 Agreements differed radically, as might be expected
from opponents claiming the same source as authority for their actions.\textsuperscript{28}

The American interpretation initially laid its greatest emphasis on the independence of South Vietnam - as a political entity. Thus the provisional demarcation line of the 1954 Agreements became an International boundary for the South Vietnamese and Americans, and South Vietnam, rather than being a part of a temporarily divided country, became a sovereign state. Elections to reunite North and South Vietnam should have been held in 1956, but were not. The then head of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh diem, refused, with American support, to hold them, claiming that the conditions for free and fair elections did not pertain; that is, that North Vietnam would rig the elections. However, several times after Diem's repeated refusal to cooperate in the matter of elections, the North Vietnamese contacted the Geneva Conference co-Chairman to complain about the deadlock and pressed for country-wide elections.\textsuperscript{29} Whether or not the South Vietnamese and American claim about probable election rigging could be supported by reference to the Geneva Agreements, the fact is that for future propaganda purposes the South's refusal to participate in any election arrangements was a decision that might be hard to justify in anything but a favourable climate of opinion. It was also a major potential, if not at the time actual, propaganda weapon for the North Vietnamese. While the American and South Vietnamese version of events was trusted, then factors such as these
might remain hidden, or if known might be overlooked in favour of the overall American interpretation. However, these actions and interpretations could be difficult to defend when set against the provisions of the 1954 Agreements.  

Additionally, the Administration's method of handling infringements of the Geneva Agreement provisions was to highlight North Vietnamese violations while omitting any mention of its own and South Vietnam's transgressions. Again, while the Administration was trusted as a source of information on the conflict, then its version of this aspect prevailed; but there was easily-available documentary evidence of the infringements committed by both sides in the dispute. This fact alone should have been enough to make the Administration take a more accurate approach to such allegations. However, not content with simply living with documents which could, if quoted in full, cause doubts to be registered which might then influence attitudes to future official explanations, the Administration actually used one such report to buttress its own case. Through the simple expedient of quoting only the sections of the International Control Commission's report dealing with North Vietnam, the sole blame for violating the treaty and the origins of the war were traced back to the North Vietnamese decision to intervene in South Vietnam's affairs and to support the Vietcong.
This method used by the Administration to justify its course of action is a difficult one to handle even in the best of conditions. The 'best' of conditions would consist in the type of information control exercised by totalitarian regimes, where the full report would never be available to any section of the public, merely selected quotations. For the Administration to try and use this method in an environment in which censorship could never be imposed on the relevant document, either at home or abroad, was short-sighted, at the very least.

Nevertheless, due to a general early presumption in favour of the American and South Vietnamese cause, this ploy worked with most observers, for a while. However, as with the earlier examples of American interpretation, this approach was quite obviously potentially damaging to the Administration - even more so, because this was deliberate distortion and, therefore, not even dependable as one government's perception/interpretation against another government's version. Again, this particular element was used as an important part of the Administration's arguments in proving North Vietnamese culpability. However, once it was pointed out that both sides had infringed the Geneva Agreements, then this alone could damage the Administration's credibility in the eyes of the public.

11. The Lessons of Munich and Korea

The theme of aggression was a major component of the Administration's propaganda campaign. Obviously North
Vietnamese aggression was the foremost element to be stressed, and its effects, if it was to continue unchecked, explained to the public. China's - and subsequently the Soviet Union's - support for the Vietcong/North Vietnamese immediately widened the scope of the aggression and the propaganda framework was correspondingly widened. The conflict was thus pictured as a vital episode in the fight to preserve freedom and democracy and to stem the advance of world communism. In this way the Administration linked and likened the onslaught of the communist 'bloc' to that of the Axis powers before and during World War II: 'Munich' was used as a propaganda device that operated on several levels. 

Firstly it was intended to recall explicitly the dishonour associated with that event, particularly since World War II; the betrayal of a country which led inexorably - the general feeling is now - to the later miseries of the war. By the same token it also summed-up the short-sightedness of the policy of appeasement - not only was it dishonourable but it also failed to check the appetite of the aggressor; indeed it merely increased Hitler's desire for, and expectation of, further triumphs. Thus the emotions of Munich - shame, failure and stupidity - were transferred and translated by the Administration into a refusal to commit the same mistake in the Vietnam War.

Secondly, the linkage of Munich and South Vietnam, in attributing to North Vietnam and China (and world
The expansionist and unlimited desires of Hitler's regime, was intended to legitimise American actions, not only on behalf of South Vietnam but also on behalf of other American allies - throughout the world. The struggle in Indochina was invested with the same historical significance as World War II, with the difference that the aim now was the prevention of another war on that scale, by, if necessary, fighting a smaller war first.

Thirdly, 'Munich' at the time meant the destruction and denial of freedom in one particular country and the later fight to retain freedom and democracy in others. Used in connection with South Vietnam, 'Munich' symbolized the will of, and necessity for, the Americans and South Vietnamese to fight for the same freedom and democracy, but without the initial betrayal that 'Munich' also represented. This particular analogy was much used in Administration rhetoric, whether the primary purpose of a statement was to stress peaceful intentions or a determination to pour men and money into the conflict: most Administration statements on the war included both of these elements. Two important occasions, when Lyndon Johnson used the 'Munich' analogy occurred during 1965. The first speech, at Johns Hopkins University in April, contained the Administration's offer of 'unconditional' discussions, but also included the following words:

"We are also there because there are great stakes in the balance. Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Viet-Nam would bring an end to the conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central
lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied. To withdraw from one battle field means only to prepare for the next. We must say in Southeast Asia - as we did in Europe - in the words of the Bible: 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.'”

Approximately four months later at the end of July, in an address announcing an increase in the number of combat troops destined for South Vietnam, the necessity for additional troops later and, therefore, an increase in the draft over a period of time, Johnson again used the 'Munich' analogy as a justification and an emotional rallying call:

"We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there is no one else. Nor would surrender in Viet-Nam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueler conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history." 

The use of such emotive events is intended to short-circuit thought among the audience - to produce feeling from hearing, not analysis. For along with the analogy - if it is at all apt or relevant - comes a set of emotions and values that are shared, if the correct calculations have been made by the propagandist, among the audience. The danger of course when using this type of basic propaganda technique is that it is open to attack on the grounds that the sets of circumstances are totally different and have no bearing on one another - even if the events bear sufficient resemblance to make an analogy resonably apt. The analogy is useful for only so long as it stirs up the required sympathy and identification with
a cause. But if sympathy begins to wane in an audience generally and, or, there are observers (who need not necessarily be critics) capable of analysing official rhetoric and making their views known more widely, then this particular propaganda technique is probably the easiest and weakest link in the chain of arguments to attack.  

Korea (and also, sometimes, Greece, Iran, Turkey, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Formosa Strait, Cuba, and Lebanon), which was at least in the same part of the world as Vietnam, was referred to as a successful example of curtailing aggression through firmness. Again, the use of this war analogy simply assumed that the two events, Korea and Vietnam, were similar. The picture was blurred by concentrating mainly on the aspects of aggression and freedom:

"In the Philippines, Korea, Indonesia and elsewhere we were on the side of national independence. For this was also consistent with our belief in the right of all people to shape their own destinies. That principle soon received another test in the fire of war. And we fought in Korea, so that South Korea might remain free. Now, in Vietnam, we pursue the same principle which has infused American action in the Far East for a quarter of a century."

This statement was a masterly piece of obfuscation. South Vietnamese political wrangling was ignored; and the roots of the conflict were assumed to lie in aggression by another state - not a part of a temporarily divided country. By the same implication the principle at stake was the right of the South Vietnamese to their national
independence. Finally, the differing nature of the two 
wars was ignored. The Korean War began through a 
straightforward invasion of South Korea and a series of 
conventional engagements, as opposed to the origins of the 
Vietnam War, which the Administration, despite its later 
propaganda, had earlier acknowledged to be an 
insurgency\[40\], but which it now claimed was overwhelmingly 
a product of North Vietnamese and Chinese territorial 
ambition.

In addition, the Korean experience was used when the 
subject of negotiations was raised by the Administration, 
or discussed by the press. This example was cited both by 
observers who were general supporters of U.S. involvement 
in the war, and those less enthusiastic about some aspects 
of the venture.\[41\] The lesson learned then, and reiterated 
during the Vietnamese War, centred on the negotiations in 
1951 in Panmunjom. These negotiations dragged on for two 
years during which time, it was felt, the communists took 
unfair advantage of the supposed lull and continued to 
wage war by way of numerous local engagements along the 
front line. Whenever negotiations were mentioned in the 
context of Vietnam, Panmunjom and the loss of American and 
allied lives were cited, or implied, to justify the 
Administration's pre-negotiation stance: cessation of 
North Vietnamese/Vietcong infiltration into, and activity 
in, South Vietnam before American bombing would stop and 
negotiations could begin on how to achieve a durable peace 
with an independent South Vietnam able to determine its
own future. Notwithstanding these terms, the Administration publicly insisted that it was always ready for 'unconditional discussions'. But the Administration's stance was later undermined on two grounds: firstly that it was setting conditions for talks with the North Vietnamese; and secondly that while conducting 'unconditional discussions' the Administration would continue to bomb North Vietnam.  

iii.) The French Connection

America entered into its commitments to South Vietnam by way of aiding the French in their effort to defeat Ho Chi Minh's Communist regime, between the years 1946-1954. After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 and the subsequent temporary partition of Vietnam, the Americans then became the principal supporters of South Vietnam. France quietly faded from that scene to engage in the Algerian Civil War, which lasted until 1962. After the end of that war France became much more active in international diplomacy, re-emerging vigorously at about the time that the Administration's commitment to South Vietnam hardened into the aerial bombing of North Vietnam and subsequent actions.

The effects of the links between France, South Vietnam and America were important in propaganda terms. For the Americans could be seen as following in the footsteps of the French, who had fought a war against the Vietminh - after signing a Treaty in 1946 recognising the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a free state within the
French Union. During World War II numbers of former colonies assumed that they would gain national independence once the war was over. Under Ho Chi Minh, the Vietminh had given some aid to the Americans against the Japanese, on the assumption that Vietnam would afterwards gain some form of autonomy. During World War II, America certainly championed the cause of national independence which meant the disintegration of the colonial empires, primarily of France and Britain. Yet from 1950 onwards America poured vast sums of money (paying for 80 percent of the French war effort in Vietnam according to some estimates) into helping the French regain a foothold in part of its empire. Of course America could claim that it was still supporting a decolonisation, for the French had been forced to take note of some nationalist demands and had set up a Vietnamese government in 1949. This, as Bernard Fall remarks in *Vietnam Witness*, transformed "what had been essentially a colonial war into a civil war". However, considering that the new Vietnamese chief of state installed by the French was the former Emperor Bao-Dai - who had even been retained in that capacity when the Japanese granted "nominal" independence to Vietnam almost at the end of the Second World War - the new state and its head seemed both artificial and a creature of the French.

While the Cold War existed and various moves by the Communist bloc added to the atmosphere of tension between East and West, then the American emphasis on the
containment of Communism as being the most important goal to pursue could be seen to be aimed at keeping other regions free - that is, non-communist. However, in pursuing this goal America would always be open to the basic criticism - and a criticism hard to counteract - that America's very foundations and ideals were being compromised in the types of regimes that the U.S. Administration was supporting in its anti-communist 'crusade' and in the effects on the countries in which the battles were fought. And where its commitment to Vietnam was concerned, the Administration was aware that America itself might appear to the Vietnamese in the guise of the old colonial power of France.

In addition to being labelled as France's successor in Indochina, the Americans had another spectre haunting them which gained public mention. This concerned the general chaos which constituted the First Indochina War leading to the defeat of the French. However once the American war machine swung into action and despite the periodic gloomy press assessments of the war, it was expected that American military might would eventually prevail over the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. However, as the war dragged on, seemingly ever more confusing and frustrating, doubts began to grow on this score and were aired in the press.

B. Political Aspects

1. The Administration's View of China, National Liberation Wars and the Domino Theory
Early in the war the most frequent method used by the Administration to connect the North Vietnamese with China, was to lay the emphasis on North Vietnamese aggression backed by China. In this way China featured in most statements containing references to North Vietnam; to a large extent the two countries were treated as inseparable, as in Johnson's announcement on 28 July, 1965:

"But we must not let this mask the central fact that this is really war. It is guided by North Viet-Nam, and it is spurred by Communist China. Its goal is to conquer the South, to defeat American power, and to extend the Asiatic dominion of communism....

Our power, therefore, is a very vital shield. If we are driven from the field in Viet-Nam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise or in American protection." 52

This version of events was sometimes reflected in the press and occasionally made its appearance in a stronger form. In November 1965 for example, the New York Times, after a brief reference to the growth of the war, stated in an editorial:

"All the time there are the Communist Chinese, sitting back calmly without losing a man; yet Communist China is the real opponent in Asia." 52

The corollary of the view of China as the real enemy or driving force behind North Vietnam was that when the question of negotiations was discussed, the attitude of China was assumed to be crucial. Given that Chinese rhetoric could only be described as abusive where America was concerned, the response of the Chinese to any American moves - whether these moves concentrated on war or peace -
was generally predictable. This was of great value to the Administration, for after American bombing pauses or speeches about possible discussions, the Chinese could invariably be relied upon to heap scorn upon these gestures, thereby exonerating the Administration's policy in the eyes of the West. The depiction of North Vietnam's refusals of U.S. negotiating terms, or peace moves, varied: sometimes Hanoi was depicted as following its own course in such refusals; sometimes the heavy hand of Peking was detected. Whichever view was taken, the Administration's protestations that it was genuinely searching for a negotiated solution were believed for a considerable length of time. This was no mean feat for a government which, to mention but a few incidents: initially ruled out negotiations in the early part of 1965; turned down a peace proposal in that year by the Secretary General of the United Nations; was publicly stated to be 'cool' towards its principal ally's peace efforts (that is, Britain's); and quoted conditions and stipulated an end result of negotiations - that is, South Vietnamese independence - terms which were largely characterised in the press, following the Administration's viewpoint, as 'unconditional'. The following example of press reporting illustrates many of these features. Under the headline, 'America Cannot Lose By Viet-Nam Offer: China Target of Talks', the Daily Telegraph's Washington correspondent wrote two days after President Johnson presented his Baltimore peace plan on 7 April 1965:
"The American Government expects to benefit no matter what happens to its offer to negotiate now on Viet-Nam without any pre-conditions on either side...

Officials in Washington were confident today that if it does not get a ride on the negotiating roundabout, it will have its turn on the propaganda swing. If negotiations get under way, there is the prospect of a settlement that would meet the American desire for South-east Asia."

From the view as China as the main driving force behind North Vietnamese actions it was only a short step to the idea that the principle motivation behind American actions was the containment of Chinese expansionism. This was a view that made its appearance in this form in the media. However, any fears that the U.S. intention of frustrating China's aims might lead to war with China were countered by the Administration's insistence that it sought no wider war, and in practical terms by its careful control of the bombing of North Vietnam - away from the Chinese border. For as stated previously, the U.S. Administration needed a sufficient knowledge of, and interest, in the war from its audience in order for it to support the government's viewpoint and actions. But what the U.S. Administration did not require, or want, was the level of interest and alarm that could be generated through the impression that America and China might be teetering on the brink of a shooting war.

As the war progressed, some members of the Administration developed a more subtle approach to China's role in the war and hence its global and regional role. But although the new approach loosened the virtually
automatic link that had previously been made between North Vietnamese actions/aggression and Chinese influence, nevertheless it still tied the war neatly to national wars of liberation and via this to China's influence regionally and globally.⁵⁸

This change in approach may have been helped by the great increase in Soviet aid to Hanoi from mid-1966⁵⁹, although according to Kahin and Lewis, Russia had "always been the North's principal supplier"⁶⁰, and also the increasing acrimony between Russia and China.⁶¹ Bearing these factors in mind it could be argued that the earlier American view of China's role would have to have been modified to correspond more to this new reality. It could also be the case, however, that tying China so closely to the origins and progress of the conflict was counter-productive: that approach certainly helped to concentrate attention on the conflict and its wider implications and this was not always useful to the Administration.

Thus the new line, from the point of view of propaganda, was an improvement on earlier versions. It was rather vague on China's exact role and was therefore more difficult for opponents to challenge. Also it was probably a more accurate reflection of the then current situation, yet still incorporated one of the Administration's main propaganda lines on national wars of liberation.

The other main component of the Administration's view of the dynamics of Southeast Asian relations was the
domino theory and linked to national wars of liberation it was a mainstay of American official propaganda during the Vietnam War. The concept of Southeast Asian nations being a row of dominos that would automatically fall if South Vietnam was lost to communism, was a rigid, mechanistic theory that took little account of each nation's individual circumstances, and it was therefore easily attacked on these grounds by critics. Nevertheless the Administration still clung to this theory and it was used in various attenuated forms to explain and legitimise the U.S. commitment to the war, and also to recruit support for the U.S. involvement.

ii.) The Image of the South Vietnamese Government and 'Democracy' and 'Freedom'

The major problem facing American propagandists concerning South Vietnam centred on the relationship between America and South Vietnam. American aid to its ally was on a vast scale; American force levels rose dramatically in 1965 and continued to rise throughout 1966, as did the amount of weaponry that these troops wielded; and South Vietnam's economy was receiving vast amounts of U.S. aid. The only sphere of life which appeared to be free of American control was the political arena, and though nominally the most important sphere in national life, the result here was a mainly South Vietnamese shambles with American assistance. In theory the relationship between the two states was that of sovereign equals and thus, at least publicly, American
actions and rhetoric were limited by the attributes of South Vietnamese sovereignty. Additionally, because North Vietnamese and Vietcong propaganda always referred to South Vietnam as America’s puppet state, it was necessary to counter this by stressing South Vietnam’s independence of America. So the question of American influence in South Vietnamese affairs via America’s aid and war effort was a delicate one for propagandists to tackle. Their task was to portray a newly independent nation, ready and willing to fight an enemy which was being heavily reinforced and armed by another nation — North Vietnam — and also equipped by other outsiders, that is China and Russia; and all these circumstances thus laid the burden on America of helping its gallant ally in a hitherto unequal struggle. Impressions that America was the prime war-maker, even if these were a more accurate reflection of reality, were unwelcome. Yet even in the information field, leaving aside the battlefield, the Americans assumed the greater role, even in South Vietnam itself:

"In conducting massive psychological efforts to counter insurgency against the existing regime in South Vietnam, the Agency [United States Information Agency] is performing a role which would normally be carried out by a government with its own people. Although attempts are being made by USIA personnel to train local government officials to take over this responsibility, they are not as yet very successful, for the population of Vietnam is not too nationally oriented and lacks motivation to learn to do what USIA is now doing for it."

The assumption by the Americans of the major role in the information field simply on the basis of their greater experience would have constituted enough of a drawback,
when they were trying to portray South Vietnam's independence and willingness to fight all aspects of the war. Still, had the Americans been acting primarily as tutor to a willing pupil, their lop-sided relationship would have held some future hope of the South Vietnamese Government network running perhaps one aspect of the war on its own. However, judging from the above assessment by United States Information Agency (USIA) officials, the South Vietnamese were both unwilling pupils and to a large extent lacked a sense of identity with their republic, proclaimed 12 years earlier. There is, of course, the possibility that these government officials were lukewarm about South Vietnam because they were more oriented to the concept of a wider nation which included the North. There is also the likelihood that the leadership in Saigon inspired neither confidence nor loyalty, being drawn mainly from the top echelons of society with a high proportion originally hailing from the North and adhering to the Catholic religion. This all suggests that in addition to the gulf between the Saigon leadership and the mass of South Vietnamese peasants, there was also a divide between the South Vietnamese leadership and its own lower-ranking government officials.

Whatever the reason for this lack of South Vietnamese national feeling, American propaganda consistently emphasised those very qualities which USIA privately believed were virtually non-existent. And the U.S. Administration devoted much rhetoric to trying to convince
its various audiences that South Vietnam was a nation. Here the Administration was, of course, caught in the usual cleft stick: To admit that the South Vietnamese were unenthusiastic about their nationhood destroyed one of the major pillars of American propaganda — that this was a case of nation fighting for survival against an outside aggressor. The only way out of the dilemma was to stress the newness of the South Vietnamese nation and the difficulties caused by North Vietnamese aggression. A more sophisticated official explanation of American intervention in the war centred on the thesis that South Vietnam needed time to sort out its problems and American troops were helping to buy that time by staving off the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. Obviously this still left open the question of South Vietnamese 'motivation', or the lack of it, but as an explanation at least it avoided some of the pitfalls that previous statements were subject to and thus did not actively erode what credibility the Administration retained.

Logically the central part of American government propaganda should have been concerned with South Vietnam itself, for America claimed to be fighting to preserve South Vietnam's independence. Much of the Administration's propaganda campaign did revolve around South Vietnam. However, rather than lauding the achievements of South Vietnam, it was mostly aimed at counteracting the published details of the more unfortunate aspects of its ally's behaviour. Naturally the Administration would have
preferred to say nothing about the darker side of its commitment, but in the absence of systematic censorship on information leaving South Vietnam, the Administration was frequently forced into commenting on the latest press allegations about the South Vietnamese leadership or Army and thereby added to the publicity and controversy.

One of the most prominent features of South Vietnamese political life, which could scarcely be ignored, was the tendency for unsatisfactory governments to be replaced through the machinery of the coup. In the last analysis the South Vietnamese armed forces were the judges of which faction should be in power at any given moment, while other political forces such as the Buddhists and students could, on occasions, create sufficient chaos to make yet another change of government inevitable, or alternatively, force their set of demands on the government. During the first half of 1965 there were approximately eight severe political crises in Saigon, involving three changes of government. While 1966 began promisingly, with Prime Minister Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky offering a referendum which would lead to a new constitution and elections in 1967 for a civilian government, it then deteriorated with a political crisis beginning around 10 March that lasted until the middle of June. In order to regain control of Danang and Hue and quell the South Vietnamese dissident factions, the Saigon leadership had to use the South Vietnamese Army. While Hue was still under Buddhist control the United States
Information Service (USIS) library and cultural centre and the U.S. Consulate and Residence were attacked and burned. In short, the image that South Vietnam presented to the world was one of chronic instability, with the war against the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese taking second place to domestic political in-fighting.

This one aspect alone was enough to cause observers to question Administration statements that American troops were fighting to preserve democracy and freedom in South Vietnam. Also, Johnson's tactic, when under pressure, to invoke the pledges that earlier administrations had made to the then South Vietnamese Government, was inclined to boomerang when commentators enumerated the changes of government that had taken place in Saigon and suggested that the original pledges to a specific government were rapidly becoming an open-ended commitment to any Saigon 'government'. When the Administration broadened the American commitment so that it embraced the South Vietnamese people, as opposed to just the South Vietnamese Government, this proved a scarcely more satisfactory way of either explaining American policies or deflecting criticism. For as observers pointed out, the wishes of the South Vietnamese people were hard to deduce from the political chaos in South Vietnam - unless the chaos itself was taken as an indication of their wishes - for South Vietnam was not a democracy and in addition the Vietcong and North Vietnamese controlled large portions of the
countryside, so the chances of the people being able to express their true wishes were indeed remote.71

The very fact that the Administration could state that to win this war it was necessary to win the battle for the 'hearts and minds' of the people suggested that at best the latter were uncertain as to where their sympathies lay. However, amidst this uncertainty, the Administration apparently detected signs that, but for the Vietcong use of assassination and terror, the South Vietnamese peasants would support Saigon and the Americans. Thus American propaganda emphasised repeatedly, for the benefit of its audience, lists of Vietcong assassinations of South Vietnamese Government employees and supporters and issued descriptions of Vietcong atrocities in order, amongst other aims, to help justify the Administration's assumptions about the sympathies of the South Vietnamese people.72 As with so much American official propaganda, these two potentially conflicting views of the South Vietnamese people's sympathies ran side by side: on the one hand it was necessary to win over the South Vietnamese, and on the other hand it was apparently obvious that only Vietcong coercion was preventing the South Vietnamese from declaring their allegiance to Saigon. Such unexplained contradictions in Administration propaganda invited dissection and ridicule by the Administration's opponents, or by those observers who found the Administration's approach to the 'truth' and 'information' too idiosyncratic.73
Overall, the broad image most frequently created by South Vietnam's concentration on internal politicking, was of America ensnared by a corrupt and unstable ally, whose people sometimes demonstrated a violent anti-Americanism. Unfortunately, even when this disquieting public impression was occasionally contradicted, and the Americans appeared to be influencing their unruly ally in a more acceptable direction, the improvement in image of either the South Vietnamese Government or the American Administration was rarely great and usually short-lived.

For example in February 1966, approximately one week after the resumption of U.S. bombing raids and two days after the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee began another round of open hearings on the Administration's Vietnam policy, Johnson and his top officials held a conference in Honolulu with the participation of South Vietnam. The main theme of this meeting concerned economic and social reforms and the issue of pacification; that is, specifically non-military issues. Chester Cooper, who was then Assistant for Asian Affairs in the White House and was involved in the meeting, summed up its effects:

"The conference was a success both in terms of reaching significant decisions and of establishing closer working relations between the top levels of the two governments. The Saigon Government, Ky especially, improved its image in the United States. But there was, nevertheless, a persistent feeling in Washington that the Administration had hastily contrived the whole affair to direct public attention from the bombing resumption. In addition many felt the Honolulu meeting had been a gimmick to steal the spotlight from Senator Fulbright, whose Foreign Relations Committee was just about to start a new round of Hearings on the Administration's Vietnam policy. The latter
suspicion was given added credibility by the President's sudden decision on the last day of the Honolulu Conference to send Vice-President Humphrey on a trip to Asia to 'explain' the development at Honolulu. This applied particularly to our 'third country' allies in Vietnam who were annoyed at not having been invited.74

That there was suspicion about the timing and motives for this conference indicated again both the existence and extent of the famed 'credibility gap' concerning the Administration, and of course added to it, while the clumsiness of Administration public relations was amply demonstrated in the abruptness with which the conference was called. As Kahin and Lewis wrote:

"Considerations of domestic U.S. politics evidently outweighed those of diplomatic courtesy and respect for South Vietnamese sensibilities, as Ky and General Thieu, Saigon's Chief of State, were summoned to this meeting with the President - on U.S. soil - a scant two days before the opening of the conference."75

This manoeuvre was, as usual, only partially successful even in its most immediate objective of spotlighting the conference instead of the Congressional Hearings, for there was press comment later on the timing of the conference.76 The attempt to create an impression of two countries united in their fight against communism and in their desire for reform in South Vietnam, expressed in the Declaration and Joint Communique of the Honolulu Conference, was shattered the following month in March when a four-month-long political crisis erupted in South Vietnam. The use of South Vietnamese troops to recapture major South Vietnamese cities from rioting anti-government demonstrators, coupled with Johnson's public disapproval,
contrasted strongly with the optimism and amity expressed in the Honolulu Conference. The irony was that the Administration had, by its own efforts and with great success in one sense, focused attention on South Vietnamese affairs and thereby highlighted the contrast.

By this time, after a number of years of collaboration with such a volatile and unstable ally, it should have been obvious to the Administration that predictions about future social and economic progress in South Vietnam were a hazardous form of propaganda. However, in this instance it seems likely that the Administration perpetrated an even greater blunder than it appears at first sight. For according to Kahin and Lewis, the political crisis in March in Saigon was a direct result of the Honolulu Conference:

"The Honolulu Conference had serious and largely unanticipated consequences in Saigon. On the one hand, the prestige of the Ky government plummeted within South Vietnam as the story of the Premier's summons to Honolulu and his embrace by the American President circulated freely in Saigon. On the other hand, the conference encouraged Ky to believe that the United States was now so committed to him that he could act more freely against his rivals in the military junta. Ky obviously concluded that so soon after the Honolulu Conference Washington simply could not afford to withhold its backing from him."

Such a syndrome was not without precedent. In broader terms the same political calculations had been made by Diem and the Nhus when they were in power; that is, that America was so committed to the fight against communism and had sunk so much money and prestige in South Vietnam and Diem that it could not afford to abandon them. Until
Diem and Nhu's assassination in November 1963 these assumptions were fairly accurate and gave them a vast amount of leverage with Washington. Ultimately Washington did abandon this particular ruling clique, but only after years of increasingly desperate support.7

Many of the Administration's problems with the South Vietnamese Government's image can be traced back to Washington's manifest inability to influence its ally's behaviour, to any lasting degree, in acceptable directions, concerning both the conduct of the war and internal progress in the country. Naturally preferring a government publicly committed to fighting the communists, even if privately engaged more in political manoeuvering, whether representative of the people or not, Washington helped to fashion a cleft stick for itself. For the Administration could not risk 'rocking the boat' through taking too tough a stance, such as for instance on internal progress. This was not only because of public American commitments such as Ky received, but also because if the war was to be fought by any South Vietnamese units at all, then the additional political instability that a tough Administration stance might have provoked had to be avoided at almost any cost. In order to counteract and explain its unpredictable conduct, South Vietnam was depicted in American propaganda as a 'young nation' which needed time to 'mature politically', but which, under constant attack from the communists, was being denied the opportunity to develop as rapidly as it might otherwise.80
However, though the political ruthlessness and inefficiency of the various South Vietnamese governments could be 'explained' in this way, defending their conduct of the war, when many of the same characteristics were exhibited, was an entirely different matter. The South Vietnamese tendency to subordinate fighting the war to domestic politics was clearly an immense handicap to the Americans. When the latter were bearing the brunt of the fighting, having key South Vietnamese units shifted around according to political moves in Saigon rather than those of the Vietcong was obviously a propaganda disaster, even if not a military one. In addition, promotion in the South Vietnamese Army depended on political loyalty to the current Saigon rulers, rather than military efficiency.

These aspects of the South Vietnamese conduct of the war were difficult enough to deal with, but an even worse aspect was the treatment meted out to prisoners. Observers found this to be one of the most repugnant features of the regime. At the same time that American and South Vietnamese propaganda highlighted the brutality of the Vietcong and life as it would be under communist rule, America's ally committed similar barbarities with both political prisoners and prisoners of war. Here, the relationship between the American and South Vietnamese Armed Forces appeared in a particularly unfavourable light. This relationship was bound to be a complex one, as is the case where any two sovereign armies are concerned in a joint venture. For this was the crux of the matter:
that these were sovereign armies, because the last image that Washington wanted to convey to the world was that of South Vietnam as a puppet state and army, subordinate to American aims - as Hanoi's propaganda so claimed. Nevertheless, though it was recognised that the South Vietnamese Army was autonomous and not simply under American command, it was American money that was keeping the entire operation afloat and equipping the South Vietnamese Army. As a result, publication of South Vietnamese cruelty damaged not only South Vietnam's standing in the eyes of the world, but also, by association, tarnished America's reputation. The constant barrage of American propaganda stressing that both armies were fighting for freedom and democracy merely added to the outrage.8

The general impact of the American intervention on the social and economic structure of South Vietnam was little discussed publicly - fortunately for the American war effort. Obviously a foreign army, the size of which amounted to a friendly occupation force, was bound to cause a considerable amount of disruption; this was only to be expected. But, for instance, the level of corruption, or the disintegration of the moral and social fabric of Vietnamese life were only occasionally commented on by journalists. The explanation for this apparent stroke of luck benefitting the Americans, at least as far as the Western nations were concerned, seems to be that firstly there were other aspects of the war which were
more highly visible - for instance, the physical destruction and the refugee problem - and secondly, other aspects were more compelling to reporters (either determining and/or satisfying audience tastes), such as combat descriptions and film footage. Phillip Knightley suggests a further reason for the paucity of information on corruption:

"Neither British nor American correspondents did very well in writing about the unimaginable scale of corruption in Vietnam, perhaps because few correspondents could claim to be completely untainted themselves. Most of them changed dollars and pounds on the black market, and many bought stolen army goods.... In fact, as Murray Sayle, in 1967 the correspondent for the Sunday Times of London wrote: 'Economic activity in the South has practically ceased, except for the war; Saigon is a vast brothel; between the Americans who are trying more or less sincerely to promote a copy of their society on Vietnamese soil, and the mass of the population who are to be 'reconstructed', stand the fat cats of Saigon."

Knightley goes on to say:

"Most correspondents considered corruption stories peripheral to the war itself. It seemed to many of them more important to devote their time to the army or Marine Corps, to attach themselves to a unit going into action and to write about it, usually in simple Second World War terms."

Thus the Administration came off lightly in the press with regard to, in some ways, the more long-lasting effects of their friendly occupation. Of course official propaganda focused on the amounts of aid donated by America; on appeals for aid from other countries; and on efforts to improve life for the South Vietnamese people. Nevertheless, the overall impression gained of the South
Vietnamese state was not one to inspire the majority of observers with a sense of progress achieved in any field.

 iii.) Domestic Politics, Influences, and American Foreign Policy

On a general level, the intertwining of domestic politics with foreign policy is a feature which is well-known to observers of the American political system. During the Vietnam War this feature was manifested in the way in which the Johnson Administration, when presenting its policies, took into consideration their possible impact on a number of broad opinion groups - which were not necessarily pressure groups. These overlapping groups can be divided as follows: firstly there was the largest, most amorphous group which is traditionally 'uninformed' about, and uninterested in, foreign policy, comprising the American 'public', who are also voters; and secondly there were the groups which, though part of the overall 'public' are generally 'informed' and interested in, foreign policy, including politicians, both past and present; the communications industry; university faculties and students; and anti-war groups and groupings.

The degree of attention paid to these groups by the Administration varied, but domestic opinion mattered because the Administration did require public support for its policies. The 'bottom line' was that the public would have to accept the deaths of Americans - their own flesh and blood - as Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton
noted in a memorandum about U.S. policy and 'image' for Secretary of Defense McNamara in March 1965: "In this connection the relevant audiences are... [Communists, South Vietnamese and allies] and the U.S. public (which must support our risk-taking with U.S. lives and prestige)." There were also electoral considerations for Johnson to take into account, with Congressional elections due in 1966, and the rather more distant Presidential election due in 1968.

When considering the effect on the public of its war policies, the Administration apparently bore in mind a number of traditional public preoccupations, which included the fear of communist expansion, the 'loss' of China, and the various evils associated with the Korean War. Commenting in September/October 1966, in an article entitled, "The President, the Polls, and Vietnam", Seymour Martin Lipset offered the following view of the interaction between Presidential policies and the public's traditional anti-communism:

"The findings of the surveys clearly indicate that the President, while having a relatively free hand in the actual decision-making to escalate or to de-escalate the war, is more restricted when considering the generic issues of action or inaction. He must give the appearance of a man engagé, of being certain of what he is doing, i.e., that the anticipated consequences do in fact come about.

The President seems to present his program along two parameters:

as part of a plan to secure peace, particularly if the action involved is actually escalation;

pacific actions are presented as ways to contain communism, or even to weaken it."
The President knows that in order to get the support of the American people for a war they wish they were never in, he must continually put his 'best peace foot' forward - he continually talks and offers peace, so that he may have public endorsement for war.

And conversely, any effort to make peace, to reach agreement with any communist state, would best be presented as a way to 'contain' communism, to weaken it by facilitating splits among the various communist states, or to help change it internally so that it will be less totalitarian, more humane and less expansionist.\textsuperscript{90}

As well as illustrating the President's concern with particular public attitudes, Lipset's short analysis gives some idea of the confusion which must have beset observers of the Administration's actions and rhetoric. For its part, Hanoi frequently complained that every time the Administration talked of peace it then escalated the war.\textsuperscript{91}

In 1965, a year before Lipset's article appeared, James reston, writing in The New York Times, had pointed to the popular foundations of Administration thinking, while deploring the resulting policies. In an article entitled, "Washington: Where Did We Go Wrong?", Reston wrote:

"President Johnson's only consolation about Vietnam is that the public opinion polls seem to support his conduct of the war. He keeps them close in his pocket, as a reassurance to himself and a rebuke to his critics, but they really do not prove him right or wrong.

All they prove is that the American people rally around the flag in trouble. The more the nation has become involved in the leadership of dangerous and complicated events all over the world, the more the people have tended to back the President's judgement."\textsuperscript{92}
Reston then related a series of events in which the public had supported previous presidents' decisions, however contradictory, returning to the theme of Vietnam by way of a reference to the "not unpopular" landing of Marines in Santo Domingo in the recent Dominican republic crisis:

"And the popular assumptions about Vietnam have led us into even more serious troubles. It is popular in this country to oppose communist aggression or expansion wherever it appears. It is popular to assume that whenever Uncle Sam appears on the battlefield the opposition will knuckle under. It is popular here to believe that even if the French lost 187,000 casualties and a war to the North Vietnamese regulars and guerillas, we are different and not subject to the same disasters. But these assumptions, though popular, are not necessarily true."

Moving on to the question of forthcoming decisions on the war, namely the pressure to extend the bombing to "industrial installations" near Hanoi and Haiphong, Reston commented that as regards this decision:

"Maybe this should be done and maybe it shouldn't, but the popularity polls are a poor basis for judgement. Nothing irritates President Johnson and his principal advisers more than the suggestion that they allow popular feelings at home to influence their foreign policy decisions abroad. They both defend their support of popular attitudes and deny that they act on these attitudes, but it is perfectly clear from the record that in both Vietnam and the Dominican Republic they have been influenced profoundly by popular assumptions and have confused popularity with effective policy. [Reston then relates a series of past popular policies which were disastrous and unpopular policies which later proved successful.]

However, the public's attitude to Vietnam had not always been so easy to 'determine'. For in the 1964 Presidential contest, faced with a choice between the
hardline Goldwater and the more moderate Johnson, the public had chosen the latter, which appeared to indicate that the public wished to stay out of a land war with Asian communists. But Kegley and Wittkopf point out that subsequent studies showed that both 'hawks' and 'doves' had voted for Johnson and that he could thus interpret the election result as he wished.\textsuperscript{35} However, whether or not the public had voted to stay out of an Asian land war, the fact is that during the 1964 election the Administration's rhetoric on Vietnam had been pacific, concerned with allaying any fears that U.S. troops would be sent to fight in the conflict; and this rhetoric contrasted strongly with its subsequent escalatory actions in early 1965.\textsuperscript{36}

Regardless of any possible earlier public ambiguity, as Reston states, once in the war - having been presented with a fait accompli - the public rallied to the flag, dutifully if unenthusiastically. This early lack of enthusiasm would make the official propagandists' task more difficult; for they would have to work to instill a basic emotion in the public which is often present initially in a nation at war - even if this enthusiasm later drains away.\textsuperscript{37}

Though both Lipset and Reston espouse circular arguments in their respective articles concerning the cause and effect of Presidential policies - both point to the public backing the President's policies and then state that the President's policies derived in part from popular attitudes - what does emerge clearly is that once Johnson...
decided on a course in Vietnam he paid attention to public opinion. And on occasions there were attempts to 'prepare' the public in advance of certain actions, and efforts to keep a check on public reactions.

Concerning other opinion groups Johnson also devoted time to explaining and seeking support for his policies. For instance he expended much effort in ensuring that the majority of Congressmen supported, and continued to support, his Vietnam policies - at least publicly. Congressional opinion was important both in its own right, as a source of support and funds for the war, and as an opinion group with views that were widely disseminated and which could exert some influence on the American electorate and on world opinion. The obvious way to have secured congressional support would have been to obtain a majority congressional vote specifically authorising the war. However, Johnson preferred to enlist support without resorting to a public declaration of war and also he used the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as evidence of congressional authorisation for his policies. Thus he sought support and understanding on a private and frequently individual basis, as Alistair Cooke noted in The Guardian:

"The truth... is that since last spring he [Johnson] has canvassed the ideas of 58 Heads of Government, innumerable professors, liberals, Democrats, Republicans, Tories, and Labour men, Negroes, trade union leaders, churchmen and soldiers; he has talked with every Senator and Congressman; had frequent bouts with the leaders of both parties; and had flown in the fifty Governors en masse."
Again, in addition to being important in their own right, these were groups and individuals whose views on the war, when disseminated, might be of interest to, and exert influence on, the general public. The amount of attention paid to the various opinion groups by the Administration tended to vary according to how widely their views might be broadcast—that is, how much attention the media was giving, or might give, to a group or individual—how prestigious and well-known the group or individual was to the public, and what views were held. Although the Administration did spend time preaching to the converted, great efforts were made to convert doubters. Failing conversion, there was the secondary goal of muting criticism through the devices of stressing the sheer complexity of the war, the necessity to honour commitments, and the Administration’s overwhelming desire for peace.101

In the short term, in the early stages of the war’s escalation, these tactics worked fairly well: few opponents were able to resist a personal appeal from so prestigious a figure as the President, or one of his top aides.102 In addition, to begin with, the President and his advisers were able to profit from the idea that in this confusing war only they possessed sufficient and extensive enough information to form a true picture of the situation.103 Over a longer period, however, what was initially flattering and unusual in the personal approach inevitably began to pall as it was seen to be the
customary method of dealing with critics - if they were judged to be of any importance - and as Johnson and his Administration's prestige and credibility began to wane. And as casualties increased the press demanded more information - and more accurate information - from the Administration.¹⁰²

In its statements on the war the Administration endeavoured, to keep what it defined as its majority audience - leaving aside both doves and hawks - happy, while to a large extent pursuing the war separately. For instance, the knowledge that the American public might be uneasy about involvement in another land war in Asia (after the experience in Korea which, though successful, was unpopular) was a factor which led the Administration to disclaim repeatedly its desire for a wider war, contributed to the Administration's failure to declare war in the first place, and influenced its desire to pursue the war with minimum publicity.¹⁰³

In the very short term, that is, approximately five to six months, the lack of a declaration of war did not hamper the Administration's freedom of action or rhetoric. The first bombing raids in February 1965 on North Vietnam were publicly stated to be retaliatory and not the beginning of a long-term campaign. The long-term bombing campaign that began soon after in March 1965 was also justified as retaliation for North Vietnamese aggression against its neighbour, South Vietnam. The increased commitment of troops was initially passed off as an
increased commitment to static defense of South Vietnam, and when their offensive role was later revealed, this was still stated to be a part of the same defensive policy, rather than the prelude to an American offensive against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong which would continue, regardless of cost, until the Administration had achieved its aims. With official statements such as these, and an as yet limited number of ground troops, it was still possible for the Administration's audiences, both domestic and foreign, to be uncertain about the Administration's intentions and where these actions were leading to. However, the revelation in June 1965 of an offensive role for the U.S. military and the July announcement of the dispatch of yet more troops to South Vietnam and other measures, began to alter audience perceptions.

However, over a longer period the absence of Congressional ratification of the war through a specific Congressional declaration of war was to prove a costly error. Had the conflict been of a short duration and, or, had it shown signs of being concluded successfully, then the fact that this was an undeclared war might have been tolerated. But as the war dragged on and as casualties rose and it became more obvious that this was both an undeclared and a major war, the Administration discovered that it had provided its opponents with a useful propaganda weapon, for, in failing to obtain a Congressional declaration of war, the Administration left itself open to the charge that it was fighting a war without the people's
consent, as expressed through the will of Congress. In defense Johnson cited the Tonkin Gulf Resolution as sufficient authority for his war policy. However despite Johnson's belief in the legitimacy of his authority to conduct such a major war without a further congressional Resolution, when the Nixon Administration finally curtailed U.S. involvement in the war in 1972, steps were taken - as a direct result of this war - to ensure that in future no President could introduce American troops into a long war without Congressional consent:

"It was the hubristic excesses (and disasters) of the Vietnam War which impelled the nation to look afresh at the President's sweeping powers in foreign policy and war-making. The result was the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973 which obliged the President to report to Congress within forty-eight hours of committing armed forces abroad."10

C. Propaganda Problems Posed by Military Aspects of the War

i. The Nature of the War

One of the most difficult problems that the American propaganda organs faced during the Vietnam War was the nature of the conflict. The Administration most often portrayed the conflict politically as a straightforward contest between communists and non-communists and hence America's role in it was part of the moral crusade against Communist expansion. This, though a gross over-simplification, was comprehensible to the public.

However, explaining the war militarily to the public was an entirely different matter. For instance, it was no
easy task to give a clear picture of the Southern enemy facing American troops. The Vietcong adopted no special uniform to denote their combat status, but like traditional guerilla forces elsewhere merged into the local population. In addition, guerillas who came from North Vietnam to aid the Vietcong, had frequently originated in the South and so they too spoke the local dialect, were familiar with local customs and could blend into the background. Visually, the black pyjamas which the guerillas wore, in common with the local peasants, did not present a military aspect, particularly when contrasted with the uniformed American and South Vietnamese troops.  

Another problem facing the Administration was how to measure, and thus be able to publicise, progress in the field. There appeared to be no pattern to this war as there had been in most previous wars. Instead of being a series of engagements yielding territory, or key points, that were then held as part of a general objective of advancing on other enemy positions or headquarters, this war appeared to be a random conglomeration of terrorist incidents in villages and towns and seemingly isolated engagements between American and South Vietnamese troops and the Vietcong and North Vietnamese. The enemy forces appeared to come and go as they pleased, sometimes staying to fight in force and sometimes fading away. However, though there were no front lines to focus on and by which judge the 'progress' of one or the other side in the war,
the fact that the war continued, and continued to expand, in itself constituted a negative comment on U.S. 'progress'.

However, for a certain period of time this confusion was of use to the Administration. While its credibility still held in the eyes of the public, then the Administration's overall assessment of the tangled and chaotic events was likely to prevail, even with the existence of other interpretations, given the initial advantage that any government possesses - or is thought to possess by its public - in the range of information available to it. Obviously as the war dragged on and as observers and journalists became more familiar, through more exposure, with the events they were dealing with, then the Administration's view of events was open to challenge. But it was not only the passage of time that fostered different interpretations: the Administration, by lying on some issues and then being publicly shown to have lied, helped to undermine its own credibility.

As the progress, or otherwise, of the war could not be determined by the usual criteria, the American military turned to such methods as the body count of enemy dead in order to both measure and demonstrate their success. In fact the numbers game, as it was called, was used in this way in most facets of the American war effort. For instance, pacification was measured in terms of the numbers of hamlets controlled by each side, the Hamlet Evaluation System. But as Kolko points out in Vietnam.
Anatomy of A War 1940-1975, not only were the monthly statistics inaccurate, but they could not measure the South Vietnamese villagers' allegiance, and he states: "The war was a monumental human, political and social event whose complex effects required nuanced analysis." Furthermore, this reliance on statistics to evaluate progress in this aspect of the war had already been criticised by U.S. officials involved in earlier pacification schemes, as noted by the Director of Provincial Operations for the Agency for International Development, in his study of the pacification effort in South Vietnam up to 1965:

"Finally, there has been a tendency to haste in Vietnam and to insist on statistics even though they do not really reveal the true nature of progress or lack of it in political, social, and economic development. It is important to realize that the basic problems being dealt with cannot be solved quickly. People's loyalties and beliefs and actions do not change quickly, nor do their customs and social institutions. Thus, evaluations of certain programs cannot be made on a weekly or monthly basis."

Where military planning for the war and evaluation of progress were concerned the body count system was equally suspect, for the figures themselves could easily be inaccurate, either by accident or design. For example, South Vietnamese males killed in the battle zones, unless positively identified as 'friendly', tended to be classified as enemy dead - and others slipped into the statistics too - thus inflating the figures for enemy losses. However from these body count figures the American military planners calculated their assessment of how badly
the enemy 'was hurting' and at what rate they were recruiting to fill the gaps, indeed at what rate the enemy would have to recruit to keep going. And President Johnson himself sometimes used the figures to illustrate progress in the war.

Eventually the flaws inherent in this system became apparent; indeed the U.S. military produced its own critical survey of the figures in late 1968, and earlier, the Systems Analysis Office in the Pentagon had not only reported the inaccuracy of the figures but had also produced pessimistic evaluations of the war. For the drawbacks to these particular figures are obvious: firstly they said nothing about the morale, will and capability of the enemy, which were supposedly the prime target of American ground and air attacks. Secondly, no inference could be drawn as to the state of the war itself: whether headway was being made with peasants in enlisting their support for the South Vietnamese Government's cause, or whether support for the Vietcong and North Vietnamese was strengthening. The body count figures said nothing about territorial control, or whether the war was being won or lost. As indicators to judge the war's progress these figures were useless, but there were few other ways in which the war could be measured and this statistical method of analysing the war suited the Pentagon: the figures could be used as evidence to prove success; only as the war dragged on could it be seen that the figures proved nothing.
summed up the dilemma thus in *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*:

"But statistics by their very nature could not go deeply enough. Much of the most important information about Vietnam was essentially unquantifiable, and even when it could be quantified the dangers of misinterpretation and overinterpretation were ever present....Many of those who derived genuine hope from these indicators suffered from either a lack of knowledge about Vietnam or a lack of sensitivity toward politics, or both. On balance, data generally made Americans unduly optimistic."

ii.) The American Troop Build-Up

At the end of December 1964 U.S. military strength in South Vietnam had reached 23,300 troops, stationed there in the advisory role that America was still playing. By July 1965 U.S. troop strength was 75,000, and on 28 July President Johnson announced that a further 50,000 American troops would be dispatched to Vietnam bringing U.S. troop strength up to 125,000 "almost immediately". Thus in seven months American troop levels escalated by over 100,000 men and their role also changed officially from advisers to combatants. The problems that American propaganda had to resolve concerning the troop build-up were contained in the dramatic leap in force levels and the change in role. Though these are both events that are to be expected in a war and which may be more or less difficult to explain depending on the 'popularity' of the war, the way in which the Administration chose to fight this war - without a declaration of war - and the way in which it decided to
present information to the public, constituted a more than usually difficult problem for U.S. propagandists.

The arrival of two Marine battalions in Danang on 8 March, in effect the beginning of the American troop build-up, was presented publicly as a defensive move to protect Danang airfield following the start of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam in February. Any offensive role was pointedly ruled out in the Administration's announcement of the troop dispatch. However this static security mission was shortlived, for on 1 April Johnson approved a change in the Marines' role from defence to offence and authorised a further dispatch of two more Marine battalions and an increase in support forces in South Vietnam. Thus less than one month after denying any change in the Marines' mission in South Vietnam, the Administration had reversed its position and decided to go over to the offensive. But this part of the 1 April decision was not to be made public, by specific order of President Johnson and officials were to present these moves as part of the existing policy, based on past presidents' policies. So at the beginning of the troop build-up U.S. officials were under orders to conceal a major policy change from the press and public. Effectively Johnson was already laying the foundations of the 'credibility gap' which came to characterise his administration's conduct of the war.

Even without the President's wish for minimal publicity about the troop dispatches to South Vietnam, and
his desire for secrecy over their changed mission, official propagandists could well have encountered problems over this increased commitment due to Johnson's earlier apparently pacific statements on the conflict during the 1964 Presidential election. For Johnson had specifically told American voters that U.S. troops would not be sent to Vietnam to do the fighting for the South Vietnamese and nor would North Vietnam be bombed. Yet only three months after the elections American planes were bombing North Vietnam, and the following month Marines were disembarking in South Vietnam, in direct contradiction of Johnson's public statements.

After the realisation by the press and public in mid-1965 that America was at war in South Vietnam, the initial propaganda problems created by the desire for secrecy over the change in the size of military force and role were superseded by a different set of problems centring on the length of the war and the ever-increasing numbers of troops needed to fight it. For as the war continued, so the numbers of casualties increased and the Administration came under pressure to show some progress in the war - either towards winning it or negotiating a settlement - from both hawks and doves among its audiences. These were problems that U.S. propaganda had to tackle if public support was to be maintained for this war and the Administration's war policies.

The growing size of the military operation in Vietnam soon posed another problem for propagandists, a problem
which grew with each increase in troop levels. For this war, which seemed to appear so suddenly and escalate so rapidly, was being fought in what was supposed to be peace time. Although the American economy was not on a war footing and although the battle was 'limited' to South Vietnam and selected bombing targets in North Vietnam, yet this was no minor conflict, and nor could it be passed off as such. As U.S. troops poured into South Vietnam, the scale of destruction and the casualties mounted, and the media spotlight stayed firmly on events in Vietnam and the war which America had never declared.

iii.) The Portrayal of the Bombing

America used air power in the Vietnam War in two roles. Firstly it was used to attempt to cripple North Vietnam’s war-making capacity and to interdict its supply lines to the South. Secondly air power was part of the war effort in the South, used to clear areas before troops moved in, and supporting military operations with air strikes.

Taking the first of these two roles, it was the bombing of North Vietnam in February 1965 which in effect began America's involvement in the Vietnam War. Initially, the bombing raids were portrayed by the Administration as reprisals for Vietcong attacks in South Vietnam. Specifically, the first raids on 7-8 February and 11 February were announced as retaliation for the attacks on the American installations at Pleiku and Quinhon. In bombing North Vietnam in response to Vietcong actions in
South Vietnam, the Administration sought to emphasise the idea that North Vietnam was the motivating force behind the continuing unrest and violence in South Vietnam. This rationale was used by the Administration as justification not only for the early retaliatory raids, but also for the policy of sustained bombing of North Vietnam, code-named Operation Rolling Thunder, which was authorised by Johnson on 13 February.

The propaganda problems posed by the early bombing raids differed in degree from those created by the sustained bombing programme. Initially the Administration required public and allied acceptance that the U.S. response was "appropriate and fitting", which was no small requirement given the geography of the Vietcong attacks and the American response. In addition the Administration needed to overcome the notion that the bombing was an over-reaction, particularly as there had been previous Vietcong attacks on American installations which had not occasioned bombing raids on the North. Thus it was also necessary for Johnson and his advisers to differentiate between earlier Vietcong attacks and Pleiku and Quinhon, and to justify their reaction to the latter. The next step on the way to Rolling Thunder was to loosen the connection between specific Vietcong attacks and bombing the North: to use the bombing not just as a reprisal, but as a method of fighting the war.124

Once the sustained bombing programme was underway then the problems of maintaining audience support
multiplied. Firstly there were the effects of the bombing: the destruction it caused. Although North Vietnam's major cities were not attacked, there were plenty of other targets for the U.S. Airforce. In Britain (and other nations), the spectacle of this persistent bombardment brought back memories of World War II blitzes - not the sort of image to aid American propagandists.

Secondly there were doubts about the efficacy of such bombing, expressed both as a measure of the current campaign and with reference to studies of the World War II blitzes. For as the war lengthened it became obvious that the North Vietnamese were not going to be bombed to the negotiating table by this programme and nor were they going to cease aiding the war in the South. This perception was reinforced by the American studies of the bombing campaigns in World War II, which had concluded that strategic bombing aimed at breaking a population's will to resist had not succeeded. Interdiction bombing was similarly assessed as unable to achieve its goals. Yet the Administration continued with the bombing programme, despite the lack of results, which rendered the public justification for bombing increasingly invalid.25

America's use of air power gave the war its overwhelmingly technological character, with the massive bombardments seemingly requiring a lesser degree of manpower to achieve a greater degree of devastation while risking fewer American forces. Although the results of the air strikes against North Vietnam could only occasionally
be assessed at first hand by observers, the consequences of using air power to fight the war in South Vietnam were only too visible: great destruction and vast numbers of refugees. This was the other role for the U.S. Airforce: carpeting an area with bombs prior to U.S. military operations; bombing specific villages thought to be 'unfriendly'; and reinforcing military operations with air strikes on enemy positions. The problem was that the enormous devastation caused by the bombing laid waste the territory of America's ally. Even if a village was correctly identified as 'unfriendly' - which obviously required reliable and accurate intelligence - and was then bombed, it was still the dwellings and livelihood of the South Vietnamese peasants which disappeared in the bomb craters along with the Vietcong. Of course mistakes were made, and then 'friendly' villages were obliterated - this could happen if a pilot overshot his target, or if the coordinates for an air strike were incorrect, or if U.S. intelligence was defective. The net result was that ever greater areas of South Vietnam were turned into wasteland and far from seeming 'limited', the U.S. war effort appeared to wreak unlimited destruction on the very people it was trying to save. And this was the irony, that while officially no populated areas in North Vietnam were targetted for bombing raids in an endeavour not to kill civilians, the methods used to fight the war in the South and the desire to avoid troop casualties guaranteed a high proportion of civilian casualties. And so, with this
indiscriminate method of warfare the Americans compared badly with the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, who, though ruthless, were far more selective in the people they killed.\footnote{26}

The other great by-product of the war was the refugees, the greater proportion of whom were created when their villages were destroyed, or when they were forced to move in order to avoid air strikes. From 1965 onwards the numbers of refugees grew steadily, straining the already slender organisational resources of the South Vietnamese and the funds available to cope with them. As Lewy writes:

"No reliable statistics on the number of refugees are available until 1968, but it was estimated that between December 1965 and June 1968 there were 1.2 million officially recorded refugees and a far larger number who blended in with the general population as best they could and received no government assistance whatever. During the first eight months of 1966 alone the number of refugees officially processed was half a million. Between 1964 and 1969, as many as 3.5 million South Vietnamese, over 20 percent of the population, had been refugees at one time or another."\footnote{27}

The effects of the bombing in South Vietnam were easily ascertainable, even without the aid of statistics, in terms of ravaged countryside and displaced people.

iv.) War Casualties

In any conflict casualties are a prime concern for propagandists, because troops and civilians killed and wounded are one of the most obvious and emotional results of war. Thus a reason is required to justify these deaths and injuries to the audience in the homeland and, on occasions to outside observers. It would seem logical to
suppose that the more casualties there are, then the
greater the need for a satisfactory - to the audience -
explanation and justification for the carnage. The latter
also applies to the length of a conflict, and where the
two factors coincide, of a lengthy and a bloody war, then
the requirement for propagandists to justify casualties is
vital. In addition, either of these two factors might lead
an audience to scrutinise a conflict more carefully,
reviewing the official reasons given for participation,
and seeking indications of progress towards officially
stated goals.

America's participation in the Vietnam conflict would
always have required careful explanation and
justification, for in addition to being a bloody and long
conflict it was fought 8,000 miles from the American
homeland in an area with which few Americans were familiar
until the war began and American troops were killed. Once
U.S. military involvement began in earnest, inevitably the
casualty figures started to rise, fairly slowly at first,
but then more quickly as the war continued to escalate. In
1965 the number of U.S. troops killed in action was
1,363, a monthly average of roughly 113. However
according to Lewy, during 1966 the monthly average of
American troops killed in action was 477, while in only
the first half of 1967 the monthly average jumped to 816
killed in action. Overall, the number of U.S. military
casualties, during Lyndon Johnson's term in office from
1964 to 1968, including both wounded and dead, totalled
What American official propaganda had to do was to make these casualties seem worthwhile to the American public in order to retain their support.

In addition to the U.S. military casualties there were the civilian casualties in the war. Again the effects of the conflict were obvious in South Vietnam: increasing numbers of civilians were killed and wounded. The type of war waged and the weapons used by the U.S., such as napalm, ensured a high casualty rate among civilians, accepting that such casualties were unintentional. As Lewy points out, in general arriving at accurate figures for civilian war casualties is difficult. However, using the figures and calculations Lewy provides, from 1965 to 1966 the approximate figures for civilian casualties were: 50,944 civilians admitted to hospital as a result of military action; 19,224 civilians killed outright; and 7,641 civilians deaths after admission to hospital. In the period of Lyndon Johnson's Presidency, overall from 1965 to 1968 the approximate number of civilians admitted to hospital due to military action was 215,193; the approximate number of civilians killed was 81,204; and the approximate number of civilians who died after admission to hospital was 32,279. Considering both U.S. military and civilian casualty figures, whereas American casualties would concern mainly the American public, civilian casualties could be expected to be of concern to outside observers. And irrespective of approval or support for the U.S. war effort, observers were concerned about the
carnage in South Vietnam. Civilian casualties were perceived as a particularly unjustifiable outcome of the conflict, and thus likely to generate considerable opposition to the war on humanitarian grounds alone.132

Lastly there were the North Vietnamese and Vietcong casualties. North Vietnam sustained both military and civilian casualties, the former while fighting the war in the South and the latter due to American bombing in the North. Whilst the U.S. military could assess to a certain extent what North Vietnam's battle casualties were, there was no reliable means of assessing the number of civilian casualties caused by American bombing, although on the rare occasions when correspondents visited North Vietnam an effort was usually made to evaluate the effects of the bombing on civilians. Such efforts by correspondents could produce a startling impact, as The New York Times edition of The Pentagon Papers notes in connection with civilian casualties from the bombing:

"During the prolonged internal debate [in the Administration from late 1966 to early 1967], the Pentagon account discloses, such issues as stalemate in the ground war and civilian casualties of the air war were of much more concern to some policy makers than the Administration publicly acknowledged.

Press dispatches from Hanoi in late 1966 stimulated what the analysts call an 'explosive debate' in public about civilian casualties. Privately, the analysts add, the Central Intelligence Agency produced a summary of the bombing in 1965 and 1966 that estimated that there had been nearly 29,000 civilian casualties in North Vietnam - a figure far higher than Hanoi itself had ever used."133

Vietcong casualties too were not easy to estimate, due to the difficulty of distinguishing between guerillas
and peasants in South Vietnam, and the concomitant tendency, as already discussed, for the U.S. military to inflate the figures for guerilla deaths. However, in 1965 there were reported to be 35,436 enemy dead; by September 1966 there were 40,149; and in 1967 the figure was 88,104 enemy dead. However, even if these figures were debateable, again the carnage was easily visible in South Vietnam and the supply of guerillas seemed inexhaustible, whatever the casualty rate. As the war lengthened and casualties on all sides rose, increasingly the willingness and ability of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong to both sustain losses and replace them, and ultimately their sheer tenacity, caused some observers to ponder the reasons underlying the depth of commitment displayed by America's enemies. This too was a phenomenon that U.S. propaganda had to address.

v.) **Conduct of the War/Negotiations.**

One of the most striking features of the war in Vietnam was the way in which the Administration increased both troops and bombing in graduated steps. This was a deliberate policy designed to prevent a North Vietnamese and Vietcong victory and hence avoid an American defeat, and also to try to limit any domestic outcry over America's commitment. In addition this gradual approach enabled Lyndon Johnson to pursue his preferred strategy of consensus politics, which sudden huge increases in troop and bombing levels would not have permitted.
The Administration initially presented bombing raids on North Vietnam as a means of pressuring the North Vietnamese leaders to cease the war in the South and to negotiate. Each increment in the bombing level was publicly justified as a step on the road to negotiations and ultimately peace. In this way the Administration blamed the North Vietnamese for the continuation of the war and also endeavoured to avoid the impression of punitive bombing raids aiming at reducing the whole of North Vietnam to ruins.¹³⁶

The time factor posed a major problem with this justification for the U.S. propaganda effort, for as the war lengthened and the bombing was stepped up it became increasingly apparent that North Vietnam was not going to negotiate. Indeed the North Vietnamese were quite explicit about their refusal to negotiate under the threat of bombs. Thus in the summer of 1965 the purpose of the bombing programme privately shifted from endeavouring to break Hanoi's will to interdicting North Vietnam's supply lines.¹³⁷

As a corollary to the bombing raids the Administration conceived bombing pauses, used both as a diplomatic device and as a means of conducting the war. In diplomatic terms, the bombing pauses were presented as an inducement to North Vietnam to negotiate and thus provided the Administration with an opportunity to ascertain whether or not Hanoi was prepared to talk. These pauses were also used to demonstrate to America's allies and
public opinion in general that U.S. policy was not based solely on force. As a device for conducting the war, the pauses were used to legitimize further escalation of the bombing after Hanoi had predictably turned down an Administration offer of talks, or negotiations, on U.S. terms. To the Administration the bombing programme was a means to negotiating from strength - through intensifying the 'pain level' before a bombing pause - and also constituted a vital bargaining counter, to be reduced or halted completely only in return for important concessions. Hanoi recognised and responded to the functions of the bombing pauses: for instance by delaying reaction to the pauses Hanoi bypassed the bargaining counter strategy and by stating publicly that U.S. bombing pauses and talk of peace was always followed by escalation. Hanoi drew attention to the 'legitimizing' function of the pauses. Not surprisingly, the U.S. military opposed the bombing pauses which in their estimate merely allowed the enemy to reinforce and resupply freely. Thus the Administration encountered resistance from the U.S. military whenever a pause was under consideration and then pressure to resume the bombing programme as soon as possible.

Clearly the questions that U.S. propaganda had to address on the bombing pauses centred on the credibility of the initiatives: firstly, were these pauses genuine attempts to initiate a dialogue, or were they primarily for public consumption; secondly, if Hanoi did not respond
to these bombing pauses could this alone justify the U.S. resuming and escalating the bombing; thirdly, would Hanoi's lack of response prompt a critical examination of its reasons for rejecting talks and hence probably a closer examination of the U.S. terms for talks; fourthly, could Hanoi justify its lack of response to U.S. overtures, and if so how would this affect audience perception of the U.S. bombing pauses and escalation of the bombing program?139

On the issue of negotiations the Administration endeavoured to create the impression through its rhetoric that it was always ready for unconditional discussions, as for example in Johnson's major speech on the war at Johns Hopkins University on 7 April 1965. By emphasizing its desire for peace in Vietnam and willingness to enter into 'unconditional' talks, not only did the Administration endeavour to highlight its own 'peaceful' intentions but it also tried to throw the blame for the lack of negotiations - and hence the continuation of the war - on the North Vietnamese. Thus the central arguments on the Administration's position on negotiations hinged on whether the Administration genuinely desired peace; whether it was actively seeking a peaceful solution; and whether the offers of 'unconditional' discussions that the Administration always claimed it was ready to conduct actually were without conditions.140

For U.S. official propaganda, one of the pitfalls over negotiations lay in part in the eagerness with which
observers seized on any hint of peace talks or approaches: a speech by a top official containing references to either peace or talks usually received wide media coverage and close scrutiny. Concomitantly a phase of the war which was unaccompanied by any Administration remarks on peace also tended to provoke media reaction, as Joseph Alsop, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune* on Johnson's Johns Hopkins speech, noted:

"For many weary weeks on end, the president has been beseeched, urged, even bullyragged to announce his war aims, to explain his decisions, to declare his willingness to negotiate. Under this incessant barrage of advice he kept obstinately silent..."141

Alsop's article itself illustrated the Administration's dilemma, for in addition to the above comments, it also contained an interesting analysis of Johnson's speech, focussing on elements that were not favourable to the Administration. But the particular irony of this article was that Alsop's criticism of the Administration stemmed from his hardline, hawkish position on the war, and thus he exposed the contradictions in the Administration's rhetoric and war policy that followed from Johnson's efforts to pursue a middle course between hawks and doves in his administration as well as among the public.142

The progress of time also compounded other problems concerning the rhetoric of negotiations for the Administration. For instance, the Administration always claimed publicly that it would welcome serious efforts by other nations to help the peace process. So as the war
lengthened and negotiations still did not begin, other nations took the Administration at its word and either offered to mediate or endeavoured to begin the mediation process on their own initiative. Thus the Administration was faced with various peace proposals and initiatives which, in general terms, it had previously stated it would welcome, but which might have arrived at an inauspicious stage of the war, or be unwelcome for other reasons. When these peace moves were undertaken by individual nations, then usually the Administration made a reasonable case for dismissing the initiatives. However, in addition to individual peace-makers, the United Nations and the Nonaligned Movement attempted to initiate peace moves and though these efforts were also dismissed the Administration ran more of a risk. For naturally the media devoted considerable attention to any peace moves by these two organisations, and the failure of their initiatives evoked comment and analysis. Thus it behoved the Administration to treat these peace moves with more respect than it accorded to others - if only to avoid adverse press comment - but this rarely happened. For instance, in 1965 the Administration faced a heavy barrage of press criticism when it became known that the Administration had rejected a peace initiative for talks with North Vietnam undertaken by UN Secretary General U Thant with U.S. concurrence. And the fact that Hanoi now denied the legitimacy of UN efforts at mediation, in no way moderated criticism of Washington for its dismissal of
this UN initiative." The onus was on the U.S. Administration to act according to its own rhetoric, for the Western media could sensibly examine and document only the rhetoric and actions of the United States.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2


4. President Johnson's "State Of The Union" Message, 4 January 1965, see Note 2.


6. See Chapter 4, Section C, for a full discussion of press reaction to this announcement, including the Daily Telegraph editorial, 10 June 1965: "Committed To Combat".

7. For example the President's news conference statement on 28 July 1965: "We Will Stand In Vietnam", in Stebbins, Documents on American Foreign Relations 1965, PP178 - 183, on increased troop dispatches to Vietnam was one of the few times when a major Administration announcement did not provoke an equally major press explosion. See Chapter 4, Section B and C.

8. For example the bombing of North Vietnam's oil storage depots in June 1966; see Chapter 6.

9. For example the announcement of the Honolulu Conference in February 1966 which may have diverted attention from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings; see Chapter 6.


12. See Chapter 3, Section A and B; the Administration produced a booklet in February 1965 entitled: "Aggression From The North".

13. Administration speeches and announcements on the war invariably made this point, for example, the President's State of the Union message mentioned in Note 2, or the President's speech at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, 7 April 1965, in Stebbins, *Documents on American Foreign Relations 1965*, PP140 - 147, (this speech is usually referred to as 'the Baltimore Speech'), see Chapters 3 and 4.


15. U Thant, *View From The UN*, (Newton Abbot, Devon: David and Charles, 1978), PP59 - 60. Some of Johnson's advisers subscribed to the same views as Johnson, others did not, see Chapter 3 and 6, Section A.

16. For example William P. Bundy's address cited in Note 3; also the Supplemental Appropriation for Vietnam, 4 May 1965, cited in Note 15.


18. See Chapter 4, Section A and B, for the first serious instance of public pressure on the Administration to negotiate after escalation of the war.


21. See "Appraisal Of Current Trends: Statement By The President At LBJ Ranch, Johnson City, Texas, April 17, 1965" in Stebbins, *Documents on American Foreign Relations*
22. See Chapter 1, 2 and 6, Section A for discussions of the Administrations expectations from escalation, based on The Pentagon Papers.

23. See Chapters 5 and 6. By the end of 1965 perceptions of U.S. policy were beginning to change, and by mid - 1966 grave doubts were being expressed in the press.


25. See Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 and 6, Sections A, B and C. The first pause in May was 'unofficial' and unacknowledged publicly; the second pause was 'official' and received widespread publicity.


27. For example see Chapter 4, Section C, for the Communist reaction to the peace offer in the President's Johns Hopkins Speech on 7 April 1965.

28. See the President's message on "The National Defence, January 18, 1965", Note 5. North Vietnam's reply to the President's Baltimore Speech, 7 April 1965, was contained in Pham Van Dong's "Four Points", published in mid - April 1965; this statement claimed that U.S. policy in Vietnam was violating the 1954 Geneva Agreements.


30. The Guardian's leaders contained early criticism of the Administration's interpretation of the Geneva Agreements; see Chapter 4, Section C.

31. See Kahin and Lewis, The United States In Vietnam, P130; see also Secretary Rusk's Statement on "The Bases Of American Policy, February 25, 1965", Note 5.

32. But not with The Guardian leader writer, see Note 30.

33. For example see the Observer, 13 June 1965: "Mr. Wilson And The President".

35. "'Pattern For Peace In Southeast Asia': Address By The President At Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, April 7, 1965", Note 13.

36. "'We Will Stand In Vietnam': News Conference Statement By The President, July 28, 1965", Note 7.


38. Usually it could be expected that exposure of a false analogy would lead to a change in an observer's position, but the *Sunday Times* demonstrated that it was possible to destroy the Administration's false analogies concerning the Vietnam War, yet still support the U.S. involvement on different grounds; see Chapter 5, Section C, *Sunday Times* editorial, 1 August 1965.


40. See Chapter 3, Section B.

41. For example Joseph Alsop's article in the New York Herald Tribune, cited in Chapter 5, Section C; or The New York Times, in May 1965, cited in Chapter 4, Section C.

42. See Chapter 4, Section C, for The Guardian editorial comments on the President's Baltimore Speech; and Joseph Alsop's article on the speech for the New York Herald Tribune.

43. See Kahin and Lewis, The United States In Vietnam, P14 - 18.

44. Ibid, P32.


47. See reference to U.S. Ambassador Taylor's remark, Chapter 3, Section B.
48. See *The Guardian*, 26 April 1965: "Sceptical Americans".

49. See Chapter 5, Section C.

50. See Chapter 6, Section C.

51. "'We Will Stand In Vietnam': News Conference Statement By The President, July 28, 1965", Note 7.


53. For example China's reaction after President Johnson's Baltimore Speech, see Chapter 4, Section C.

54. Ibid.

55. See Chapters 3, 4 and 5, Sections C, dealing with press reporting and reaction during 1965.

56. *Daily Telegraph*, 9 April 1965; for further analysis of this article see Chapter 4, Section C.


58. This view was publicly articulated by the President's National Security Adviser W. W. Rostow, giving the Sir Montague Burton lecture at the University of Leeds on 23 February 1967, entitled: "The Great Transition: Tasks Of The First And The Second Post-War Generation". White House press release, 23 February 1967.


60. See Kahin and Lewis, *The United States In Vietnam*, P190.


63. For instance the President's Press Conference on 20 March 1965 in *The Johnson Presidential Press Conferences*, P280; also Johnson's Baltimore Speech, 7 April 1965, Note 14; the domino theory also figured in the deliberations of the SEATO Council, see "The Southeast Asia Treaty


66. The original basis for the strong position of Northern Catholic refugees lay in the use that Diem made of them to secure his own power base after he became Head of State in 1955, see Kahin and Lewis, The United States In Vietnam, PP72 - 75; also Prime Minister Ky and President Thieu were Northerners (Kahin and Lewis, The United States In Vietnam, P241 and P166, respectively); and a quarter of the officers in the South Vietnamese Army were from the North with Catholics comprising "double South Vietnam's average" percentage (see Kolko, Vietnam: Anatomy Of A War 1940 - 1975, P209).

67. See Chapter 4, Section C. Comment by Vice President Humphrey.

68. See Chapters 3, 4 and 6, Section C for periods of South Vietnamese political instability.

69. Ibid, Chapters 3 and 4.

70. Ibid, Chapter 6.

71. See Chapter 5, Section C.

72. For instance see "American Policy In South Vietnam And Southeast Asia", William P. Bundy address on 23 January 1965, cited in Note 3.

73. See Chapter 6, Section C, in particular for a spate of press comment on the South Vietnamese Government and U.S. policies.


76. See Chapter 6, Section C.


78. Kahin and Lewis, The United States In Vietnam, P244.


83. See Chapter 6, Section C, for press concern about the South Vietnamese authorities' use torture.


85. Ibid, P385.


88. This is only a very broad categorisation, for the Administration also took other groups into consideration as noted below; for a brief discussion of special interest groups see Kegley and Wittkopf, American Foreign Policy, Pattern And Process, PP276 - 285. Before escalation of the
war the Administration considered how to handle world and public opinion; see *The Pentagon Papers*, *The New York Times* edition, PP363 - 364; where the 'interested' groups were concerned, the Administration put its case in special briefings for congressmen and senators, and sometimes journalists, and sent emissaries to teach-ins.


91. See Chapter 3, 5 and 6, Section C.


93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.


96. Chester Cooper gives an interpretation of Johnson's rhetoric in his book *The Lost Crusade, America in Vietnam*, which stresses the pacific nature of his speeches. In his own memoirs Johnson displays considerable sensitivity on this issue, stating that the public refusal to go North or commit U.S. troops was also accompanied by an insistence on honouring U.S. commitments, see Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point, Perspectives Of The Presidency 1963 - 1969*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), P68.

97. For instance the British reaction at the beginning of the Boer War, World War I and more recently the Falklands War; World War II was a notable exception.

98. For an instance of advance attempt at influencing the press and public see the 28 July 1965 announcement on increased troop deployments, Chapter 4; or again the P.O.L. bombings in June 1966, see Chapter 5.

99. See Chapter 3, Section A.


101. See Chapters 4 and 5.

102. For instance the Administration attempted to influence *New York Herald Tribune* columnist Walter Lippmann - see Chapter 4, Section C.

103. This was particularly the case where the issue of negotiations was concerned; see Chapter 5 and 6,
Section C.

104. See Chapter 5 and 6, Section C.

105. See Chapter 3, Sections A and B for a discussion of Administration planning on the war and decisions on propaganda techniques.

106. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with events in the war from January to July 1965.


110. See Chapter 6, Section C for press comment.

111. For instance see Chapter 5, Section C for press reaction to the revelations about the Administration's rejection of U Thant's 1964 peace initiative.


119. President Johnson's 28 July 1965 news conference statement, "We Will Stand In Vietnam", see Note 7.

120. For the details of, and Administration planning on this period see Chapter 3, Sections A and B.

121. See above, Section B iii, Domestic Politics, Influences And American Foreign Policy.

122. See particularly Chapters 5 and 6, Section C, for reflections of public discontent and Administration moves to counter this.

123. For instance see the press reaction to the Administration's early attempt to downplay the change in U.S. troop role in June 1965, in Chapter 4, Section C.

124. See Chapter 3, Sections A and B.

125. North Vietnam persistently and publicly demanded a halt to the U.S. bombing before talks could begin. See Chapter 5, Section C for a vivid reflection by journalist James Cameron of the effects of the bombing on North Vietnamese morale.

126. See Lewy, America In Vietnam, PP95 - 105; also Chapter 5, Section C on press reporting of the destruction of a South Vietnamese village due to a map reference error.


128. Figure from Table 4 in Kahin and Lewis, The United States In Vietnam, P188.

129. Figures from Lewy, America In Vietnam, P73.

130. Ibid, P146.

131. Ibid, PP443 - 444. Note that Lewy's cited Statistic on P444 for total number of civilian deaths is based on an error in calculation; in response to a letter from the author and Dr. McKeever, Professor Lewy recalculated the figures as follows: civilians who died after hospital admission 85,590; total number of civilian deaths in South Vietnam 300,910.

132. Chapter 5 and 6, Section C contain press reports reflecting on the level of violence in this war.


135. See Chapter 3, Section A on Administration planning from January to March 1965.

136. See Chapters 3 and 4, Sections B and C.

137. See *The Pentagon Papers*, *The New York Times* edition, PP468 - 469; see also Chapter 4, Section A.

138. Chapter 4, 5 and 6, Sections A, B and C deal with the bombing pauses and public reaction.

139. Ibid.

140. Chapter 4, Section C analyzes press reaction to Johnson's Baltimore speech.


142. Alsop's article is analyzed at greater length in Chapter 4, Section C.

143. For further details see Chapter 5, Section C, press comment in November 1965.
CHAPTER 3

THE BEGINNING AND ESCALATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR:
JANUARY-MARCH 1965

As stated in Chapter 2, the U.S. Administration's propaganda campaign was waged with three broad goals in mind: to persuade the audience to perceive the war as the Administration wished it to be perceived; to convince the audience of the necessity and importance of the war; and to persuade the audience that the Administration's intentions were peaceful, with force used only as a last resort. Within this broad framework there are several issues to consider when examining and judging the success or failure of the Administration's propaganda campaign. This campaign can be judged both as a whole and as a series of propaganda operations, either initiated by the Administration, or as a response to a particular incident during the war and the subsequent publicity. The issues to consider are: Administration planning and knowledge at different stages of the war, mainly contained in The Pentagon Papers; what the newspapers reported at these same stages; how this reporting fitted in with the Administration's plans; how the British Government acted and what the British public thought, according to opinion polls; and the effects of Administration propaganda policies and moves as reflected in the newspapers, and as they affected the British Government and public opinion.
For a number of reasons Administration planning and knowledge is especially important in relation to the early stages and subsequent escalation of the war.

Firstly, from the Administration's point of view this was a crucial stage in the conflict itself. In only three months the Administration switched from the previous policy of limited involvement with American advisors, to air raids, and then the dispatch of ground troops, even though in a defensive role. In the short term, the tactics that the Administration used to handle publicity at this early stage, before greater involvement, and growing casualties, and while the possibility of withdrawal was still thought to be an alternative, could affect more seriously the way that the next set of policy decisions on conducting the expanded conflict would be received and perceived by both the press and public.

Secondly, in view of the Administration's previously expressed reluctance "to go North", during this early stage of increased activity it was necessary to fix in the press and public's perceptions the necessity for the Administration's decision to bomb North Vietnam and then to convince them of the Administration's basically peaceful intentions, reluctance to escalate and desire for negotiations. In propaganda terms this could then be used to justify the Administration's future conduct of the conflict.

Thirdly, from the point of view of assessing the Administration's propaganda campaign, examining the
Administration's knowledge and planning in early 1965 will show whether and to what extent the Administration privately realised what lay ahead, that is, the massive growth of the conflict with its attendant casualties. Having ascertained the Administration's private perceptions of the future course of the conflict it will then be possible to compare these perceptions with the Administration view of the conflict contained in official statements and speeches disseminated through the press and to determine the accuracy and veracity of Administration statements.

During this vital period the parameters of U.S. policy were established: no withdrawal and negotiations on U.S. terms. Within these parameters though, U.S. policy was fluid and reactive, rather than purposive.

A. Administration Planning

According to The Pentagon Papers, the Administration planned a "major policy review" on Vietnam at the end of November 1964, consisting of a series of "strategy meetings" which included the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Maxwell Taylor, followed by meetings with Johnson. The preliminary strategy meetings evaluated the policy options previously submitted by the NSC Working Group on SVN/SEA. The Working Group's options were:

"Option A essentially was a continuation of military and naval actions currently underway or previously authorized, to include prompt reprisals for attacks on U.S. facilities or other VC 'spectaculars' in South Vietnam. These were to be accompanied by continued resistance to a negotiated settlement unless stringent preconditions, amounting to agreement to abide by U.S. interpretations of the Geneva Accords,
were met. Option B consisted of current policies plus a systematic program of progressively heavy military pressures against North Vietnam, to be continued until current objectives were met. Negotiations were to be resisted, as in A, although to be entered ultimately, but they were to be carried on in conjunction with continued bombing attacks. Option C combined current policies with (1) additional - but somewhat milder - military pressures against North Vietnam and (2) a declared willingness to negotiate. Once negotiations were begun, military pressures were to stop, although the threat to resume was to be kept alive."

Following the preliminary "strategy meetings", the final policy proposal was drafted by Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs William P. Bundy and reviewed again before submission to President Johnson. Bundy's draft paper essentially contained a combination of Options 'A' and 'C', with Option 'A' actions to be pursued for the first 30 days followed by:

"...a mixture of suggested actions and rationale similar to that in Option C. The air strikes would be 'progressively more serious' and would be 'adjusted to the situation.' The expected duration was indicated as 'possibly running from two to six months.' "..."The approach would be steady and deliberate, to give the United States the option 'to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not.' "

There were differences between the President's advisors over how gradual and how forceful the air strikes should be, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff favouring dramatically forceful action designed to affect Hanoi's will to continue and inflict maximum damage. The State and Defense Departments and the White House preferred a more gradual application of incremental pressures, "in which
the prospect of greater pressure to come was at least as important as the damage inflicted."

The Pentagon Papers explain that "apparently several [language] changes were made [to Bundy's paper] in order not to ask the President to commit himself unnecessarily". In addition, proposals concerning U.S. publication of evidence of North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam and presentation of this evidence to Congressional leaders and allied heads of state, and a major presidential speech, were deleted from Bundy's paper. According to The Pentagon Papers these changes were significant in that the actions now recommended - described afterwards by the Administration as 'phase one' and 'phase two' - "would represent the least possible additional commitment. This represented a considerable softening of the positions held at the end of the first Principals [senior NSC members] meeting, on the 24th [of November]." Finally one of the most important changes concerned the Principals' attitude to negotiations, which now ruled out the previously favoured "formal" Geneva Conference and wanted "U.S./GVN terms for cessation of attacks" sent to Hanoi privately, not declared publicly. The senior officials' position was summed up:

"Thus, it is fairly clear that the policy position formulated by the Principals before presentation to the President included no provision for early bargaining at the conference table."11

According to The Pentagon Papers at the meeting with President Johnson on 1 December the participants discussed
Bundy's paper, were briefed by Taylor on the situation in South Vietnam and also considered the help given by U.S. allies to South Vietnam. Johnson apparently approved the "general outline" of the paper's proposals but only agreed to the implementation of 'phase one' actions. On the overall results of the meeting *The Pentagon Papers* conclude:

"In effect, the December strategy meeting produced little change except to make more concrete the concept of possible future operations against North Vietnam and to authorize steps to include GVN in preparation for these possibilities. It is clear that the President did not make any commitment at this point to expand the war through future operations against North Vietnam."\(^{12}\)

Although *The Pentagon Papers* analyst states that "Phase one actions to exert additional pressures on North Vietnam were quite limited" with only the "GVN maritime operations and U.S. armed reconnaissance missions in Laos" being "military actions"\(^{12}\), the fact is that the original military measures being supplemented were secret operations that the public knew nothing of until U.S. planes were shot down over Laos in January 1965. The other 'phase one' actions were "stage-managing the public release of evidence of increased Communist infiltration" and getting more help from other countries.\(^{14}\) In the latter sphere UK officials were briefed by William Bundy on 3 December\(^{15}\) and subsequently Harold Wilson was also "thoroughly briefed"\(^{16}\) during his visit to Washington in December 1964. What emerges clearly from the Bundy briefing on 3 December is that the U.S. ruled out
"dramatic action" against North Vietnam partly because of the political instability in South Vietnam and the "still slowly deteriorating" situation: the initiation of 'phase two' actions depended on an improvement in South Vietnam and Hanoi's response to 'phase one' actions. After the briefing Bundy also suggested that the UK increase its police advisors in South Vietnam as part of the "vital... increased third country contributions" necessitated by the possibility of "more serious decisions" on South Vietnam. 17

Thus, although President Johnson may not have committed himself to expanding the war in December 1964, nevertheless some quite detailed planning had been undertaken to increase already existing military pressures on North Vietnam and stronger actions were eschewed in part because of South Vietnam's "fragility" and not simply because of the Administration's reluctance to widen the conflict. In addition the Administration was actively seeking increased assistance from a number of third countries. So, at the very least, the Administration clearly had no intention of withdrawing, or it seems, negotiating, except on its own terms to achieve its objectives.

Publicly the Administration had earlier "sought to dampen" the intense press and congressional speculation concerning a possible expansion of the conflict. 10. And after the 1 December meeting an Administration press statement merely confirmed U.S. assistance to South Vietnam and Ambassador Taylor's instructions to consult
the Saigon government; nothing was said officially about the substance of discussions or the decisions that had been taken.\textsuperscript{19}

However, the Administration's 'gradual' method of handling the conflict was overturned by a serious deterioration politically in South Vietnam, including one of the Vietcong (VC) 'spectaculars' that had previously been judged unlikely when the Administration briefed friendly countries in early December.\textsuperscript{20} On 19 December a military coup in South Vietnam sparked off an internal political crisis, with repercussions on relations with the U.S., which continued throughout January 1965 and was not finally 'settled' until late February. On 24 December the Vietcong bombed the Brink Hotel in Saigon, where U.S. Officers were billeted, killing two Americans and wounding a number of others, including some South Vietnamese. Despite appeals for retaliatory action from various sections of the Administration, including the Saigon Embassy, the President and his principal advisors eventually decided not to retaliate, mainly because of the political turmoil in South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{21} Added to this, for a variety of reasons\textsuperscript{22} no 'phase one' maritime operations had effectively been undertaken and the 'intensified' air strikes over Laos had not apparently been perceived by the communists as any different to earlier air activity\textsuperscript{23}, thereby robbing the program of its significance as a signal and warning to the communists. So, by late December 1964 the Administration's calculations, underpinning the
late November/early December policy decisions, were already redundant.

Thus, January 1965 found the Administration yet again reviewing its policy on South Vietnam, against this background of political deterioration in Saigon, which had also generated another outbreak of criticism at home from Congress and the press. The January policy review focussed on both the internal effects of the crisis in South Vietnam and also its wider impact on neighbouring countries, with the concomitant implications for U.S. foreign policy. Summing up the Saigon Embassy's advice, which was naturally mainly concerned with the situation in South Vietnam, The Pentagon Papers state:

"One very significant and probably influential viewpoint was registered by the Saigon Embassy....the thrust of the advice seemed to be to move into Phase Two, almost in spite of the political outcome in Saigon." 24

According to The Pentagon Papers analyst, State Department officials concentrated mainly on the wider impact of a debacle in South Vietnam:

"The perceived impact of a collapse in Saigon on other nations - perhaps even more than the political fortunes of South Vietnam itself - were a significant part of the State Department calculations. If a unilateral 'Vietnam solution' were to be arranged, so the thinking went in January 1965, not only would Laos and Cambodia be indefensible, but Thailand's position would become unpredictable." 25

The study then quotes Bundy's written assessment:

"Most seriously, there is a grave question whether the Thai in these circumstances would retain any confidence at all in our continued support....As events have developed, the American public would probably not be too sharply critical, but the real question would be
whether Thailand and other nations were weakened and taken over thereafter."26

In effect, the State Department was worried about the impact that a South Vietnamese collapse would have on the American image of will and capability in the eyes of other nations and thus on America's position as a bulwark against communism, particularly in South East Asia. Also, according to The Pentagon Papers, Bundy and other Administration officials apparently believed that U.S. policies had appeared so ineffective to Asian nations since the presidential election, that these nations believed that the U.S. insistence "on a more perfect government than can reasonably be expected, before we consider any additional action..."27 was an indication that the U.S. "'was possibly looking for a way out.'"28

The study also cites "current developments in the communist world" as part of the State Department's concern: in addition to the USSR's resumption of an active role in South East Asia, China was viewed as a country supporting revolution and Indonesia was mentioned as a possible Chinese ally along with North Vietnam and North Korea.29

In the Pentagon, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) arrived at conclusions similar to the State Department's. If anything, OSD was even more blunt than the State Department about the value of South Vietnam itself to the U.S.:"In the event of inability to prevent deterioration within South Vietnam, he [Assistant Secretary McNaughton] urged
development of plans to move to a fallback position by helping shore-up Thailand and Malaysia.

An OSD assessment made immediately after the Khanh coup in late January adds perspective to this viewpoint. [Doc.249] In it, McNaughton stated and Secretary McNamara agreed, 'U.S. objective in South Vietnam is not 'to help friend' but to contain China.' In particular, both Malaysia and Thailand were seen as the next targets of Chinese aggressiveness."30

The advice tendered by the State Department was yet again to increase the pressure on North Vietnam, although not to move into 'phase two' operations at this stage. The specific measures suggested were:

"(1) 'an early early occasion for reprisal action...'; (2) 'possibly beginning low-level reconnaissance of DRV...'; (3) 'an orderly withdrawal of our dependents,' which was termed 'a grave mistake in the absence of stronger action'; and (4) 'introduction of limited U.S. ground forces into the northern area of South Vietnam...concurrently with the first air attacks into the DRV.'"31

OSD concurred with the view that air attacks should be launched on North Vietnam:

"...both [McNaughton and McNamara] favored initiating strikes against North Vietnam. At first, they believed, these should take the form of reprisals; beyond that, the Administration would have to 'feel its way' into stronger, graduated pressures. McNaughton doubted that such strikes would actually help the situation in South Vietnam but thought they should be carried out anyway. McNamara believed they probably would help the situation, in addition to their broader impacts on the U.S. position in Southeast Asia."32

By 11 January the Administration had abandoned its former condition for stronger measures, that is, an improvement in South Vietnam's political situation, and was prepared, if necessary, to cooperate with a military government.33. On 25 January the withdrawal of U.S.
dependents from South Vietnam was under consideration. Despite the appearance of an inexorable march towards bombing North Vietnam, at this point The Pentagon Papers analyst states clearly that the Administration was only considering reprisals, not 'phase two' actions. However, set against this judgement it seems that at least two of Johnson's advisors - McNamara and McNaughton - expected that the Administration would have to take stronger measures, with reprisals acting as simply a preliminary stage.

The method chosen by the Administration to trigger reprisals was to authorise a provocative U.S. destroyer patrol - eventually scheduled for 7 February - in the Gulf of Tonkin (termed DESOTO patrols in The Pentagon Papers). Under the code-name Flaming Dart a list of targets to be struck in North Vietnam was drawn up in the case of an attack on a destroyer patrol or a Vietcong 'spectacular'. In the event the DESOTO patrol was cancelled due to Soviet Premier Kosygin's visit to North Vietnam and the U.S. desire to avoid offering a provocation in the hope that the USSR might act as a restraint on North Vietnam. The Administration's choice of a DESOTO patrol appeared to hark back to the Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964, when U.S. air strikes were launched on North Vietnam in retaliation for a North Vietnamese attack on a DESOTO patrol in the Tonkin Gulf. If, in August 1964, the Administration had not expected a destroyer patrol to be attacked, now it clearly thought that such a patrol would
act as a provocation to the North Vietnamese, and if attacked would trigger justifiable U.S. reprisals. However, despite U.S. efforts to avoid a provocation at this particular time, when the Vietcong attacked two U.S. installations (Pleiku and Camp Hollaway) and other targets on 7 February causing heavy casualties, the Flaming Dart reprisals were launched. On 8 February U.S. planes bombed targets in North Vietnam. According to Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions, on 6 February McGeorge Bundy, who was then in South Vietnam on a fact-finding mission, had already drafted a recommendation for sustained reprisals, not merely retaliatory strikes, in order to "influence the course of the struggle in the South." Bundy recommended developing "the necessary public and diplomatic statements to accompany the initiation and continuation of this [reprisal] program" and he also stated:

"At its very best the struggle in Vietnam will be long. It seems to us important that this fundamental fact be made clear and our understanding of it be made clear to our people and to the people of Vietnam. Too often in the past we have conveyed the impression that we expect an early solution when those who live with this war know that no early solution is possible. It is our belief that the people of the United States have the necessary will to accept and execute a policy that rests upon the reality that there is no short cut to success in South Vietnam." Three days later the Vietcong launched another spectacular attack on a U.S. barracks at Qui Nhon and again the Administration responded with air strikes on North Vietnam. On 13 February President Johnson authorised
the sustained bombing of North Vietnam, a programme
code-named Rolling Thunder, which was also to be publicly
announced. On 19 February U.S. air strikes against
Vietcong positions in South Vietnam began.

Initially the Rolling Thunder non-retaliatory air
strikes were scheduled to begin on 20 February, but they
were successively postponed, first because of more
political upheaval in Saigon; then because of a UK-USSR
peace initiative which the U.S. Government did not want to
appear to be wrecking with air strikes; and lastly because
of bad weather.\textsuperscript{37} Just before the first Rolling Thunder
air strikes were finally launched on 2 March, the State
Department published a paper on North Vietnam's efforts to
"conquer" the South, containing details of North
Vietnamese infiltration and supplies of weapons to the
Vietcong.\textsuperscript{38}

The next step taken by the Administration on 6 March
was to deploy two Marine Corps battalions in South Vietnam
to guard the U.S. airfield at Danang. The U.S. military
commander in Vietnam, General Westmoreland, had requested
these troops on 22 February and President Johnson had
approved the request on 25 February.\textsuperscript{39} The U.S. troops
landed in South Vietnam on 8 March.

Secretary of Defense McNamara had already started
examining the efficacy of the U.S. air strikes on North
Vietnam after the initial reprisal raids on 8 and 11
February and had concluded that future raids would have to
inflict more damage. On 17 February he told the Joint
Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chairman General Wheeler:
"Our primary objective, of course, was to communicate our political resolve. This I believe we did. Future communications, or resolve, however, will carry a hollow ring unless we accomplish more military damage than we have to date...."\(^4\)

According to General Wheeler this matter was already in hand - for example President Johnson authorised the use of napalm on 9 March - and he recommended loosening Washington's tight control over the air strikes, giving more flexibility to the field commanders in attacking targets.\(^4\) This recommendation was also supported by General Harold Johnson, Army Chief of Staff, who had been dispatched to South Vietnam on 5 March on another fact-finding mission by President Johnson.\(^4\) However, not only did General Johnson recommend loosening restrictions on the air strikes, expanding the bombing programme (Ambassador Taylor had already pressed vigorously for this), not relating the strikes to Vietcong incidents and curtailing publicity on them, but he also proposed sending to South Vietnam either a division of U.S. troops or four divisions of U.S. and SEATO troops. On 15 March President Johnson approved most of General Johnson's 21 recommendations, but not the troop proposals.\(^4\)

As The Pentagon Papers make clear, by 21 March the U.S. military chiefs were proposing a bombing programme that was designed to destroy North Vietnam's military capabilities. Although this programme was not approved as a package, some proposals, such as cutting North Vietnam's lines of communication and striking its radar stations, were incorporated into the expanded bombing campaign.
According to The Pentagon Papers, the purpose of the bombing programme had by now changed radically and so had the original expectations concerning its efficacy:

"Operation Rolling Thunder was thus being shifted from an exercise in air power 'dominated by political and psychological considerations' to a 'militarily more significant, sustained bombing program' aimed at destroying the capabilities of North Vietnam to support a war in the South.

But the shift also meant that 'early hopes that Rolling Thunder could succeed by itself in persuading Hanoi to call off the Vietcong were also waning.'

Thus once again the Administration was forced to review the options available to achieve its objectives, because current policy was not achieving the desired results. On 24 March Assistant Secretary McNaughton evaluated the current policy, its aims and problems in a draft "Plan for Action for South Vietnam" for Secretary of Defense McNamara:

"1. U.S. aims:
  70% - To avoid a humiliating U.S. defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor).
  20% - To keep SVN (and the adjacent) territory from Chinese hands.
  10% - To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life.
  ALSO - To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.
  NOT - to 'help a friend,' although it would be hard to stay in if asked out."

McNaughton then posed the question of whether South Vietnam could be "bottomed out" without taking "extreme measures" against North Vietnam or sending large numbers of combat troops to South Vietnam. His answer to the question was "perhaps, but probably no." He then detailed the "trilemma" of U.S. policy:
"U.S. policy appears to be drifting. This is because, while there is consensus that efforts inside SVN (para 6) will probably fail to prevent collapse, all three of the possible remedial courses of action have so far been rejected:

a. Will-breaking strikes on the North (para 7) are balked (1) by flash-point limits, (2) by doubts that the DRV will cave and (3) by doubts that VC will obey a caving DRV. (Leaving strikes only a political and anti-infiltration nuisance.)

b. Large U.S. troop deployments (para 9) are blocked by 'French-defeat' and 'Korea' syndromes, and Quat (current South Vietnamese Prime Minister) is queasy. (Troops could be net negatives, and be besieged.)

c. Exit by negotiations (para 9) is tainted by the humiliation likely to follow."

Under the section dealing with air strikes on North Vietnam in "Important miscellany", McNaughton listed:
keeping the enemy "aware of our limited objectives";
keeping allies "on board"; keeping the USSR "in passive role"; and "Information program should preserve U.S. public support."

At the same time that McNaughton was recommending troop deployment as a "possible course of action" while acknowledging that it would take "massive deployments (many divisions) the GVNU.S.:VC ratio to the optimum 10+:1", General Westmoreland also submitted his analysis of the situation in South Vietnam. He requested reinforcements which would bring U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam up to approximately 70,000. Westmoreland wanted the troops by June and "indicated that more troops might be required thereafter if the bombing failed to achieve results."
All these proposals were scheduled for discussion at a White House National Security Council meeting on 1-2 April. Just before the meeting took place on 2 March the Vietcong staged another of its 'spectaculars' and bombed the U.S. Embassy in Saigon: apparently, U.S. bombing of North Vietnam had not affected the Vietcong's will and ability to blow up any target it chose.

B.) Administration Propaganda Techniques

Analysing the Administration's private views on handling public information about the conflict at this stage, it can be seen that the Administration was very much aware of the need to keep the public - and U.S. allies - informed on what the Administration knew would be a long and hard struggle, entailing U.S. losses and with an uncertain outcome. Many of the policy documents submitted for discussion to the President or his principal advisors - by for instance McNaughton, or McGeorge Bundy or William Bundy - contained recommendations on the type of information to release to the public and U.S. allies and the method of release: whether by Presidential speech, White House statement, background briefings, press conferences, Congressional consultations, or public report.¹⁰

At first glance this might seem to betoken an Administration emphasis on actually keeping the public informed. However, in the case of one of the most important Administration decisions about sustained air strikes on North Vietnam, it was also recommended that
after initial announcements on reprisals the U.S. should then implement this policy "with as low a level of public noise as possible", while publishing regularly "a running catalogue of Viet Cong offenses...". The rationale given was that it was not in the U.S. interest to "boast" about its actions. But, whatever the rationale, the Administration was clearly open to charges on this important issue that it did not intend to keep the public fully informed about its own actions, only about the other side's actions. Thus the Administration's main propaganda effort at this point was concentrated on explaining why it was bombing North Vietnam, not how it was doing this or what the results were. The potential problem of negotiations was encompassed in the explanation for the air strikes:

"In the closing days of February and during early March, the Administration undertook publicly and privately to defend and propound its rationale for the air strikes...Secretary Rusk conducted a marathon public information campaign to signal a seemingly reasonable but in fact quite tough U.S. position on negotiations, demanding that Hanoi 'stop doing what it is doing against its neighbors' before any negotiations could prove fruitful."

So, the Administration's propaganda argument for bombing North Vietnam rested on North Vietnam's general 'aggression' against the South and the air strikes after Pleiku were deliberately set within this wider context of attacks on the South Vietnamese as well as on Americans. Recommendations to the President on handling public information explicitly stated that the focus was to be concentrated on this Northern aggression. However,
underpinning this argument was a particular interpretation, or reinterpretation, of two important factors. Firstly, the demarcation between North and South Vietnam, which in the 1954 Geneva Agreements had been a temporary dividing line pending elections on reunification, in Administration propaganda became an international boundary dividing two separate nations, not two sectors of the same country. Classifying South Vietnam as an independent nation⁵⁶ meant that the U.S. could justify bombing raids to help this independent nation - South Vietnam - to repel outside aggression. As a corollary, elevating South Vietnam to full nationhood also dealt with the potentially damaging accusation that the U.S. was interfering in a civil war and thus allowed the U.S. to expand its involvement in the conflict and still remain within United Nations stipulations on other nations' involvement in conflicts as opposed to civil wars. In this context U.S. commitments under the SEATO Treaty were also cited as justifying U.S. actions to help South Vietnam repel this armed attack.⁵⁷

Secondly, the original justification for the reprisal air strikes were Vietcong attacks in South Vietnam. So, to justify bombing North Vietnam the Administration had to link Vietcong attacks in the South to Northern direction and support; in other words a Northern war of conquest using Southern guerillas, but with increasing numbers of North Vietnamese infiltrators. This interpretation also explained the unrest and political turmoil in South
Vietnam by putting the blame on North Vietnam's interference and further assuming that South Vietnam's parlous internal condition would then improve. But, there were potential propaganda problems with the Administration's interpretation of these factors.

Concerning the demarcation between North and South Vietnam, there was no foundation in the Geneva Agreements to consider the 17th parallel as a permanent division, much less an international border, which was how the Administration's propaganda arguments treated this dividing line. Indeed a year later in March 1966, in a Memorandum on "The Legality of United States Participation in the Defense of Viet-Nam", presented to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the State Department's Legal Advisor, while concluding that defending South Vietnam was legal, also stated: "...the fact that South Viet-Nam is a zone of a temporarily divided state..." thereby disposing of South Vietnam's independent nationhood and negating one of the Administration's propaganda arguments. This admission also laid the U.S. open to the charge that it was involving itself in a civil war. Even without the Administration's own officials pointing out such flaws, the Geneva Agreements were openly available and the accuracy of the Administration's interpretation of those Agreements, as they related to South Vietnam's political status, could easily be checked and disputed. This could not only damage the Administration's propaganda effort, but could also damage
its general credibility, leading to a loss of public confidence concerning the Administration's statements on the war, which in turn would affect how future Administration propaganda was publicly received and perceived.

The nature of the conflict in South Vietnam was also very much open to different interpretations, the most obvious being that the conflict was an insurgency and/or civil war. Despite the Administration's public emphasis on this being a war of aggression by North Vietnam, in private there were references to the conflict being primarily an insurgency. Thus in March the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon in a telegram to Rusk referred to "U.S. involvement in the counterinsurgency" and McNaughton's 24 March evaluation of the situation referred to "doubts that the VC will obey caving DRV." These private, or intergovernmental views and analyses such as McGeorge Bundy's at the time of Pleiku tended to contradict the Administration's justification for the reprisal air strikes:

"Moreover, these attacks [Pleiku] were only made possible by the continuing infiltration of personnel and equipment from North Vietnam. This infiltration markedly increased during 1964 and continues to increase."

However, in addition to differences in the Administration's private and public views on the nature of the conflict, the public views expressed by the Administration in March 1965 were also different from its earlier public stance:
"Until the February raids, and especially throughout the election campaign of 1964, the case had regularly been made that the insurrection in the South was essentially a home-grown affair and largely self-supporting; now the argument had to be turned around and public opinion persuaded that there really wouldn't be much difficulty cleaning up the South if infiltrators from the North would just go home and 'leave their neighbors alone.'"(64

Thus, in the light of the Administration's previous statements, its reprisal air strikes on North Vietnam and introduction of troops into South Vietnam in March 1965 left it open to the charge that it was now interfering in a conflict it had previously regarded as an insurgency. And even if North Vietnam poured troops and materiel into that conflict, unless North Vietnam was classed as a foreign country the U.S. was still open to accusations of interfering in a civil war proper - as well as an insurgency. Furthermore, the official U.S. view that North Vietnam was the prime cause of South Vietnam's troubles was not consistent with reality - as the Administration well knew from its Ambassador in Saigon, from intelligence reports(65 on the situation and from various fact-finding missions to South Vietnam. McGeorge Bundy pinpointed some of the problems in his 7 February evaluation. Discussing one of the root causes of unrest and mentioning the groups involved in the political in-fighting, he stated:

"Vietnamese talk is full of the need for 'revolution.' Vietnamese practice is empty of action to match the talk—so much so that the word 'revolution' sometimes seems to have no real meaning. Yet in fact there is plainly a deep and strong yearning among the young and the underprivileged for a new and better social order. This is what the Buddhist leaders are groping toward; this is what the students and young Turk generals are seeking. This yearning
does not find an adequate response in American policy as Vietnamese see it. This is one cause of latent anti-American feeling."

And discussing the then head of government, General Khanh, Bundy wrote:

"Khanh is not an easy man to deal with. It is clear that he takes a highly tactical view of the truth, although General Westmoreland asserts that Khanh has never deceived him. He is intensely ambitious and intent above all else on maintaining and advancing his own power. He gravely lacks the confidence of many of his colleagues--military and civilian--and he seems not to be personally popular with the public. He is correctly assessed as tricky. 

...our principal reason for opposing any sharp break with Khanh is that we see no one else in sight with anything like his ability to combine military authority with some sense of politics."

Clearly the Administration knew that much of South Vietnam's political instability was self-generated - and that U.S. policies were perpetuating the very situation - and leaders - that was frustrating many Vietnamese.

To make its case that North Vietnamese aggression was the cause of trouble in the South, the Administration published its report on North Vietnamese infiltration. This report needed to be convincing because it was intended to convey to the public the Administration's hard evidence on infiltration - the facts on which the Administration based its actions and public statements on the conflict. However when published it received a mixed reception which did not augur well for the Administration's propaganda effort.

The Administration was also aware of the potential 'image' problems it might face, particularly if great
numbers of U.S. and Third Country troops were to be introduced into South Vietnam. When Westmoreland wanted one U.S. division sent to South Vietnam, Ambassador Taylor stated:

"It will increase our vulnerability to Communist propaganda and Third Country criticism as we appear to assume the old French role of alien colonizer and conqueror."

McNaughton too suggested that with the dispatch of large numbers of troops: "anti-U.S. 'colonialist' mood may increase in and outside SVN." However, there was little the Administration could do about this particular 'image' problem other than to note it, for the prime consideration of U.S. policy was to prevent South Vietnam collapsing and with the failure of the air strikes the option left was that of large troop dispatches - given that "will-breaking" air strikes and negotiations had been ruled out.

Attention was also paid to public perception of the military methods to use in achieving U.S. goals. In his 24 March memorandum McNaughton mentioned this aspect twice: first when he stated that in general the U.S. must "emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used" and second when he outlined more intensive bombing programmes and military measures, including mining North Vietnamese ports, and noted the risk of "World-wide revulsion against us (against strikes, blockades, etc.)."

To sum up, in its policy deliberations the Administration invariably included a review of propaganda
techniques and goals and also noted some potential pitfalls relating to its central methods of fighting the war. Already the basic propaganda framework had been established, which continually emphasised enemy aggression, actions and intentions and minimised publicity about U.S. actions after the initial major announcement on the air strikes. The approach was outlined in a State Department message to U.S. Ambassadors in Asia on 18 February:

"Careful public statements of USG [U.S. Government], combined with fact of continuing air action, are expected to make it clear that military action will continue while aggression continues. But focus of attention will be kept as far as possible on DRV aggression; not on joint GVN-U.S. military operations. There will be no comment of any sort on future actions except that all such actions will be adequate and measured and fitting to aggression."72

Thus any errors in the Administration's propaganda campaign could not be attributed to either a lack of attention to, or ignorance of, the role and importance of propaganda in a conflict.

C.) Press Reporting and Reaction

Throughout January 1965 U.S. and British newspapers were reporting the deteriorating political and military situation in South Vietnam.73 The coup in Saigon on 26 January had been preceded by rioting during which the United States Information Service Libraries in Saigon and Hue had been attacked as a protest over U.S. support for the then Premier Huong. Militarily, the Vietcong were reported to be extending their control. A Daily Telegraph editorial summed up the situation on 20 January:
"What the Americans have been trying to promote ever since the fall of Diem more than two years ago is a government that would unite all political factions behind the military drive against the Viet Cong guerillas. What has, instead, been taking place is a succession of coups, counter-coups, intrigues and demonstrations in which rival generals quarrel between themselves and with the civilians, while politically-minded Buddhist monks stir the brew.

This deplorable political background might not matter so much if military operations against the communists were nevertheless proceeding satisfactorily. They are not. For all the massive American commitment of arms, aircraft and technical support, the guerillas are gaining ground. While holding much of the countryside in terror, they are now, significantly, making more frequent attacks on urban areas and also on American billets and clubs. Their next step may be attempted subversion in the Viet-namese Army."

The general impression in British newspapers, using reports from their Washington-based correspondents, was of an increasingly desperate situation in South Vietnam which was correspondingly decreasing the options available to the U.S. Administration. These reports reflected the assessments of U.S. Administration sources and the U.S. military chiefs, as well as American critics of Administration policy. For instance on 16 January, The Guardian reported Senator McGovern's critical speech to the Senate on South Vietnam with the headline: "Some Harsh Words on Vietnam". Under the subheading "'Not Winning'" the report stated:

"He began with the assertion:
'Ve are not winning in South Vietnam. We are backing a Government there that is incapable of winning a military struggle or governing its people. We are fighting a determined army of guerillas that seems to enjoy the co-operation of the countryside and that grows stronger in the face of foreign intervention.' He thought victory was farther away than 10 years ago."
On 18 January, under the headline "U.S. Army Chiefs Urge Bombing of N. Vietnam", The Times wrote:

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff, convinced that the present policy for South Vietnam can only lead to disaster, are pressing for more direct and immediate military measures. Their plan would involve the bombing of North Vietnam and the dispatch of an American expeditionary force. In view of President Johnson's determination not to extend the war it could be said that this plan is of no account." 78

On 23 January, The Times reported the U.S. State Department's "concern over increased movement of North Vietnamese troops through Laos." The report continued:

"If this is correct, and the Pentagon would have the press believe that it is, the situation must be serious; but Mr. McCloskey [State Department spokesman] said there was no cause for alarm...
Meanwhile, the United States Information Library in Saigon was attacked by a mob today. It was yet another sign of the deterioration in South Vietnam, but the State Department could only say that it was regrettable." 79

While on 31 January, Henry Brandon writing from Washington in the Sunday Times stated:

"WITH THE latest developments in South Vietnam the Johnson Administration feels like a ship with the rudder broken, the anchor chains torn away, the hull leaking and one mutiny after another on the bridge. The American passengers are tossed about, holding desperately to the railings...
With the political uncertainties in Saigon and the American freedom of choice being constantly narrowed, it is not easy to develop a policy. As a consequence no one close to the top wants to assume responsibility for taking the lead." 80

Thus both those who supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam and those who criticized this involvement agreed on two propositions in January 1965: that the situation in South Vietnam was deteriorating; and that President
Johnson had no intention of widening the conflict. However, there was disagreement as to the cause of this deterioration and how to resolve the whole problem of Vietnam. The Administration laid the blame for the deterioration on North Vietnamese infiltration, while critics of U.S. involvement stressed the political instability in Saigon. Journalists reported both aspects of the situation and also the various solutions under consideration.

In support of its case the Administration released some figures on North Vietnamese infiltration, prior to its full-blown report released at the end of February, and on 25 January the press cited U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy on the implications of this development:

"A top U.S. spokesman for Far Eastern Affairs said today that U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam is 'unthinkable,' but he held open the possibility of enlarging the war in response to Communist actions."

The report also explained that while in previous years the Administration had said the Vietcong were basically South Vietnamese, now infiltration meant that the communists had more manpower and this in turn affected their view of their chances of winning:

"U.S. officials agreed that if any other evidence were needed that the Communists think they are winning and therefore have no interest in negotiating a settlement, this development [infiltration] supplies it."

The explicit statement that the war might be expanded in response to communist moves and that the communists
were not interested in negotiating encapsulated two interrelated Administration's propaganda goals, aimed at shifting the blame for escalation and lack of negotiations onto the communists. The propaganda technique the Administration used was to emphasise communist infiltration, supplying detailed figures, and then to interpret this development for its audiences within the Administration's own conceptual framework.

A fairly detailed break-down of North Vietnamese infiltration, based on "informed sources in Saigon", was provided by USIS in London in a Washington datelined report on 28 January. In addition to drawing the conclusion that Hanoi was supplying troops for the Vietcong, USIS also concluded that the number of Southern guerillas trained in the North was "drying up" and the number of "irregulars" supporting them had not changed. The implication was that there was no longer the Southern support for the Vietcong that there had been previously and therefore the North was becoming the dominant element - a more sophisticated version of the 'foreign invasion' thesis. USIS also attempted to ward off possible allegations that infiltration figures had been provided for some purpose other than mere public information:

"American officials pointed out that these figures were being made public at this time not as a prelude to new policy decisions, but to update the record now solidly established. They also now have a better insight into the methods and the geography of infiltration." And the report concluded by reproducing a somewhat different official view of the course of the conflict
compared with Bundy's comments on a possible expansion of the conflict:

"The picture emerging from firm evidence is a matter of concern in Washington, but officials at this point do not see the war in South Vietnam entering a new phase."[65]

The USIS report was inaccurate in the most important respects. Concerning infiltration and the composition of the Vietcong, in November 1964 the National Security Council Working Group on Vietnam in its Intelligence Assessment concluded:

"Despite a large and growing DRV contribution to the Viet Cong insurrection, the primary sources of Communist strength in the South remain indigenous."[66]

Also the figures on infiltration were being released as the prelude to a new policy - DESOTO patrols having been authorised and long-considered reprisals planned for the next Vietcong attack.[67] Indeed collating infiltration evidence had been put in hand in December 1964 with that purpose in mind - to explain U.S. involvement in attacks on North Vietnam.[68] And the new policy of reprisals was quite likely to lead to a new phase in the war, as was recognised in considering the evacuation of U.S. dependents from South Vietnam by 25 January.

As can be seen, although the general information provided by the U.S. official propaganda organ fitted in with the Administration's propaganda goals, already there was something of a discrepancy between Bundy's reported remarks on the conflict and the information put out by USIS subsequently.
Despite the USIS reassurance that the war was not entering a new phase, when the Vietcong attacked Pleiku, the Administration responded with air strikes on North Vietnam. As The Pentagon Papers make clear, these air strikes constituted a conscious break with past U.S. policy and the introduction of new 'ground rules' in the conflict. The U.S. justification for the air strikes explicitly associated the North Vietnamese with Vietcong attacks in the South and also linked the U.S. with South Vietnam by mentioning attacks on South Vietnamese as well as U.S. facilities. In addition President Johnson also stated that U.S. dependents were being withdrawn from South Vietnam because of Hanoi's "more aggressive course of action"; that the U.S. must "make absolutely clear our determination to back South Vietnam in its fight to maintain its independence"; that a Hawk air defense battalion was being deployed to South Vietnam and that: "Other reinforcements, in units and individuals may follow."

The press reporting that followed these air strikes covered not only the events and U.S. justifications, but also focused on the ensuing wave of pleas for negotiations and plans to achieve these - including British statements and moves - and U.S. reactions to these.

Concerning the events and U.S. justifications, despite the Administration's careful emphasis in its statement on the Pleiku attacks that both South Vietnamese and U.S
installations,"several villages" and a South Vietnamese town were attacked, press reports focussed on the attacks on U.S. installations. Indeed The Times on 8 February ran a report with the headline, "Reprisal For Attacks on American Troops" and stated:

"The surprise of yesterday's attacks was enhanced because they were directed mainly against American installations."\(^{92}\)

Keeping the focus on the U.S., press reports then dissected the events, analysing the Administration's statements on the situation and justification for the air strikes. Two press reports in particular highlighted the propaganda weaknesses in the U.S. version of Pleiku. On 9 February The Guardian reported that U.S. public opinion supported the U.S. retaliation, but then stated that not everyone in Washington believed that the Administration had proved that Hanoi was behind the attacks:

"Why, it is asked, should it be assumed that these particular night attacks were the handiwork of Hanoi rather than the VietCong guerillas unless it has suddenly become Washington policy to attribute any successful and dramatic attacks against them in South Vietnam to Hanoi. Or, as one commentator asked in today's 'New York Times,' was not the main responsibility for these successful attacks a lack of field intelligence by the South Vietnamese and a failure to prosecute the anti-guerilla war in a more vigorous and successful way?"\(^{93}\)

After mentioning The New York Times' belief that the war was going to escalate, the report then put events in Vietnam into a general South East Asian context, pointing to a Peking broadcast calling for the overthrow of the Thailand Government and stating:
"It is this that seems to have brought home with new force the need to stop communism at the 17th parallel in Vietnam if it is not to sweep ineluctably over the whole of South-east Asia." 24

On balance, despite the comments on the reasons for the U.S. retaliation and the damning assessment of South Vietnamese capabilities and performance, this report was of use to the Administration in setting the Vietnam conflict within the wider struggle against communism and specifically Chinese aggression - a feature of Administration propaganda. However a Guardian editorial on the same day criticised the turn of events, suggesting that Britain should try to reconvene the Geneva Conference, despite the U.S. disinclination to attend such a conference, and stating that the Foreign Secretary should:

"...make clear to Washington the defects - obvious almost everywhere outside that capital - in the present U.S. policy, and to show how it is leading ever further from the goal it has set itself." 25

The Times also immediately questioned the Administration's version of Pleiku, in a 9 February report headlined, "U.S. Decision on Vietnam Not A Hasty One" with the sub-headline: "Evidence of Preparations". The report stated that U.S. objectives were "unchanged, including the hope of a negotiated settlement" and that: "The conflict is not to be expanded into a major war." The report explained that Johnson had decided to embark on "'controlled escalation'", using "controlled bombing" to persuade Hanoi to cease supporting the Vietcong. On the retaliatory air strikes the report stated:
"The decision was not made in the heat of the moment last Saturday night; indeed, it could be said that the attacks on American cantonments were a long-awaited provocation."

Citing the "unusual" presence of U.S. aircraft carriers in the Tonkin Gulf the report continued:

"The targets in North Vietnam had been selected long ago, and it can be assumed that the flight plans did not have to be drawn up in a hurry. President Johnson had literally assumed his responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief weeks before, and has since been acting as an Air Force wing commander.

Some officials deny that the United States was ready and waiting, which is difficult to understand. Apart from the information available, it is at least comforting to know that the President did not act hastily."

There were several potential problems for the Administration's propaganda effort raised in this report:

Firstly, the correct assumption that Pleiku was a provocation that was awaited; secondly the natural corollary that the targets had been preselected; and thirdly that some U.S. officials had denied the U.S. state of readiness. All of these points could have damaged U.S. credibility at the time, for the Administration was disseminating an official version of the situation in which some facts were present and others entirely lacking, and some U.S. officials were denying even obvious conclusions that could be drawn from available information. However alongside comments which might have reflected badly on the Administration, the report also supported U.S. propaganda lines, in stating that the U.S. still hoped for negotiations and that the war was not to become a major conflict. Thus the Administration was still
presented as wanting peace, despite the air strikes, and this counteracted the remarks on being ready and waiting to retaliate. The following day, under the headline, "U.S. Press Calls For Vietnam Talks", The Times repeated its remarks on U.S. readiness, with greater emphasis, and added a new comment on the official U.S. handling of the air strikes:

"There can be no doubt, however, of the general dismay, the secrecy with which the President first conducted a clandestine war and then ordered the bombing of North Vietnamese targets without regard to public opinion is one serious cause, which should not be ignored by the White House.

It has been established that the retaliatory act was planned two months ago. While the President could not be expected to divulge future military planning, he had ample time in which to test public opinion and prepare it for what he must have regarded as an unavoidable if unpleasant act."

The Times report then suggested that the main factor in the Presidential secrecy may have been the "widespread opposition to any further involvement."

Again these were potentially very damaging comments on U.S. policy and handling of events. The charge that the White House was either oblivious to, or careless of, public opinion was ironic in view of the attention paid to this factor in its policy deliberations, as evidenced in The Pentagon papers. And the Administration had created this potential pitfall itself by deliberately keeping quiet about its policy reviews and discussions, giving scant information on the options under consideration and by refusing to reveal its infiltration evidence and make its case earlier as recommended by those in the field."
As a result it was accused of one of the most basic propaganda errors, appearing both overly secret in general and inept politically. But the suggestion that the Administration's secrecy may have been due to "widespread opposition" to further involvement and the earlier remark about a "clandestine war" implied that the Administration was aware of public opinion on the war and was fashioning its policy away from the public gaze precisely because of this knowledge. However this report also mentioned the connection between the U.S. bombing and its objective of negotiations, thus setting the air strikes in a more reassuring framework that implied that the U.S. was not embarking on a major conflict.

Clearly the belief that the Administration was seeking peace was a major factor in counteracting the impression created by its obviously warlike actions, and to some extent this helped legitimise the bombing. This was important in view of the fact that the U.S. air strikes on North Vietnam were first portrayed as reprisals and then became a method of pursuing the war, unrelated to North Vietnamese or Vietcong activities except in the general sense that they were the enemy in South Vietnam.

This belief in the basically peaceful nature of U.S. policy was demonstrated again in the press reports dealing with the second set of U.S. reprisals after the Vietcong attacked Qui Nhon barracks on 10 February. For instance The Guardian report pointed to the generalisation in the U.S. statement about Vietcong actions likely to provoke
U.S. retaliation and stated that this "appears to move the whole war on to a new footing." But the report summed up the purpose of these air strikes as an effort to force Hanoi into negotiations. Other articles focused on the possibility of a long drawn out war if the U.S. was preparing for a major conflict and highlighted the U.S. predicament in having involved its prestige in support of an ally incapable of even producing a stable government.

It was after this second set of U.S. air strikes that the pressure for negotiations began building up. The various peace moves and proposals for negotiations received widespread press attention. Concerning the British Government, the press focused on the Government's reaction to negotiation proposals—often urged by the Labour Government's left-wing MPs—in its dual role as America's ally and as co-chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference. The latter role obliged the Government publicly to deal with the conflict on a basis other than simply being America's ally. However, the British Government's primary aim was to support America and its role as co-chairman suffered accordingly.

The British Government's contacts and sympathy with the Administration were clear from an early stage. On 9 February The Guardian reported that Britain had been aware "for the past three months" of U.S. plans for military measures against North Vietnam; had not objected to the measures and considered them justified by communist
aggression. The same article also reported the Government's view that there was no basis for negotiations and therefore no reason to reconvene the Geneva Conference. The Times reported that the Foreign Office's "vigorous and forthright" reaction to the bombing reflected Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart's views that the U.S. was "bound to hit back". Reconvening the Geneva Conference was stated to be "premature" but:

"The British Government have been and still are, however, in constant touch with the United States Government on the next steps to be taken." 

Prime Minister Harold Wilson's support for President Johnson was reported and also his anxiety over the possibility of the conflict escalating. By 18 February Wilson was reported to have seen the U.S. Ambassador twice and discussed only Vietnam the second time. These early reports created an impression of close contact and coincident views between the Administration and the British Government. However subsequent events and reports revealed that there were divergences between the two governments over the issue of negotiations, that the British Government's firm public support for the U.S. carried no concomitant influence on U.S. policy, and that this support was held to vitiate the British Government's own ability to work for a diplomatic solution.

The first British attempts at negotiating a peaceful solution centred on the Geneva Conference. As far as reconvening this Conference was concerned, both Britain and Russia initially stated that the co-chairmanship had
lapsed. However, later in mid-February, in the wake of Labour left-wing pressure on the government to try to negotiate a cease-fire and settlement and reports of U.S. disinterest in negotiations, the notion was revived. Both Britain and Russia were reported to be interested in reconvening the Geneva Conference, with the Russians also supporting French initiatives. The New York Times reported that Britain was, "Willing But Dubious" on the Russian/French proposals and it was widely reported that Britain was also conducting its own diplomatic consultations. However the value of British efforts was publicly undercut by the Administration's stated and widely publicised lack of interest in negotiations unless the communists ceased their activities in South Vietnam. In addition, some press reports suggested that the British Government's moves were designed to placate its left-wing critics and The New York Times also reported that while the British efforts were acknowledged publicly by Administration officials, in private they were "belittled". The British Government's credibility as a potential peace-broker was further diminished when President Johnson was reported to be annoyed by Wilson's peace moves and it emerged that U.S. officials judged these moves to be mere politicking aimed at forestalling a left-wing Labour back-bench rebellion. And The Sunday Telegraph stated that Russia preferred France as a partner in moves for negotiations:

"Over Vietnam, Britain has shown herself, in
both Russian and French eyes, too much the loyal seconder of American policies to be fully acceptable." 112

February ended with the announcement of sustained U.S. reprisals against North Vietnam and Britain's peace efforts appeared to be obsolete. The 'special relationship' between Britain and America was apparently of little importance in the context of Vietnam, as The Times noted. 113 While publicising its evidence on North Vietnamese infiltration, the Administration was still not publicising its intentions about Vietnam, other than to restate its position on the requirements for negotiations. The press continued to report that the U.S. wanted negotiations, but also noted the Administration's brusquely negative response to negotiation proposals such as U Thant's on 25 February. 114

However from the point of view of the Administration's propaganda campaign the impression that the U.S. could not be influenced on the issue of negotiations, even by a supporter such as Britain, carried an obvious danger of creating the appearance of U.S. unwillingness to negotiate, despite its public statements to the contrary. And as the U.S. emphasised the importance of this war against communism, widened its significance beyond Southeast Asia, and deepened the U.S. military commitment, so its public audience became more alarmed about the dangers involved in escalation.

The U.S. announcement about the Rolling Thunder air strikes and the first raids on 2 March immediately
reinforced fears about escalation of the conflict. Labour MPs publicly opposed this development and tabled a motion calling on Wilson to dissociate the Government publicly from this U.S. policy of nonretaliatory air strikes, viewed as an expansion of the war despite U.S. denials to the contrary. U.S. Marines then landed at Danang on 8 March to assume security duties.

These two events taken together placed the British Government in a difficult position vis-a-vis its critics, particularly as the Government's diplomatic approach to Russia on 20 February had evoked no response by mid-March, as reported, and Labour MPs were pressuring the Government over its support for U.S. policy.

Meanwhile the British press was reporting and discussing all the dominant themes of the war. Immediately after the Marines landed there was speculation about an expansion of the conflict, due to a Pentagon leak - a leak which was itself curious given the Administration's much discussed and criticised public silence on its Vietnam policy. The Times reported Washington rumours of increased air strikes and 10,000 more Marines being dispatched to South Vietnam. Concurrently some U.S. officials were reported to think that the real enemy was China, with a minority of 'war hawks' believing that a war against China could be won using U.S. military technology - a view which The Times castigated as "insidious propaganda". At the same time President Johnson was privately persuading members of Congress that U.S. policy
in Vietnam remained basically the same as that of the last ten years, stressing the Eisenhower and Kennedy commitments.¹²⁰

The U.S. image engendered by its involvement in Vietnam was also discussed and set in the context of the Geneva Agreements, although as a Guardian editorial stated:

"President Johnson, understandably, cannot see the United States 'advisers' as successors to French colonial troops".¹²¹

This editorial then analysed the inherent problems in the Administration's propaganda line on the war, disputing the nature of the war and the U.S. chances of winning:

"Raising these points [about the U.S. interpretation of Geneva Agreements and violations] might seem unfriendly were it not that President Johnson, Mr McNamara, and Mr Rusk constantly give the impression of believing their own propaganda by disastrously running the war accordingly. If the war were as they say - predominantly an international war - the Americans might be expected to win it, being vastly the stronger side. They would also, if they were right in their views, be acting irresponsibly, for they would be risking escalation towards a world war. If they are wrong, as they seem to be, that risk is not so great; but the more they exert their strength, the worse things go with them, as formerly with the French in Algeria."¹²²

The editorial exposed the Administration's propaganda dilemma of how to keep its allies 'on board' using an argument emphasising the war's importance, which, if it was believed, also raised fears of a general conflagration. If it was not believed, then one of the Administration's main justifications for fighting the war collapsed in its audiences' eyes, raising further
questions about the U.S. reasons for, and wisdom of, involvement in Vietnam.

Lastly the British press was already concerned about the U.S. methods of fighting the war. On 26 February, the *Times'* Washington correspondent had suggested that if the U.S. used its military technology extensively against villages then, "the talk of fighting for the minds and souls of the villagers would be utter cant." The *Guardian* reinforced this with the observation that although both sides perpetrated "horrors and indignities", still "technological superiority counts."

As far as events were concerned, towards the end of March there were two difficult episodes for both the U.S. Administration and the British Government. After the Russian Foreign Minister's visit to Britain, producing no progress on Vietnam, the Administration's propaganda line on negotiations was aided by reports that neither Hanoi or Peking were interested in negotiations. This was followed almost immediately by reports on 23 March that the U.S. was using non-lethal gas as a weapon in South Vietnam and on 24 March the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon was reported to have stated that the war would be extended without limit. Another Commons motion was signed by Labour back-benchers protesting against the use of napalm and gas.

The potential damage to the U.S. propaganda effort caused by Ambassador Taylor's remark was defused in a subsequent Presidential statement on 25 March. This
announcement reiterated the standard propaganda line about the cause of the war; stated that the U.S. still sought no wider war; emphasised that the U.S. would "never be second in seeking a settlement"; and requested a return to the Geneva Agreements. In addition the President mentioned the possibility of aid for all nations in Southeast Asia. The New York Times suggested that in addition to neutralising the Ambassador's remarks, the statement was intended to "reassert that American policy was reasonable" in view of the furor over the revelations about the use of non-lethal gas.127

As far as the British Government was concerned, the problems caused by the the U.S. Ambassador's remarks, which were potentially far more serious than the gas issue, were dealt with by requesting U.S. elucidation of the Taylor statement. Once President Johnson reaffirmed that no wider war was sought, the British Government could continue to support America's limited war in Vietnam. In addition, Government critics were reassured that the main objective of Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart's visit to Washington was to discuss Britain's role in trying to end the war Vietnam.128

However, the use of non-lethal gas in South Vietnam, although militarily worthless, produced a world-wide barrage of criticism directed at the U.S. It was a propaganda disaster for the Administration. The incident is worth discussing in greater detail to illustrate the
damage that was done to the U.S. propaganda effort and the inept methods used to counteract the criticism.

On 23 March an Associated Press (AP) correspondent reported that the U.S. was "experimenting" with gas warfare in South Vietnam. There were comical elements in the story about a gas-laying operation which an AP photographer had attended after a military spokesman had confirmed the experiments.

The U.S. Defense Department issued a statement to the press in Washington and Saigon defending U.S. actions. This defence was incorporated in a USIS bulletin on the issue, which also included other departments' views. The justifications were:
1.) The non-lethal, temporarily disabling gas was only used in situations where the Vietcong mingled with or took refuge amongst non-combatants.
2.) The gas was supplied by the U.S., but was dispensed by South Vietnamese personnel, and it was the same gas used by the British in Cyprus.
3.) The use of tear gas in riots or tactical situations was not contrary to international law and practice, and, as the State Department Press Officer pointed out, America had never ratified the 1925 Protocol on gas warfare.
4.) Other U.S. officials felt that it was more humane to use tear gas than to subject innocent citizens to firepower.

The world-wide press furore that began on 24 March did not finally subside until August. The day after the news
broke, James Reston outlined the main effects of the disclosure, in a *New York Times* article headlined, "Just A Little Old Benevolent Incapacitator":

"One unfortunate aspect of the incident was that it occurred precisely at the moment when the U.S. was beginning to gain a little more understanding in the world for its policy in Vietnam. [Reston relates that the principal foreign offices in the world were beginning to believe Johnson when he said that he would go anywhere to serve the cause of peace but that the communists were not interested; even the French had conceded that their Peking and Hanoi explorations had been rebuffed.] Accordingly the propaganda war over Vietnam was beginning to turn a little to the American side, when the gas incident was disclosed, incapacitating our own propagandists and not very benevolently either."\(^{131}\)

*The Times* pointed out that American military spokesmen could only blame themselves for the outcry, which they had generated themselves "by releasing dribbles of information in imprecise language..."\(^{132}\) Articles in other newspapers pointed out that the incident and controversy were a propaganda gift to the communists.\(^{133}\) The North Vietnamese and the Chinese then issued statements about the use of "poison" gas through their press agencies and radio broadcasts. These reports were then relayed to the West through dispatches from Tokyo and Hong Kong which expressed the anxiety felt by many Asians about the use of special weapons by White men against Asians. In their anxiety these dispatches tended to blur the distinction between poisonous and non-poisonous gases.

*The New York Times* then pointed out that although the communists had said that the gas had been used two or three months before the first news report, the communists...
had not reacted until after the furor in the West had alerted them to the propaganda potential. Yet the Administration had not even grasped the possibilities of attacking the communist propaganda campaign on that delayed reaction.\textsuperscript{134}

The Russians put out a measured condemnation of U.S. actions, which they said flouted international law and common humanity. Then they delivered a note to the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow which deplored the use of "toxic" gases in Vietnam. The American Ambassador refused to accept the note and the press reported that too.\textsuperscript{135}

In Britain, a Commons motion was tabled by seven Labour MPs deploring the use of gas and a telegram of protest was sent to Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart in Washington. According to an Observer report, Stewart was caught unprepared, but responded to the telegram:

"After a tolerably successful, most cautiously conducted 90 minute talk at the White House on Tuesday, Stewart made his gas gaffe at the National Press Club, calling for the U.S. to show 'a decent respect for the opinion of Mankind' in a quote from the Declaration of Independence. It was like blowing one's nose on the American flag. President Johnson and other officials were peeved and said so."\textsuperscript{136}

There was a march by sixteen Labour MPs to the U.S. Embassy in Grosvenor Square, to protest against the use of gas and napalm in Vietnam. The MPs were reported to have shown appreciation of the Embassy's lack of concrete information and policy direction and only one MP made unhelpful comments.\textsuperscript{137}
The mood of exasperation which seemed to be felt and expressed by most newspapers over the Administration's incompetence and surprise over the furor was forcefully stated by the foreign editor of the Daily Express:

"A few whiffs of tear gas - long since dispersed in the steaming heat of the Vietnamese jungle - have produced in the last 48 hours enough crocodile tears to irrigate the Sahara Desert... The left wing of the Labour Party is weeping. The Belgians are sobbing. The Indians are practically hysterical. But the people who really ought to be crying their eyes out - from frustration and despair - are President Lyndon Johnson and his cabinet.

Last night Mr. Dean Rusk gave a press conference to state that America was not embarking on gas warfare in Vietnam. It looks like a climbdown in the face of left-wing led world opinion. In fact, it is nothing more than the sorry conclusion to one of the most ineptly handled pieces of public relations in recent diplomatic history."

The Times summed up the incident in more sedate language though with an equally damning conclusion:

"The whole incident, which naturally hinges on one's faith in authoritative sources, seems to indicate incompetence and insensitive handling rather than dark deeds. The original news agency dispatch came openly from South Vietnamese sources, and the American military spokesmen, apparently at a loss, were sufficiently ill-advised to talk about such an emotive subject before referring to the experts, from whom precise information was said today to be freely available."

In addition to the criticism about the Administration's handling of the gas issue, later reports focussed on why the gas was used in villages, concluding that there something wrong with the handling of the conflict if the alternative to gas was bombs or napalm.

The main effect of the controversy was pinpointed in an Observer analysis stating that the political impact was
"symptomatic of spreading fears about United States policy".  

This incident highlighted a number of basic propaganda errors committed by the Administration. The speed of modern day communications demonstrated the difficulty of containing, or even limiting the propaganda damage.

Firstly, since one of the basic requirements for a propagandist is to know the audiences receiving communications and the intermediaries transmitting the message - in this case the press, which also constituted an audience - American propagandists should have known that the very word gas had been anathema to Europeans since World War I and the use at that time of mustard gas. It should also have been known that this weapon could be portrayed in the context of the Vietnam War as something being used only on Asians, even if administered by South Vietnamese Asians, thus setting it in a racial context. Other Asians might therefore be expected to be particularly anxious, over and above the type of weapon used.

Secondly, the U.S. propaganda defense also embroiled its main ally, Britain, in the row, forcing the Government to explain the use of gas in Cyprus. Thirdly, pointing out that the U.S. had not ratified an International Protocol on gas warfare merely drew attention to a general deficiency in U.S international conduct. Fourthly, the justification that it was better to use gas than to bomb
villages highlighted what many observers already thought was wrong in the U.S. conduct of the war and further concentrated attention on the nature of the war. Fifthly, although Britain had been implicated in the incident, U.S. representatives in Britain were shown to be ill-informed about their own government's policy.

In addition, this incident took place just before the Administration planned to escalate the war in April, when the U.S. would need its allies support, and its main ally Britain would again have to face opposition from its own ranks.

However, despite this incident the Administration's propaganda campaign at the end of March, as reflected in the British press, had achieved more or less what it set out to do. So far the impression conveyed was that the objective of the Administration's bombing campaign was negotiations. This also reflected the erroneous belief, according to evidence in The Pentagon Papers, that the Administration did want negotiations. Reports at the end of March that the Administration approved of a trip by Patrick Gordon Walker to Southeast Asia to try to make contact with all sides in the conflict, including all the communist states involved, helped both the Administration and the British Government defend themselves against criticism on the negotiations issue. The belief that the Administration had peaceful intentions would subsequently ease the Administration's path into using bombing pauses to 'test' North Vietnam's desire for
negotiations and thus allay public fears about the course of the war, and then, after a suitable interval, the Administration could escalate the air strikes on the grounds that North Vietnam did not want negotiations. Also, Administration statements that the U.S. sought no wider war were false according to The Pentagon Papers, although they were still credible to the press.

The British press, however, had also focused on additional problems in U.S. propaganda. Firstly, the portrayal of the Vietnam conflict as part of the general communist conspiracy for world-wide expansion was disputed by sections of the British press, for this portrayal ignored the rifts within the communist bloc. Secondly, although the press considered more credible the U.S. argument that the conflict was a new phase in communist strategy using national wars of liberation, nevertheless the press also pointed to the weakness in using Vietnam as a battle ground. In addition, for observers who noted the communist bloc rifts and ideological struggle, the U.S. tactic of bombing North Vietnam to try to force a conclusion was perceived to carry the danger of actually forcing China and Russia closer over the issue of aid to North Vietnam. The U.S. view that the conflict itself was purely the result of North Vietnamese communist aggression was disputed in some press reports, and North Vietnamese control of the Vietcong was inadvertently disputed even by a newspaper supporting the American venture. The political turmoil
and multitude of coups in Saigon undercut not only the U.S. claim to be fighting for freedom and democracy but also the U.S. thesis that South Vietnam's troubles were caused by communist aggression. The destruction caused by U.S. war methods was already beginning to be of concern, as well as the type of weapons used.

The U.S. propaganda device used to justify the bombing, that it was bombing to achieve negotiations, carried the obvious risk that bombs might not always be perceived as a suitable signal of a desire for peace. The continuous repetition of the Administration's desire for negotiations also meant that the Administration either had to achieve these negotiations or show beyond any doubt that it was the communists who refused to negotiate. On the President's 25 March statement on U.S. objectives, The Times wrote that this statement was "the most positive...in recent weeks" but also noted that the President "did not depart from the previous requirement for a cessation of hostilities, which is clearly unacceptable to the Vietcong and North Vietnamese."14

This article also disputed the Administration's version of the Geneva Agreements, pointing out that the Agreements had provided for a cease-fire and division of Vietnam, not a security arrangement for Southeast Asia as the President had interpreted them in his speech. In fact The Times was inaccurate in referring to a division of Vietnam, for under the original Agreements, the division was only
temporary, but still the article's interpretation was more accurate than the President's.

The problem of negotiations was also connected with the Administration's portrayal of the conflict as an international concern in order to generate wide public and foreign support. The danger of the conflict further escalating generated, in turn, more public pressure on the U.S. to negotiate and forced the Administration to justify its apparent refusal to consider negotiations on grounds other than requiring a cessation of communist aggression. The propaganda line that the U.S. relied on, that it was the communists who refused to negotiate, was always liable to be publicly disputed, because in late 1964 the Administration turned down the possibility of negotiations under UN auspices. The public revelation of this, later in 1965, damaged the Administration's credibility and its propaganda effort.

Finally the methods used by President Johnson to contain or combat criticism of his policy were being shown to be unsuitable and unsustainable over even a short period of time. Briefing groups of Senators or Congressmen privately might stifle or combat their own personal doubts, but the arguments used by Johnson to counteract criticism did not filter down to the general public through press briefings or statements, thus Johnson was not communicating to a mass audience.
D. British Government Reaction and Opinion

Publicly the British Government was a staunch supporter of U.S. policy on Vietnam. However from the beginning of the conflict there was a stated limit to this support. This limit centred on the extent to which the war affected the North Vietnamese civilian population, that is, whether or not the civilian population would become a target - even indirectly - of U.S. bombing. This limit was also reinforced for the Government by the knowledge of the limits of its own left-wing's tolerance on the issue of Vietnam. Thus early official British statements stressed that Britain was supporting the U.S. in its attacks on limited objectives in North Vietnam. When the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon was then reported to have remarked that the war would be carried on without limits, the Prime Minister, under pressure in the Commons, was obliged to seek clarification of this remark. Such parliamentary pressure on the Government, over its support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam, was to become a typical occurrence.

Undoubtedly the U.S. Administration was aware of the pressures on the British Government and appreciative of its support for U.S. policy. The Administration also endeavoured to help the Government continue its assistance. For instance on 31 March, McGeorge Bundy telephoned Wilson's Private Secretary, Oliver Wright, to explain some aspects of U.S. policy:

"I also told Wright of the importance of not giving specific signals even inadvertently to the communists with respect to our military
intentions. I told him that the Prime Minister had handled matters very well in limiting himself to statements that he knew we did not intend any war without limits. Such general statements were quite correct and understandably necessary in the light of the quotation attributed to General Taylor. What would give us more trouble would be statements indicating any specific American decision not to attack a specific area or target in North Vietnam.

...In the first place, it was impossible for us to give specific assurances as to what we would or would not be doing three or six or nine weeks from now. It might very well be embarrassing for the British if they should give assurances one week which they had to take back a week later...I told Wright that we were carefully using such indefinite phrases as 'measured, fitting and adequate.' I hoped the British could do the same. He told me that he understood the point clearly, and he seemed to accept it."

From McGeorge Bundy's account of this telephone conversation, the Administration was clearly anxious to keep its military options open.

However the Administration's appreciation of British support did not extend to British peace initiatives, which reduced the British Government to the role of passive supporter when these initiatives were dismissed by the Administration. The public image of the British Government then also suffered. Discussing a British-Russian diplomatic initiative just prior to the Pleiku air strikes, The Pentagon Papers state that this initiative was regarded in Washington "not as a potential negotiating opportunity, but as a convenient vehicle for the public expression of a tough U.S. position." Johnson's publicly reported annoyance over British peace initiatives has already been mentioned. It can thus be seen that the British Government could expect to encounter difficulties
in the future concerning its support for U.S. policy in Vietnam, and its concurrent efforts to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict. For the Government used suggestions of such peace moves to allay left-wing criticism of the Government's policy of supporting U.S. policy in Vietnam. The Government's tactics were thus undermined when the U.S. Administration publicly discounted British suggestions of peace initiatives.

E.) British Public opinion

British public opinion can be divided basically into two sections. The first section comprises mass public opinion, traditionally 'unconcerned' and 'inactive', especially on foreign policy issues. The second, much smaller section comprises 'concerned' and 'active' opinion.

British mass public opinion, as expressed in Gallup Polls, supported the U.S. involvement in Vietnam at the beginning of 1965. A poll published in December 1964 reported that 41% of those polled approved of U.S. armed action, while 33% disapproved. However there was no inclination to help the U.S. if asked - 46% of those polled in January opposed taking any part in the war; 10% agreed to sending troops; 17% agreed to sending war materials; while 29% had no opinion. But in addition to supporting U.S. armed action, the majority of the public - 77% - also favoured the notion of a Southeast Asia conference.
In March the proportion of the public supporting U.S. armed action was much the same as in December 1964; the proportion against, 40%, stayed the same, while those with no opinion went up by 1%. There was also support by 40% of the public for the notion of the U.S. continuing its 'present efforts' in Vietnam, although 33% favoured an American withdrawal. But opposition to Britain taking any part at all was growing, now 50%, although the proportion favouring sending war materials had also increased to 22%, and the number favouring sending troops was 14%; 15% had no opinion. A National Opinion Poll (NOP)\textsuperscript{151} however put a different question to those polled on American involvement, asking whether U.S. handling of the situation had been "too firm, not firm enough, or about right". The poll recorded that 17% thought U.S. handling was too firm; 17% not firm enough; and 36% thought U.S. efforts were about right; the poll thus recorded criticism from both 'doves' and 'hawks' among the public. On the gas warfare incident though, both Gallup and National Opinion polls reported a majority disapproval of the use of gas. The National Opinion Poll put a straightforward question on the U.S. using "non-killer" gas and recorded 58% disapproval. Gallup poll asked if there was support for the protest by Labour and Liberal MPs against the use of gas and recorded that 55% disapproved.\textsuperscript{149}

In general it can be stated that in the period from January to March 1965, a plurality of the British public did approve of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, although
the public opposed any British involvement and favoured efforts to solve the conflict peacefully. However, the methods by which the U.S. conducted the war appeared to be important to the public and could generate public disapproval.

However, the 'active' section of British opinion was already beginning to make its views known on the Vietnam war. For instance, when the U.S. began its Rolling Thunder air strikes on North Vietnam, 800 students protested outside the U.S. Embassy, as The Guardian reported:

"A straggling but noisy crowd of about 800 students demonstrated all yesterday afternoon and evening outside the American Embassy in London against last week's US bombing in Vietnam.
They shouted that Americans were warmongers and murderers, and advised Yankees to go home and wage war on want, not Vietnam, and (somewhat irrelevantly) to give negroes the vote. After a contingent of Communists arrived from Hyde park things warmed up a bit, and three US Marines in uniform were booed as they entered the Embassy." 152

In addition, later in March there was the gas warfare episode as discussed above, which prompted a march by Labour and Liberal MPs to the U.S. Embassy, and the dispatch of a condemnatory telegram to the Foreign Secretary, who was then in Washington discussing Vietnam with the U.S. Administration.

Thus the early stages of the escalation of the war provoked opposition from certain sections of British public opinion. As the war escalated more rapidly during April to July this opposition also grew, becoming more more discernible and organised. Therefore this section of
'active' and 'concerned' British public opinion will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3


7. Ibid, loc. cit. p246, although infiltration evidence was still collected, see p255.

8. Ibid, loc cit, p246.


11. Ibid, loc cit.


20. Ibid, loc cit, P257.
22. Ibid, P253.
25. Ibid, P265.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid, loc cit.
29. Ibid, PP266 - 267.
30. Ibid, P267. (Italics added.)
31. Ibid, P266.
33. Ibid, P268.
34. Ibid, loc cit.
35. Ibid, loc cit.
38. *Aggression From the North*. The Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam [Dept. of State Publication 7839, Released February 1965, Office of Media Service, Distributed by USIS].
41. Ibid, loc cit.
43. Ibid, 8 November 1965.

46. Ibid, P433.

47. Ibid, loc cit. (Square bracket added.)


49. Ibid, PP438, P437.

50. Ibid, PP398 - 399.


54. Ibid, P305.


64. The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Volume Three, P304.


67. Ibid, P352.

68. See Note 38.


71. Ibid, P432, P435.


74. Daily Telegraph, editorial, 20 January 1965: "Viet-Nam Dangers".


78. The Times, 18 January 1965: "U.S. Army Chiefs Urge Bombing Of N. Vietnam; Industrial Plants As Targets".
datelined Washington, 17 January, from our own correspondent.


82. Ibid, AP Report.


84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.


87. See Section A.


89. Ibid. P304 - 305.


91. Ibid, Statement (b), 7 February 1965, P130.


94. Ibid.


97. Ibid.


103. *The Times*, 9 February 1965: "Britain Supports America".

104. *The Times*, 12 February 1965: "Mr. Wilson Tells President Of British Support".


114. Ibid.


117. Daily Telegraph, 11 March 1965: "Johnson To Break His Silence".

118. The Times, 18 March 1965: "Washington Rumours Of 10,000 Marines Being Sent Out".

119. Ibid.


122. Ibid.

123. The Times, 26 February 1965. See Note 113.


126. The Guardian, 24 March 1965: "Mr. Stewart Seeking Peace".

127. The New York Times, 26 March 1965: "Johnson Hints At Aid For Asia If Strife Ends".


132. The Times, 24 March 1965: "U.S. Seeks To Justify Use Of Gas".


140. *Observer*, 28 March 1965: "What Is This War About?"


143. *Observer*, 14 February 1965: "Dead End In Vietnam".

144. Ibid.


148. Office Files of The President. McGeorge Bundy, 31 March 1965; Memorandum For The Record, Lyndon Johnson Library. Sanitised.


150. See *Gallup Polls* for the periods December 1964 - April 1965.


A. Administration Planning

By the end of March 1965 the Administration had managed to justify, largely successfully, first the retaliatory air strikes and then the non-retaliatory air strikes on North Vietnam, although public pressure was mounting on the issue of negotiations. However the Administration had also concluded that the air strikes would not achieve their objective and so further measures would be needed. Another policy review was thus undertaken in Washington from 1-2 April to determine what would be militarily necessary to achieve U.S. objectives.

The decisions taken at the White House policy review meeting had far reaching consequences for U.S. involvement in Vietnam in that the focus shifted from using air power to try to affect North Vietnam's will, to using ground troops to force a conclusion in South Vietnam. This was the beginning of America's ground war in Asia.

The White House policy review decisions were embodied in National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 328 which was signed on 6 April. Most important was the decision to change the role of troops deployed to Vietnam from a defensive to an offensive role. An additional 18,000-20,000 military support personnel were to be dispatched to Vietnam and two more Marine battalions and a
Marine air squadron were to be deployed. Rolling Thunder operations were to continue increasing slowly, aiming at North Vietnamese lines of communication. Also a study was to be undertaken on blockading or aerial mining North Vietnamese ports for possible future actions. The full implication of the latter in the context of the conflict was well understood by the Administration, for the Memorandum stated:

"It would have major political complications, especially in relation to the Soviets and other third countries, but also offers many advantages."

However, most important of all was the decision not to publicise these changes and to represent the actions as a continuation of the same policy, not a new one:

"The President desires that with respect to the actions in paragraphs 5 through 7, premature publicity be avoided by all possible precautions. The actions themselves should be taken as rapidly as practicable, but in ways that minimize any appearance of sudden changes in policy, and official statements on these troop movements will be made only with the direct approval of the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State. The President's desire is that these movements and changes should be understood as being gradual and wholly consistent with existing policy."

U.S. involvement in a ground war in Vietnam thus began with the same secrecy that had characterised much of U.S. military involvement in the region until the air strikes on North Vietnam. According to The Pentagon Papers the Administration realised the implications of changing the Marines' role, in that the decision was taken "grudgingly" and the new role was to be undertaken "cautiously and carefully" for once ground troops were
committed offensively it would be harder to withdraw, especially after U.S. casualties. Nevertheless, whether it would be more difficult to disengage or not, the decision was taken to commit U.S. troops.

After the initial troop commitments, recommendations for further reinforcements quickly followed. By 20 April U.S. troop strength was recommended to be increased to 82,000. By 7 June another 44 battalions had been requested to deal with increased Vietcong activity in their summer offensive, resulting in high South Vietnamese Army casualties in already under-strength battalions. Westmoreland also indicated that further troops could be required in 1966, but in fact, before the end of July he had requested another 100,000 troops. Johnson approved the deployment of 34 battalions on 17 July and by 30 July the entire request had been approved, bringing U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam at the end of the year to 184,314.

At the same time the mission of the U.S. forces was changed, from the initial defensive - later enclave - strategy. In June Westmoreland requested, and was subsequently permitted, to commit U.S. troops in battle in support of the South Vietnamese Army, when necessary. By mid-July his other request had been authorised: to engage in search and destroy operations aimed at defeating the enemy in the South. The latter decision altered the entire U.S. strategy, which had formerly been aimed at denying victory to the other side. The Pentagon Papers state:
"Final acceptance of the desirability of inflicting defeat on the enemy rather than merely denying him victory opened the door to an indeterminate amount of additional forces.'"

Precisely what President Johnson and Secretary McNamara expected their decisions of July to bring within the near term 'is not clear,' the study says, 'but there were manifold indications that they were prepared for a long war.'"

Immediately after NSAM 328 was issued, Johnson made a major speech on peace at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore on 7 April offering "unconditional discussions" to North Vietnam on the Vietnam conflict. According to The Pentagon Papers the timing of the speech was linked to public pressure about the Administration's attitude to negotiations and peace, which had formerly consisted of blaming Hanoi for the war and demanding an end to communist aggression. Now Johnson sought "a more spectacular way of dramatizing his peaceful intent."

On the same theme Johnson ordered a supposedly 'secret' week-long halt in the bombing of North Vietnam in mid-May. On the genesis of this move The Negotiating Volumes of The Pentagon Papers state:

"But while the public clamor persisted and became more and more difficult to ignore, the President was receiving intelligence assessments from Saigon and from Washington that tended to confirm his reading of Hanoi's disinterest in negotiations, but that provided him with a quite different argument for a bombing pause at this time: if the conflict was going to have to be expanded and bombing intensified before Hanoi would 'come to reason,' it would be easier and politically more palatable to do so after a pause, which would afford an opportunity for the enemy's intentions to be more clearly revealed."

The study also states that photographs had been obtained of the first SAM missile site being constructed
near Hanoi, and that Russia was beginning to provide
"considerably increased quantities" of military equipment
to North Vietnam and was therefore becoming more committed
to aiding North Vietnam. The study suggests that because a
"decision involving a a major Soviet 'flashpoint,'
therefore, would soon have to be faced" the President "may
well have wished to provide a prior opportunity for a
quiet Hanoi backdown, before proceeding with more forceful
military activity." Thus, as before, negotiations were
to be on the Administration's terms only.

Johnson informed the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam
of the proposed bombing halt privately beforehand on 10
May, stating:

"This fact [completion of the week's bombing
operations] and the days of Buddha's birthday
seem to me to provide an excellent opportunity
for a pause in air attacks which might go into
next week and which I could use to good effect
with world opinion...

You should understand that my purpose in this
plan is to begin to clear a path either toward
restoration of peace or toward increased
military action, depending upon the reaction of
the Communists. We have amply demonstrated our
determination and commitment in the last two
months, and now I wish to gain some
flexibility."  

However, despite the reference to restoring peace and
waiting for communist reactions, the private message in
which the Administration tried to inform North Vietnam of
this temporary bombing halt laid the blame for the
conflict on North Vietnam; in effect required the
immediate cessation of enemy activity in South Vietnam;
stated that if the pause was taken for weakness the U.S.
would demonstrate its determination to withstand
aggression "more clearly than ever"; and emphasised that the pause could be reversed at any time if there was enemy action. North Vietnam refused to officially accept the message, despite several attempts through different channels including the British Consul in Hanoi, but later denounced the bombing pause. On 18 May U.S. bombing of North Vietnam was resumed.

In early June the Administration was forced to acknowledge publicly that the troops in Vietnam were now used being offensively.

Finally at the end of July, after another policy review session during which a reserve call-up was considered and rejected, President Johnson publicly announced the decision to send 50,000 more troops to Vietnam, bringing the total number of troops to 125,000. Johnson did mention that more troops would be needed later and would be sent as requested, but he did not say that 60,000 more troops had already been requested and were about to be authorised, nor did he mention Westmoreland's latest request for 100,000 more troops. In addition the President announced that the conscription draft would increase.

B. Administration Propaganda Techniques

On the issue of the changed role for the Marines in South Vietnam, the Administration decided that silence would be the best propaganda technique to use. Under NSAM 328 any statement at all on the increased troops and movements was subject to tight control exercised by
McNamara and Rusk. The objective was to avoid any form of public speculation in the press and amongst the public. Furthermore, as with previous Administration policy decisions, the new decision on troop deployments was to be represented, and thus sanctified, as a continuation of previous U.S. policy under previous presidents, not as a new escalatory stage in the conflict and therefore a break with the past. The policy of silence on the new role of the Marines was adhered to until 8 June, when the State Department Press Officer inadvertently referred to the change and sparked off another press furore. The Administration was then attacked not only on the change in role, but also on the fact that it was a low-ranking official who announced the change. This was another propaganda disaster, compounded by the contradictory and uncoordinated manner in which the Administration attempted to rebut the press allegations.

At the same time that the Administration was controlling information on the troop deployments, the issue of negotiations was to be given wide publicity. As mentioned above, the President's Johns Hopkins speech was scheduled to defuse the public pressure that had been increasing in March. This speech incorporated the main lines of Administration propaganda on the cause and importance of the war. Thus China was cited as the instigator of Hanoi's aggression; emotive analogies were used, linking the Vietnam conflict with World War II aggression; the long-standing nature of the U.S.
commitment to South Vietnam was stressed; and there was also a more sophisticated portrayal of the enemy troops, acknowledging Southern participation as well as Northern aggression. And again there was an offer of Southeast Asian development, beginning with an American investment of one billion dollars. Most of the speech was concerned with these aspects; the part dealing with peace and negotiations was much shorter and far vaguer and also reaffirmed the intention to use military power in pursuit of a final settlement as defined by the U.S.:

"There may be many ways to this kind of peace: in discussion or negotiation with the governments concerned; in large groups or small ones; in the reaffirmation of old agreements or their strengthening with new ones. We have stated this position over and over again 50 times and more to friend and foe alike. And we remain ready with this purpose for unconditional discussions. And until that bright and necessary day of peace we will try to keep the conflict from spreading... We will use our power with restraint and all the wisdom that we can command. But we will use it." 17

In general the public reaction to the Baltimore speech was favourable, indicating that it had achieved its objective of dampening criticism about the Administration's attitude to negotiations.

Shortly after the Baltimore speech a British peace initiative was rebuffed by the communists, which also helped the Administration's public position on negotiations. This incident highlighted what was to become an interesting feature of the Vietnam conflict: the detailed dissection of the language of communist statements and rejections of negotiations, with officials
sometimes seeing what they were wanted to see in such statements and rejections. The type of minute examination of language by British "experts", mentioned in a *New York Times* report of 15 April, headlined "London is Hopeful", and relating to the communist rejection, was a technique which was usually employed by the Administration. This was partly due to the general scarcity of concrete information about North Vietnam's aims and war effort, the fact that any such information was strictly controlled by the North Vietnamese Government, and the language difference. The U.S. monitored the North Vietnamese media, but could obviously learn only the official North Vietnamese line. Apart from information that the U.S. and other Western countries could glean via diplomatic contacts, with the U.S. using indirect and often tortuous channels, most information was available to the West only through official statements, infrequent visits from western journalists and occasional official interviews, or visits from American anti-war activists.

The draw-back to information gained from westerners who visited North Vietnam was that by virtue of wanting to, and being allowed to visit North Vietnam these people were viewed as being sympathetic to North Vietnam's cause and whether or not this was a correct assumption the information they brought back was viewed with suspicion by U.S. officials and often assumed to be merely part of North Vietnam's propaganda campaign. This left the Administration trying to assess information about North
Vietnamese Government aims, particularly on the issue of negotiations, coming via these indirect diplomatic channels or from rare interviews with high-level North Vietnamese officials granted to journalists. Publicly the Administration always claimed to examine this information carefully.

At first glance, the difficulty of obtaining what the Administration might consider to be reliable information about North Vietnam's position and the need to examine the 'nuances', would seem to be a draw-back, especially concerning an acceptable basis for negotiations. But to a large extent, whether this situation did hamper the Administration depended on how genuine the Administration's desire was for negotiations. For instance, a lack of what the Administration considered to be reliable information on North Vietnam's views on negotiations could be used by the Administration to demonstrate North Vietnam's lack of interest in negotiations. The need to scrutinise communist statements so carefully and the concomitant linguistic analysis after translation of communist statements, could also aid the Administration, for if 'nuances' could be detected which showed a softening of Hanoi's position, the reverse was also true: 'nuances' could indicate a hardening of Hanoi's position.

The bombing pause in May was handled quite differently to Johnson's Baltimore speech. Firstly, it was not publicly announced. Secondly knowledge of the project,
code-named Mayflower, was restricted to only a few officials. And thirdly, any queries from the press about U.S. officials' statements in Saigon that only reconnaissance flights were being undertaken, were to be subtly redirected to Washington, thus allowing Washington to maintain control over public knowledge. The Negotiating Volumes of The Pentagon Papers state:

"Much additional attention was lavished by Washington upon maintaining near-absolute secrecy, preserving a plausible front vis-a-vis the press, and other aspects of stage management."

After Hanoi's rebuff, the bombing resumed on 18 May. There was no public announcement, but Commonwealth governments had been informed beforehand of the resumption and of the lack of communist interest in negotiations. Other friendly governments were similarly briefed after the bombing resumed. In answer to press questions U.S. officials were to state that pauses in the bombing were due to "operational factors" and might occur again in the future. Thus the Administration's freedom of action was preserved, uninfluenced by the pressures that might have been generated by public knowledge of the pause.

By contrast with the June propaganda debacle over the U.S. troops' offensive role, the President's announcement on 28 July of further troop deployments was much better handled. In mid-July there had been press reports, based on remarks by the President and McNamara during press conferences, that the reserves might be called up, draft calls increased, the defense budget increased and other
serious measures taken. During the last week in July, when the White House was reviewing its policy again, there had been increasing speculation about the situation. Thus, after this build-up of tension, the President's announcement that the situation did not demand a reserve call up, but merely an increase in the draft, and an extra 50,000 troops, tended to generate relief in the U.S., rather than anxiety about the troop deployments. 

Concerning U.S. public opinion on the conflict, after the policy review a warning was sounded by Senator Mansfield, who told the President that the public was supporting him because he was President, not because of "any understanding or sympathy with policies on Viet Nam; beneath the support, there is deep concern and a great deal of confusion which could explode at any time; in addition racial factors at home could become involved." 

C.) Press reporting and Reaction

March ended with the announcement that the British former foreign secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, would travel to Southeast Asia on a form of peace mission, at the behest of the British Government and with the Administration's concurrence. There was also press speculation on the talks then beginning in the White House. Using a New York Times article as a basis, The Times explained on 30 March that although the U.S. bombing campaign had apparently failed, because U.S. prestige had been "fully committed" withdrawal was "probably impossible", and therefore the choice was "almost
certainly not between increasing the pressure or withdrawing but how the pressure can be increased without provoking China.\textsuperscript{23} And on 2 April The Guardian reported that Johnson was discussing "new proposals for pursuing the war more vigorously".\textsuperscript{24} On 3 April The Times reported that the "main decision" to be announced after the talks was an increase in South Vietnam's army and police force and also that the U.S. had concluded that there was little risk of Chinese or Soviet intervention in the war. Concerning future U.S. involvement the article displayed a wariness about the life-span of Administration statements on this issue:

"For the next few weeks at least - a necessary reservation because the Administration has reversed itself before - there is apparently to be no change in strategy or the size of the American commitment. The Administration is preparing for a long hard war, with no prospect in the foreseeable future of a negotiated or a \textit{de facto} ceasefire."\textsuperscript{25}

Against this background of reporting on probable U.S. escalation, in Britain the House of Commons debated foreign affairs, with Vietnam as the major topic. The foreign Secretary's speech defended both the Administration's version of the causes of the war, and the British Government's attitude to peace initiatives and to U.S. policy on the war. Both aspects of the speech were criticised in the British press. During the debate the weak points in the Administration's official propaganda lines were again revealed, the nub of which was the Administration's contention that the war was caused by a North Vietnamese communist invasion. In an editorial on
the debate The Guardian listed some of the critical points that had been raised:

"The debate showed that there are many important facts about Vietnam which the House of Commons can look in the face but on which American spokesmen seldom dwell. For example it looked to several members as if the House was discussing a war which the Americans and the South Vietnamese had almost lost. Another such fact, aired last night, is that whatever President Johnson may think, the war in South Vietnam is not just an invasion. 'However great the reinforcement from the North' as Mr Philip Noel-Baker said, 'this is a civil war in South Vietnam.' The proposition that the South Vietnamese are universally contented with their rulers and loyal to them is false, and the Government of the United States is taking a risk in pretending otherwise."26

The Observer dwelt on the other aspect, criticising the Government's support for the U.S. version of the cause of the war:

"It was understandable that the Foreign Secretary, Mr Michael Stewart, chose not to criticise United State policy publicly in his Commons speech on Vietnam. But there was no need for him to go to the opposite extreme: to endorse without reservation the official American view of the causes of the crisis. The Vietnamese war is not, as the American Administration argues and as Mr Stewart maintained, a straightforward case of aggression by Hanoi. Nor is it a matter simply of containing Communism: of setting an example of firmness to encourage the West's allies throughout Asia. It is essentially a complex civil war, in which nationalism is as important as communism...

Mr Stewart's speech made it clear that the British Government wants to help about negotiations....But the role of America's loyal ally may require Britain also to assume the part of the candid friend."27

This particular belief that Britain's role as America's ally did not preclude the expression of different views, but indeed carried a duty to make
differences known to the Administration, was generally held by the British press, though with different emphases. For instance *Sunday Times* editorials generally supported the Government's policy towards U.S. involvement in Vietnam. But, on the issue of U.S. tactics possibly leading to a "wider international conflict", an editorial urged Wilson to "talk very frankly to Washington about British doubts and hesitations", reckoning that Wilson's hitherto steadfast public support for the U.S. should equip him better to do this.\textsuperscript{26}

Almost immediately after the accurate reports about anticipated U.S. escalation came Johnson's Baltimore speech on 'peace'. The speech was made against a background of public pressure on the subject of negotiations and the furor over the gas warfare incident, and was partly by way of reply to the 1 April peace appeal for negotiations from the nonaligned countries conference in Belgrade, to which the Administration replied formally on 8 April. The Baltimore speech was also delivered one day after NSAM 328 was signed by McGeorge Bundy, which authorised additional troop deployments to Vietnam, intensified bombing of North Vietnamese communication lines and proposed a study on mining Hanoi and Haiphong ports for possible future operations. During this speech President Johnson offered "unconditional discussions" to North Vietnam.

The Baltimore speech received the wide coverage desired by the Administration, but the anticipated close
attention paid to the speech by the press generated varied reactions and reports. After the initial straightforward reporting on it, subsequent reports and reactions analysed the speech on two levels; firstly for the content and what it said about future U.S. policy on the Vietnam conflict and on Southeast Asia in general; and secondly for the effect that the speech would have on U.S. allies.

A Daily Telegraph report on 9 April neatly outlined the parameters of the Baltimore speech with an article headlined: "America Cannot Lose by Viet-Nam Offer". The article analysed the speech as a policy change on negotiations but also dwelt on the propaganda value, explaining that if negotiations did not materialise the Administration would still benefit from the propaganda angle:

"If the move fails, it will have at least cut the ground from under critics who have been urging America to 'escalate' the diplomatic efforts along with the military conflict."

A Daily Telegraph editorial welcomed Johnson's speech unreservedly, stating that he had "thrown wide open the door to any sort of talks aimed at a peaceful settlement in Viet-nam" and continued:

"His abandonment of the implied pre-condition that Hanoi should first cease its aggression against the South is wise as well as conciliatory. It removes any obstacle to negotiation that might arise from genuine uncertainty, in this clandestine war, whether Northern help to the guerillas had actually stopped. By proposing unconditional negotiations the President offers the Hanoi Government - and China too - a face-saving approach to the conference table...[the non-communist world should approve this U.S. sacrifice of face]"

"It is however, to the Communists that Mr. Johnson's appeal is addressed. There is only one
reason why they should refuse to enter the opened door: that they are uninterested in negotiation, but are determined to fight it out. This may well be their resolve. The President's speech is not the first opportunity they have had to show otherwise: it has been preceded in recent weeks by several private, indirect approaches, none of which has revealed the least willingness to negotiate."

This editorial basically disseminated the Administration propaganda line on the lack of negotiations. The assertion that Johnson had offered "unconditional negotiations" was completely inaccurate on two grounds: firstly, Johnson had offered unconditional discussions, not negotiations; and secondly, these discussions were not offered unconditionally - they were preceded in the speech by an American definition of what constituted a final peaceful settlement in Vietnam, which was an independent South Vietnam; by a definition of the main enemy as being North Vietnam, thus leaving aside the Vietcong as a negotiating party; and by a warning that the U.S. would "not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement." And then there was a further warning that until peace arrived, U.S. power would be used with "restraint" and "wisdom", but it would be used. It required a great stretch of the imagination, a considerable degree of anti-communism and a concomitant belief in the Administration's peaceful intentions, to term as 'unconditional' what Johnson was offering.

However the Daily Telegraph was not the only newspaper to report that Johnson's talks were unconditional. A Financial Times editorial captioned, "An
Olive Branch in Washington", also referred to Johnson's "decision to drop any conditions for peace talks on Vietnam." This editorial too was pessimistic on the prospects for a settlement, citing the Communist preconditions for negotiations, which, it said, the Americans were unlikely to comply with. On the subject of the effect of the speech on U.S. allies, the editorial stated:

"The United States has given its impatient allies proof of its genuine desire to put an end to the war. Mr Harold Wilson, who lost no time in welcoming the President's initiative, will now be able to face his left-wingers with a clear conscience."

In effect this editorial too supported the Administration's propaganda effort, in the expressed belief in the U.S. offer of unconditional talks and then taking this as proof of a desire to end the war. But while this Financial Times editorial lauded the Baltimore speech, a report printed the same day written by the paper's Washington correspondent offered a contradictory reading of the speech. Analysing both the Baltimore speech and the subsequent formal U.S. reply to the nonaligned countries appeal, this report concluded that the U.S. objective was "still to win the war even if other means are used." The report also discussed the reasons behind the U.S. offer at Baltimore:

"The main consideration which prompted the shift to 'unconditional' talks are clear enough. First, the State Department had grown increasingly uneasy about the damage done to the American image in the uncommitted world by an appearance of uncompromising and unreasonable hardness. Embarrassing criticism from American allies also seemed to be growing."
Secondly, the President, who is acutely sensitive to Congressional and public opinion, no doubt felt that the 'consensus' on foreign affairs which he regards as indispensable was in danger of disappearing. The chorus of praise and relief from moderate Senators as well as from the American Press this morning justifies this calculation.\textsuperscript{34}

However, possibly the most damning section of the report lay in its evaluation of this offer of unconditional talks:

"Diplomatic observers are this morning understandably sceptical, however, about what this superficial change amounts to. Senator Church remarked, shrewdly enough: 'Even if the offer of discussion is rejected, nothing is lost by making it' - and this, one suspects, is the real basis of the present position."\textsuperscript{35}

This report thus offered a completely different view of the Baltimore speech, concluding that it had been made for effect, not in order to achieve negotiations. Given this objective therefore, the report judged that the speech had achieved what it was meant to do - maintain the U.S. consensus on foreign affairs and deflect allied criticism of the U.S. position. However, the success of this speech was somewhat vitiated by the existence of reports such as this, implicitly exposing the negotiations offer as a propaganda gesture.

The Guardian's editorial greeted the Baltimore offer with the caption: "Generosity is not enough". The editorial focussed initially on the U.S. offer to develop the Mekong valley and the apparent absence of the usual U.S. insistence on Hanoi ending its aggression. Then the editorial pointed out that Johnson's 'unconditional discussions' were not in fact unconditional and cited the
phrase on the U.S. not withdrawing; the exclusion of the Vietcong from talks; and the demand for an independent Vietnam. On this latter point, the editorial stated:

"Thirdly, President Johnson gave as his objective 'the independence of South Vietnam,' thereby apparently ruling out reunification. This was a retreat from some of his earlier speeches, in which he used to invoke the Geneva Agreements of 1954. Perhaps he has read them since; they say specifically that the 17th Parallel must not be taken as a political or territorial boundary. At any rate the name 'Geneva' was not uttered at Baltimore. But you cannot, by insisting that South Vietnam is an 'independent nation' beg one of the main questions and then claim to be imposing no conditions."

The editorial thus revealed the inherent weakness in the Administration's use of the Geneva Agreements to bolster its case, while in the act of disposing of the idea that 'unconditional talks' had been proposed. The editorial summed up the Mekong valley offer as being another method used by the Administration to achieve U.S. objectives in South Vietnam: the U.S. display of military superiority having failed to persuade Hanoi to negotiate, the Administration was now using its superiority in wealth. Doubtful that this would work better than the bombing, due to a lack of understanding by the U.S. of what the war was about, the Guardian editorial finally suggested that a bombing halt might help achieve negotiations.

The Times also examined the Mekong valley project, explaining that the official who had proposed it "last winter" had since resigned, partly because of the pre-eminence of war hawks in the Administration, but that
the President's view "obviously underwent a change in the past few days", perhaps because of mounting domestic and foreign public anxiety about the war after its recent intensification. Thus, whereas The Guardian saw the entire Mekong project proposal as a way of gaining U.S. objectives, The Times focussed on the timing of its resurrection, seeing this as an attempt by the Administration to combat criticism of its policy. Once again therefore the propaganda purposes behind the Administration's offer were exposed, thereby putting the offer itself in a different context — that of winning the war and retaining public support, rather than a straightforward Administration attempt to start negotiations and Southeast Asian development.

Another Times article described the immediate welcome accorded the Baltimore speech by Harold Wilson and pointed out that "the American proposal went a long way towards satisfying" Labour left-wing demands addressed to the Government for a peace initiative to end the war. The Opposition too praised "President Johnson's attempt to break the deadlock". In addition the article also mentioned that Wilson had been informed of the speech beforehand by Johnson and was now using diplomatic channels to ascertain "the next moves". The impression was that there were peace moves afoot.

An interesting analysis of Johnson's Baltimore speech was provided by a supporter of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Joseph Alsop, an American columnist syndicated in
the New York Herald Tribune. Alsop lauded the "craftiness and toughness" of Johnson's speech, linking these qualities to the timing of the speech, and in the latter part of his column, to the 'unconditional discussions' offered:

"No one can any longer say that 'Johnson won't even talk.' But 'unconditional discussions' mean discussions in which neither side accepts conditions, and therefore discussions permitting our side to keep the pressure on until the desired final results begin to be in sight."²³

Alsop then stated that the "toughness" of this "grim speech" could not be exaggerated, and analysing Johnson's words about the U.S. not withdrawing, "either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement", he drew the following conclusion:

"That closes all the doors except one. That means that this strange man, who dislikes painful decisions and is so clever that he generally manages to elude them, has made the grim decision, this time, to go to the very end of the road, if need be, in order to avoid the terrible defeat that seemed to threaten in Vietnam only a little while ago."²⁴

The one door left open that Alsop mentioned referred to the Mekong proposal which, he had explained, was offered to the North Vietnamese Communists as an inducement to cease being "instruments of the Chinese Communists aggressive will."

Alsop's analysis was clearly based on a belief that events in South Vietnam were the result of communist expansionism which had to be repelled militarily. He thus viewed U.S. policy on Vietnam as a 'hawk', and as such he found the Baltimore speech reassuring. However, in
proclaiming Johnson's decision "to go to the very end of the road," he undercut the supposedly peaceful nature of the speech. In common with other observers, Alsop too pointed to the timing of the speech which he linked to the "tough policy" of air strikes, stating that it was because this policy was beginning to work that the President could now offer his Mekong "carrot" without appearing weak.

Another well-known American columnist, also syndicated in the New York Herald Tribune, was Walter Lippmann, who was regarded by the Administration as influential enough to warrant particular efforts aimed at soliciting Lippmann's support for the President's Vietnam policy. Lippmann, writing from a liberal standpoint - the antithesis of Alsop - and critical of U.S. policy on Vietnam, was bluntly sceptical about the Baltimore speech, stating:

"While the President's Baltimore address introduced a certain change in the tone of the official policy, it was quite evidently not intended to bring about any marked change in the course of the war."

As can be seen, the Baltimore speech was not a complete success as a propaganda gesture on negotiations, partly because it was seen as 'propaganda' in the pejorative sense, by some observers, for it was already clearly recognised as 'propaganda' in the sense that the speech was an effort to disseminate the Administration's viewpoint and persuade public opinion to accept it. In addition this speech was followed a day later by the U.S. Reply to the nonaligned nations' appeal, and this Reply
explicitly restated the former U.S. position that peace could be achieved "the moment that aggression from North Vietnam is eliminated" and when this stopped then "the need for American supporting military action will also come to an end." Thus the "unconditional discussions" of the Baltimore speech were undermined only the following day in this Reply, and the efforts the Administration was making to influence the public were publicly mentioned. For instance a *New York Times* report on 9 April on the Baltimore speech and the Reply stated:

"The Administration was staging a major propaganda effort around the President's speech, distributing it and 'commentaries' on it by radio, pamphlet and film clips. The White House distributed Mr. Thant's letter and let Adlai E. Stevenson, Representative at the United Nations, and Carl A. Rowan, Director of the United States Information Agency, 'report' on favorable world reaction to the Cabinet and to newsmen called in after the Cabinet meeting."  

Much of the American press, however, generally greeted the speech with relief - for example despite the report on the Administration's propaganda efforts a *New York Times* editorial was captioned "New Policy, New Phase". But some British press reports, and observers such as Alsop and Lippmann, examined the speech more critically. In these reports the speech was judged as propaganda on the grounds of timing - to relieve public anxiety - and content, for while the latter purported to signify a policy change, on close examination the 'change' was revealed to be negligible, a matter of style not substance. The fact that there were British press reports
which concentrated on these aspects and which then also exposed weaknesses in the Administration's basic propaganda arguments, as for example the Guardian editorial did on the Geneva Agreements, demonstrated the Administration's inability to implant its perceptions of the causes of the conflict and disseminate its basic propaganda arguments, as well as its tactical propaganda moves, without critical analysis through some parts of a foreign, analytical intermediary/audience. Thus the emotional references in the Baltimore speech to World War II, and the U.S. defence of "world order" through its commitment to the "small and brave" and independent nation of South Vietnam, were not having the desired effect on this section of the Administration's audience, which used a different set of references with which to judge the conflict. And in addition to some sceptical British reports, Alsop and Lippmann - American columnists with a European audience - writing from opposing viewpoints on the desirability of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, also came to the same conclusions about the Baltimore speech: that it signalled no policy change on negotiations, but was an effort to deflect criticism of U.S. policy.

However, despite the critical reception given to the Baltimore speech in some press reports, overall the speech focussed the public gaze on negotiations rather than bombing and escalation, and concentrated press attention now on the communists' response to the Administration's 'offer'. The negative communist reactions should have been
of considerable use to the U.S. propaganda effort. A
New York Times editorial on 11 April summarised the
situation, pointing to the communist's negative reactions
but stressing that the Administration should continue to
press for peace and decrease the intensity of the war.47
This editorial also gave its own version of the parameters
of acceptable proposals on South Vietnam and perforce
aided the Administration by setting such a limit:

"Publicly, North Vietnam's President Ho Chi
Minh and his Paris representative have echoed
Peking's demand - obviously unacceptable - for
American withdrawal for South Vietnam as a
precondition for a conference."48

The New York Times editorial concluded with a
judgement of the impact of the Baltimore speech and a plea
for peace:

"Within 24 hours last week the Johnson peace
plan basically altered world opinion, which had
become increasingly hostile to American policy
in Vietnam as a result of the bombing and the
gas incident...Negative Communist responses must
not distract us from this hopeful peace
offensive."49

The British press also reported the negative
communist response, but tended to concentrate on Britain's
peace initiatives and possible role in any negotiations.
On 11 April an Observer report headlined "Seeking peace on
Johnson offer", stated that unofficially the U.S. offer of
"unconditional talks...has so far had a hostile reception
from North Vietnam, China and Russia," but the report also
noted:

"Despite these negative public attitudes, the
President's speech has further stimulated
diplomatic activity behind the scenes in many
world capitals to bring about a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam war. ⑤°

Britain's own diplomatic efforts were also reported, consisting of Wilson's request for U.S. clarification of the "guarantees of the independent, neutral South Vietnam" mentioned in Johnson's speech, and Patrick Gordon Walker's forthcoming Southeast Asian trip. ⑥° The Sunday Telegraph, in an article headlined "Wilson Pressing Johnson", reported that Washington had been asked to "spell out" how it was "thinking of moving towards a settlement". ⑦° This report also noted the lack of response from Hanoi and Peking to Gordon Walker's request to visit them and judged that without their involvement the trip "would be little more than a lightning conductor to deflect Left-wing Labour unrest at home." ⑧° On 13 April The Times reported that western diplomats were now "clearly resigned" to a communist refusal of Johnson's offer. ⑨°

On 14 April the Communist reply to the Baltimore speech, formulated on 8 April, was made public. North Vietnam set out its provisions for settling the conflict in Pham Van Dong's Four Points, based on the Geneva Agreements. The Four Points were publicised in a Xinhua (China's official press agency) English language report monitored by the U.S. and reproduced in the New York Times. ⑩° The Administration was first reported by the New York Times to be "cool" to the plan and expected to reject it, but was then reported the following day to be studying the plan and "not prepared... to dismiss Hanoi's statement as an empty gesture." ⑪° The ambiguity contained in Point 3
of Hanoi's Four Points, concerning the settlement of South Vietnam's internal affairs "in accordance with the program of the N.F.L.S.V. [the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, or political arm of the Vietcong] without any foreign interference" was simply assumed by U.S. officials to mean a communist take-over by way of the Vietcong's political program. That Point 3 could be read differently, as noted by Kahin and Lewis in their critique of U.S. involvement in Vietnam published in 1967, to mean 'settling South Vietnam's internal affairs without foreign interference, in accordance with the N.F.L.S.V.'s program', was never explored by the Administration. As noted previously, the business of scrutinising and dissecting the language of communist statements could prove useful to the Administration: it was only a draw-back if there was a genuine desire to find a basis for negotiations, and at this time the Administration's terms for negotiations amounted to a North Vietnamese surrender, notwithstanding the Baltimore speech.

By now the Baltimore speech episode was coming to an end. Hanoi and Peking had refused to receive Gordon Walker, thereby vitiating the original purpose of the trip, which was to seek the views of both sides to the conflict. However, Johnson later used this rejection to advantage in his Easter message. But despite this visible set-back, the New York Times reported from London that the British Government was still hopeful about the long-term chances for peace talks because "experts" had detected "'a
nuance of difference" in Hanoi and Peking's rejection of the Gordon Walker visit and thought that North Vietnam's "more polite" rejection betokened "a shift toward a more moderate line". The report stated that the reasons given in London for this apparent shift were the bombing, the "renewed strength of the American commitment" and the "diplomatic effects" of the Baltimore speech. These "diplomatic effects" were aided by a speech by Michael Stewart to the Foreign Press Association, in which he noted the increasing support for U.S. policy, stated that he was against finding and emphasising differences between the U.S. and Britain on Vietnam as the Administration's statements were becoming more acceptable, and that the next move was now up to the communists. The Times noted that as more people came to support the Administration's policy on Vietnam, this justified the British Government's policy of support for the U.S. Thus the propaganda war seemed to be developing in the Administration's favour.

There was a postscript to the Baltimore episode on 17 April when President Johnson renewed his "unconditional discussions" offer in an Easter message from his Texas ranch, 10 days after his original speech. Stating that "we tried to open a window to peace", Johnson labelled North Vietnam's response as "tired names and slogans and a refusal to talk" to the U.S., to a "distinguished Briton" (Patrick Gordon Walker), or to the United Nations. Johnson also mentioned the increasing world understanding of America's "peaceful aim" in South Vietnam and the
"strengthened unity of American purpose" in Congress, the press and the people, to resist "aggression", "pursue peace" and "improve the lives of the people of Southeast Asia". Johnson's reference to "strengthened unity" was ironic in view of the fact that as he was delivering his message approximately 15,000 students and academics were demonstrating against U.S. policy at the White House, and this irony was not lost on journalists - their reports juxtaposed Johnson's Easter message with the demonstration, which the Guardian stated was "one of the largest ever to be held outside the White House."

While Johnson concentrated on the continuing U.S. willingness to talk about peace and the communist refusal, it was Dean Rusk who underlined the continuation of the bombing and ruled out a suspension of the air strikes on the grounds that rather than resulting in a cessation of North Vietnamese "aggression", a suspension would hearten the North Vietnamese and dishearten the South Vietnamese. In announcing the latter, Rusk drew attention to public and private efforts which had been undertaken to ascertain North Vietnam's attitude to a bombing halt, thereby explaining and reinforcing the Administration's decision not to halt the air strikes. For by this time suggestions had been put forward, most prominently by Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson and U Thant, that a temporary suspension of the air strikes might help towards resolving the situation.
On 18 April Pearson and U Thant were joined by Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who also advised a bombing halt. He did so on the grounds that this might help initiate peace talks, whereas he believed that continuing the bombing, as The Times noted in its report, "might cause the North Vietnamese to dig in - as Britain had done against the German bombing during the last war - and the Russians to refuse to talk." Clearly Fulbright and the Administration differed radically in public over the World War II analogies that applied to the Vietnam conflict. However Fulbright was merely hypothesising publicly on what the Administration already knew privately in fact: that the air campaign so far had not affected North Vietnam's will to continue aiding the Vietcong. This should not have been too great a surprise to the Administration because from the early stages of the air strikes Johnson's advisors had differed over the likely effects on North Vietnam's policy and actions of a sustained bombing campaign: intelligence estimates suggested on the one hand that North Vietnam might scale down its activities, but on the other hand that it might intensify its activities.

At the beginning of April, when the decision on committing ground troops was about to be taken, outgoing CIA Director John McCone had argued that if ground troops were to be committed then the air strikes should be intensified to "really hurt the North Vietnamese" because so far the strikes had been ineffective:
"I have reported that the strikes to date have not caused any change in the North Vietnamese policy of directing Viet Cong insurgency, infiltrating cadres and supplying material. If anything, the strikes to date have hardened their attitude." 7

This evaluation partly accounted for the Administration's switch to a ground troop strategy - only partly because several months before the decision was finally taken Johnson had favoured putting troops into South Vietnam over the bombing option. 72 Publicly, of course, there was no hint from the Administration of its doubts about the efficacy of the air strikes and its decision to deploy to ground troops. Instead it was made known that the Administration would continue, although not intensify, the air attacks on North Vietnam, but it would concentrate mainly on fighting the conflict in the South. This deliberate, publicised switch of focus, served the longer-term purpose of beginning to prepare public opinion for the time when Johnson finally did decide to announce that great numbers of American ground troops would be deployed in South Vietnam. Its immediate effect however, in the aftermath of the hopes raised by the Baltimore speech and the suggestions of a bombing halt, was to provoke more press analysis of the reasons for, and results of, the bombing campaign and indeed analysis of the basis of the U.S. commitment.

Reporting on this switch of focus on 23 April, the Financial Times put forward three reasons for what it termed "another significant shift in U.S. policy"; firstly, escalating the bombing would weaken a
pro-settlement faction within the North Vietnamese Government which the Administration had apparently detected; secondly the Chinese might send volunteers; and thirdly public opinion might object if civilian casualties rose in the North. This report also stated that the Administration had refused to commit "large numbers" of American ground troops. Other press reports had also noted that the bombing appeared to be bringing little advantage to the Administration. On 21 April in a report Headlined "Washington Counts Cost of Vietnam Bombings: Division on Policy's Effectiveness", The Times stated:

"The effect of the President's Baltimore speech is beginning to wear thin and the State Department has admitted that the response to its offer of unconditional discussions is disappointing. The United States in its third month of raining death and destruction upon North Vietnam, a desperate and by any standards a questionable measure that appears only to have brought frustration to the Pentagon."

Discussing the issue of negotiations and the Geneva Agreements, the Times report then set the conflict within the wider context of the Cold War frontiers:

"A perusal of the agreement would suggest that the North Vietnam reading of the Geneva Agreement is closer to the intentions of its authors, and certainly the American recognition of its authority was suspiciously tardy. American diplomacy, buttoned or unbuttoned [a reference to Walter Lippmann's judgement on State Department diplomacy as unbuttoned], is in fact applying the bitter experience of military defeat in the paddy fields and political failure in Saigon... For the Administration it leaves only one question to be answered: can American power force Hanoi to accept a solution, the recognition of the 17th Parallel as an east-west, rather than a North Vietnam-South Vietnam, frontier without provoking Chinese and Russian intervention?"
Walter Lippmann's judgement on the situation, mentioned in *The Times* report, was yet more explicit about the gap between the Administration's version of the Geneva Agreements and the real provisions in the document. While acknowledging that North Vietnam had not abided by the original terms concerning free elections in the North, Lippmann pointed out that the United States had also opposed free elections to unify the country "when it realized Ho Chi Minh would win them...Since that time we have insisted that South Vietnam is an independent nation." Lippmann called this a "cardinal weakness of our diplomatic position today", emphasised the fact that the U.S. had not always held the view that South Vietnam was an independent nation and came to the "bitter truth", on legal and moral grounds, that the U.S. had no "true and active supporters" of its policy.78

Certainly the diplomatic situation was in disarray, reflected in confusing press reports about another peace initiative having foundered - this time a Russian proposal to its co-chairman Britain to convene a conference on Cambodia. Britain's delay in answering the Russian request was attributed to the necessity of securing an answer from Washington, and Washington's delay was explained in turn by its need to secure South Vietnam's approval.79 The reports on the U.S. attitude to such a conference were confusing. The *Financial Times* reported on 23 April that the Americans had received Wilson's overtures, during his visit to Washington, "politely" but were convinced that
there were "serious dangers" in such a conference and that attempts to persuade South Vietnam and Thailand to take part were "foundering on their detestation of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia and their fears that a settlement would only end in the reduction of American support."

Two days later however, after Prince Sihanouk had turned down the conference, Henry Brandon in the *Sunday Times* stated that the U.S. had been "on the point of informing the British Government that it was willing to attend such a conference" and that South Vietnam would have agreed to attend.

Thus, due to Sihanouk's negative attitude, the Administration did not have to articulate a clear public response to the Cambodian conference proposal. This meant that the Administration could be reported as favouring the proposal without having to take any positive action. This turn of events was fortunate for the Administration, for if a conference had been convened, the firm U.S. intention of continuing to bomb North Vietnam while talks were taking place would have destroyed any public goodwill and belief that U.S. participation in such a conference meant that it really did want to negotiate. And there seems little doubt that the Administration did not want to negotiate, for at the recent Honolulu Conference the Administration had decided to increase the troop commitment to 82,000, and was seeking further third country reinforcements for a protracted struggle against the Vietcong in the South. The Administration expected to
prosecute this struggle successfully to achieve its current objectives of denying victory to the Vietcong and calculated that it would take "more than six months, perhaps a year or two, to demonstrate VC failure in the South." In addition to the confusing reports about the diplomatic situation, there were also contradictory press reports on public support. Stating that the "United States clearly remains a nation divided over the war in Vietnam", The Times had judged that the mid-April demonstrators were "only the articulate few representing a vast mass of dissent." Whereas the Financial Times a few days later had written: "Public opinion, when it is not apathetic, still appears to be predominantly in favour of the President's policy." In fact The Times view of the U.S. being divided over the war was supported by Gallup Poll figures published in the Daily Telegraph on 23 April, showing that 29% wanted the U.S. to withdraw, or stop fighting and begin talks; 31% wanted increased military pressure; and 14% thought the present policy correct, including a readiness to negotiate.

Concerning the British press, criticism of U.S. policy had sharpened in those newspapers which had previously expressed doubts about aspects of U.S. involvement. In some cases there was now outright opposition on varying grounds. For instance on the global effects of U.S. policy, an Observer editorial on 25 April captioned "Destroying Tomorrow", began:
The United States is fighting a mistaken fight. However much we may wish to avoid embarrassing an ally, however much we may sympathise with President Johnson's difficulties, the point has come when polite murmurs of dissent are no longer appropriate. When you see a friend sleep-walking on the edge of a precipice, carrying your only child in his arms, it is your duty to try to wake him up - even if this involves raising your voice and making rude noises."

The Observer's main charge against U.S. policy was that it was "destroying the only possible basis of world peace-keeping for the future", by destroying the improved relations between the U.S., Russia and the non-aligned nations, the most important relations being those between the U.S. and Russia. The editorial further pointed out that U.S. policy was undermining the Russian view that coexistence with the West was necessary, and because of the ideological competition between Russia and China, U.S. actions were forcing Russia to cooperate with China over Vietnam. In this situation the Observer suggested that the U.S. "should be persuaded" to settle the conflict diplomatically and accept that South Vietnam might end up with a communist government, in return for Russia guaranteeing South Vietnam's "military neutralisation." The editorial concluded that world peace and mankind's future depended on reversing the present U.S. policy on Vietnam.

The Guardian used an editorial based on Australia's commitment of troops to explore the pressure the British Government was under to follow Australia's example. Despite pointing out that Britain was economically dependent on the U.S. and therefore under obligation to
some extent, The Guardian suggested that it was time that
the British Government began to criticise U.S. policy in
the hope of influencing it to some small degree, rather
than agreeing in public and endeavouring to ameliorate
U.S. policy in private. Detailing various aspects of
U.S. war methods - the bombing, use of gas, and napalm -
which the British Government had already condoned The
Guardian wondered: "Where will Mr Wilson draw the
line?"93

The Times, meanwhile, analysed student and faculty
protest in the U.S. over the war and drew attention to the
relationship between Vietnam war protesters and the
idealism of the U.S. civil rights movements.95 This
editorial pointed out that because civil rights workers
were critical of the U.S. social order they were doubtful
about the type of society that was being defended in
Vietnam; and the two movements had workers in common.96
The editorial concluded:

"The war, in fact, is not one to which much
direct idealism can be attached, and a more
restless and critical youth is finding it
difficult to support. The protest may be
negative, ill-defined, and irritating to those
who are closer to the facts. But it has hopeful
aspects."97

Thus by the end of April the Administration was
coming under increasing pressure over all aspects of its
Vietnam policy, including forceful complaints from the New
York Times that the Administration was deliberately not
keeping the public informed about the conflict. An
editorial captioned "Truth or Propaganda" stated that the
Administration's "credibility... has been one of the numerous casualties of the war in Vietnam" and continued:

"Time after time high-ranking representatives of government - in Washington and Saigon - have obscured, confused or distorted news from Vietnam, or have made fatuously erroneous evaluations about the course of the war, for public consumption.

"Mistaken judgements are understandable - though if too frequent, indefensible; but deliberate distortion or obfuscation, or the selection or repression of facts for propaganda purposes, is inexcusable. Americans are dying in Vietnam and more will die; there should be no misunderstanding whatsoever about what they are dying for - or why."\[9\]

The New York Times traced the problem from USIA's attempts to maintain tight control over information emanating from South Vietnam, back to Washington's "increasingly restrictive public relations policies" and particularly singled out the Pentagon for its "manipulation of facts for 'image' value."\[99\] The newspaper then repeated its charges a few days later.100 And of course these complaints were made at a time when the Administration's decisions to expand the war greatly and deploy ground troops offensively were still secret. The seriousness of these decisions and the deception surrounding them was of a vastly different order to what the New York Times was currently complaining about and when these decisions finally did become public knowledge, the bitterness and anger expressed by the press was correspondingly more intense.

To make matters worse for the Administration, the Dominican Republic crisis had also erupted and U.S. troops had been dispatched to the island. The crisis was
short-lived but came at a time when the U.S. could ill afford to create an impression of a willingness to police the globe with its troops.

On 4 May, while the Dominican Republic crisis was continuing, Johnson requested from Congress supplemental funds of $700 million for the Vietnam war, thus reinforcing his intention to continue with his policy. The Times' report on Johnson's request pointed to the Senate's suspicion that this Bill would be used "as evidence of Congressional support for a "Korea-type war in Vietnam" and the report further noted the need now felt by many senators to indicate that they were "not signing a blank cheque for the Johnson doctrine." In addition, The Times stated that the current appropriations request reminded many senators of the August 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which the Administration had used as evidence of Congressional support for its current policies in Vietnam; whereas in August 1964 senators had voted for a limited retaliation against North Vietnam, not the current regular bombing programme and dispatch of U.S. troops to South Vietnam.

The Bill was approved rapidly, but congressional fears had been publicly aired, with an unsavoury reminder of the Korean War: a war which the President viewed primarily as a useful historical analogy for a successful fight for freedom, but which Congress viewed primarily as a long and bitter war which had been vastly unpopular with the American people. The parallel with the Tonkin Gulf
Resolution also publicised the Congressional feeling of having been out-maneuvered by the President in the past and drew attention to the train of events concerning Vietnam since the Resolution was passed.

However, by now, according to The Negotiating Volumes of The Pentagon Papers, Johnson was also considering a bombing pause, primarily for the purposes of demonstrating communist intransigence and thus facilitating U.S. escalation of the war.  

That the war would have to be expanded to achieve U.S. objectives had been confirmed for the President by various intelligence estimates which emphasised Hanoi's determination to continue its policy of supporting the Vietcong and its intention to intensify the struggle. In his estimate of the situation the new CIA Director, Admiral Raborn, had suggested the bombing campaign should be expanded carefully, so that North Vietnam could "explore negotiations without complete loss of face"; so that the bombing "would not preclude" Russia from pressuring Hanoi to limit the war; and so that the U.S. would not have to cope with sudden "extreme world pressures". In pursuit of this ideal, Raborn stated that the timing of the air strikes was "of critical importance" and that advantages would accrue from expanding the bombing "after, not before, any current possibilities of serious negotiations have been fully tested." He also suggested that a bombing pause might be undertaken "at some appropriate time" in order to
"test" the communists and to "exploit any differences on their side." With this recommendation, reinforced by photographs of Russian SAM missile sites under construction near Hanoi with the concomitant dangers for U.S. air strikes, Johnson decided to halt the bombing. 107

As noted already in Section A above, the U.S. had difficulty transmitting its message to Hanoi, and the language employed was brusque and the terms uncompromising. The bombing pause was not announced publicly and Washington intended to keep control over information on the pause by ordering that any queries in the field be directed to Washington.

When the bombing pause first surfaced publicly on 15 May in The New York Times, the British press was busy analysing U.S. dissent over Vietnam and the Dominican Republic; was discussing a forthcoming National teach-in on Vietnam to be held in Washington; and was dissecting the President's latest television speech - beamed to Europe by satellite - offering aid to Asia and acknowledging that many Vietcong might be fighting for ideals, and not merely conquest. 108 The Daily Express focussed mainly on the press, and after mentioning Johnson's numerous public attempts to explain his policies - twelve times in two weeks - discussed what it termed the New York Times' "steady drumfire of criticism". 109 The report also mentioned Alsop's defense of the President, which included a complaint that British newspapers were
The Times focussed on academic dissent, often embodied in teach-ins, and the Administration's efforts to explain its policies to the academic community. According to The Times, the "truth squads" that the State Department was dispatching to these teach-ins were not particularly successful, and the irritation that high-ranking Administration officials felt about the teach-ins appeared to be reflected in the attitude of these diplomatic emissaries. At the very least, the exasperation expressed by the Administration about academic dissent added to the image which was forming of an Administration that resented criticism and was firstly unwilling to debate its policy, but secondly, when it felt compelled to do so, was unable to do this without suggesting that opposition was unpatriotic, cowardly, or just simply wrong.

Thus the publicity on the bombing pause coincided neatly with the National Teach-in on 15 May, which was attracting much press attention due partly to McGeorge Bundy's expected attendance. In the event Bundy was unable to attend the teach-in, thus diminishing its significance. The bombing halt was widely reported in much the way that the Administration desired. The official reason for the halt was reported to be 'operational' but as The New York Times noted:

"Sources here, even in citing the 'military' reasons, did not discourage speculation that they were using the suspension to see whether
North Vietnam would respond either through diplomatic channels or through some signals in Vietnam itself."

The New York Times report concluded with the observation that the Administration's "reluctance to commit itself publicly" to a bombing halt was because the Administration did not want to get involved in "long and fruitless negotiations during which it would be pledged not to bomb North Vietnam while guerilla activity in the South continues." The obvious inference was a parallel with the talks during the Korean War, which had followed this pattern. However, in the case of the Vietnam conflict this observation did not explain the Administration's reluctance to publicly acknowledge a bombing pause, because the Administration had already decided that any talks would be accompanied by the continued bombing of North Vietnam.

It seems far more likely therefore that the Administration's reluctance to admit to a bombing pause publicly and thus having to give an official reason for it, while at the same time encouraging the press to discuss the possible political reasons for a 'military-operational' pause, was because by using this back-door tactic the Administration reaped the political and public advantages of an official pause without the disadvantages. Because if the Administration had admitted publicly that it was halting the bombing to test North Vietnam's response, there would have been great public and diplomatic pressure on the U.S. to extend the pause as
long as possible, certainly for longer than the five days that Johnson was allotting to this unofficial pause. And in addition the resumption of the bombing would not have been so easily accomplished after an official pause.

In his memoirs Johnson adds credence to this theory, because when discussing the proposed bombing halt in December 1965, Johnson stresses that the one aspect of a pause that was troubling him most was whether, "if Hanoi did nothing in return" there would be difficulties with world opinion when the bombing was resumed, due to the general dislike of the bombing.116 It is reasonable to assume that this problem was as pertinent in May as it was in December. It is possible that Johnson was even more concerned in May about whether public opinion would make it difficult to resume the bombing after an official pause. For as Johnson told Ambassador Taylor, the main purpose of this brief, unofficial pause in May was to clear the way either for peace on U.S. terms (which the Administration already knew was unlikely) or military escalation, in addition to influencing world opinion and gaining Johnson "some flexibility", and therefore there was every reason to avoid inviting possible adverse public pressure at this particular stage.117

The other interesting aspect of the New York Times' concluding observation on the unacknowledged bombing pause, was the designation of possible negotiations as "fruitless". Obviously this was pre-judging the outcome of any talks before they had begun. But the subtle reminder
of the pattern of the Korean talks would tend to provide an acceptable, legitimate and easily understood reason — saving U.S. soldiers lives — for the Administration's reluctance to tie its hands with a public statement on a bombing pause. In addition, the reference to guerilla activity continuing in the South during a bombing pause was a straightforward statement that the communists would not 'play fair' during Vietnam negotiations — as they had not done during the Korean War negotiations — before any attempt had been made by the U.S. to find out whether this would in fact be the case. Thus the fact that designating talks as "fruitless" made a mockery of the Administration's protestations in favour of peace discussions, was balanced by these insinuations.

There was wide coverage of the bombing halt in the British press on 16 and 17 May. In addition to the operational reason given for the pause, the Daily Telegraph suggested that it was connected with a recent Indian cease-fire plan. The New York Herald Tribune stated that publicly the pause was to allow the military to carry out reconnaissance surveys for offensive planning, but privately the Administration wanted to see whether Hanoi would respond to the pause in a way that could lead to negotiations.

In a lengthy article The Times considered both the bombing pause and the Washington Teach-in together in a report headlined: "Failure of Air Attacks on the North". The report began with the statement that
"indications... that the Administration is once again reviewing its policy in Vietnam" were an "admission of the ineffectiveness of the present policy." The report pointed out that the bombing campaign had failed as a diplomatic instrument and although it might have worked if Hanoi and Haiphong had been bombed, "the logic of ruthless strategy" was apparently "unacceptable" to Johnson and "most Americans." Stating merely that there were "many conflicting" explanations for the bombing pause, the article mentioned that it was hoped that Hanoi would respond with a "diminution of effort" - it was not expected that Hanoi would offer to negotiate. The report also presented the position of the "realists": that there was no reason why Hanoi should help the U.S. to descend from an "escalation ladder" that the U.S. did not want to ascend any further. The article also mentioned that the way in which the bombing was originally justified, in the State Department White Paper's "aggressively simple view of the nature of the conflict", was "also now regretted." This was a reference to the President's admission that the Vietcong's ranks contained idealists, and not simply communist stooges. Finally The Times report summarised the results of the National Teach-in, stating that it established the parameters of U.S. policy on two "unacceptable" points:

"First, that the present known objectives of the Administration in south-east Asia can be achieved only by a war with China. Secondly, that an early American withdrawal would leave a dangerous vacuum." 121
The report concluded that further reinforcements would be sent to Vietnam "if only to achieve a military standoff as a preliminary to some kind of political agreement." Clearly The Times still thought that the U.S. wished to negotiate, in the sense of achieving a compromise with Hanoi.

However, Hanoi's immediate public denunciation of the bombing pause, as a trick to provoke a rift in the socialist camp, demonstrated Hanoi's disinclination to respond to any U.S. gesture, much less to consider talks. Hanoi's response was thus most useful for the Administration's propaganda effort and when the bombing resumed on 18 May, the British press reaction in general was to regret that Hanoi had not responded to a genuine U.S. peace initiative, and had thereby caused the bombing to resume. Where press reactions differed was on the U.S. diplomatic effort that accompanied the bombing pause, with The Times stating that hitherto "the diplomatic side of the American offensive has been weak"; whereas the Daily Telegraph spoke of the the pause being "backed by energetic diplomacy". Various explanations were put forward to account for the short pause and rapid resumption of the bombing, such as the approach of the monsoon season (hampering precision bombing) and an anticipated attack by Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops before the monsoon, but U.S. good faith was not questioned. Indeed a London Times report pointed out:

"Whatever may be said of American policy in the past, it seems reasonably clear that Hanoi is not prepared to talk or accept the present
position until it is convinced that it cannot win by military means."¹²⁷

The Daily Telegraph went further than The Times and stated that Hanoi's rejection of this U.S. peace initiative "can be claimed as vindicating, in retrospect" Johnson's decision to bomb North Vietnam in his belief that only military action would make Hanoi negotiate.¹²⁸ This editorial concluded that: "What cannot be doubted is American sincerity in seeking an honourable settlement."¹²⁹

There was little hint in the press reaction of the possibility that the pause might have been undertaken primarily as a public relations exercise, designed to demonstrate communist intransigence towards a U.S. peace initiative. And though the Times editorial which characterised the U.S. diplomatic effort as "weak" also noted other anomalies in the U.S. position on talks, the belief was still expressed that the U.S. wanted negotiations. For instance this editorial termed as "naive" the "impression of injured innocence" given by the U.S. over "Hanoi's lack of interest in the recent soundings" and continued:

"It was too much to expect a brief suspension of the bombing to produce an immediate change of attitude. Nor is it really enough to make sweeping offers of unconditional negotiations."¹³⁰

However, the recognition of these anomalies did not affect the central conviction about U.S. willingness to negotiate:

"Everyone knows that the United States wishes to negotiate and would agree to any reasonable
arrangement, even including, if pushed, some representation of the Vietcong."

A report which did link the bombing pause with public opinion was carried in The New York Times on 19 May, and it stated:

"But there are strong indications that another motive for the pause was the Administration's desire to convince its critics at home and abroad that North Vietnam and China were preventing negotiations, not the United States."

The report was based on "sources familiar with President's Johnson's views", who stated that Johnson believed that the "main result of a pause would be to demonstrate that the Communist governments were not interested in negotiations while military victory in Vietnam was possible." However, despite this contradictory version of the Administration's motives for the pause, the report still concluded that Hanoi's denunciation of the pause "appeared to confirm what officials here have insisted upon privately - that conciliatory gestures now by the United States will not produce negotiations." Thus the impression was still held, and disseminated, that the U.S. had been involved primarily in making a "conciliatory gesture" that had been rebuffed. A Daily Telegraph report also noted that the U.S. felt that "its repeated offers of negotiations and the temporary suspension of the air raids" had dampened international criticism, but again the primary objective of the suspension was seen as negotiations, not public relations.
Thus the bombing pause achieved what President Johnson desired: Hanoi's blunt rejection of what the Western world saw as an U.S. peace overture gave the Administration's propaganda campaign a useful boost in terms of both support and credibility. In addition, Hanoi's public intransigence handed the Administration a weapon for the future on the negotiations issue. For whereas previously the Administration had demanded that Hanoi stop its aggression before negotiations should begin, thereby prompting discussion of the causes of the war and close examination of the justice of the Administration's demands, henceforth the Administration had no need to make any demands and justified the lack of negotiations simply on the grounds of this obvious communist intransigence and unwillingness to negotiate. And U.S. bombing was resumed with no public outcry and no pressure to prolong the pause.

In fact just after the bombing was resumed it appears that Hanoi may have responded privately, though ambiguously, to the U.S. overture through its economic delegation in Paris. Using the services of Canadian diplomat Blair Seaborn, the U.S. did attempt to explore this move, but due to continuing ambiguity over whether or not Pham Van Dong's Four Points constituted prior conditions for talks and North Vietnamese disinclination to resolve this ambiguity, nothing came of it.

The credit that the Administration gained through the bombing pause was soon to be squandered in the revelation
of the changed U.S. troop role. June began amid press reports on two related issues. Firstly, that Johnson was worried over South Vietnamese losses in a recent battle and Ambassador Taylor was in Washington with the details; and secondly, coverage of a speech by Vice-President Humphrey stating that the war had to be won on the ground and that the U.S. was buying time for the South Vietnamese to sort out their own problems. In Britain, Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart was briefing the House of Commons on Britain’s fruitless attempts to persuade the USSR to reconvene the Geneva Conference, and similarly unsuccessful efforts to convene a conference on Cambodia.

All of these developments should have been useful to the U.S. propaganda effort, beginning to prepare the ground for the public admission that U.S. troops were needed in combat to buy time for South Vietnam, and with Britain reinforcing the official U.S. explanation on the absence of negotiations. However, time was needed to establish a case publicly in order to justify and announce the change in the U.S. troops’ role, which had already been decided secretly two months previously. But time ran out abruptly on 8 June when the State Department Press Officer Robert McCloskey announced that U.S. troops were now available for combat duty in support of South Vietnamese troops if such assistance was requested, and when he confirmed in answer to a question that this was a new role for U.S. troops. In fact both The New York Times
on 5 June and The Times on 7 June had reported that U.S. troops had already been fighting the Vietcong. And the New York Times had also quoted Administration sources' private views that "it was only a matter of time - perhaps days or weeks - before some American troops were committed to direct combat against the Vietcong". But it was the official announcement - confirmation in fact of what some field correspondents had already observed for themselves - of this new role and the way in which it was announced that generated an immediate press row. Press criticism focussed on both of these aspects, but in addition the reasons for using U.S. troops in combat were also scrutinised, thus publicising the sharp deterioration in the military situation and recent heavy South Vietnamese losses.

Press reports on the State Department's announcement treated it as a new and particularly critical stage in the war. As the Financial Times stated:

"Another turning point in the American policy in South-East Asia, has therefore been reached and the way is now clear for the steady onset of full-scale U.S. participation in land war on the Asian mainland. This course, leading as it does, to the old American nightmare of another Korea."

The New York Times, however, decided that the U.S. was already in a land war in Asia and directed a broadside at the Administration, not least for the manner in which the nation was informed of its new war. And the same New York Times editorial also reminded Johnson of the contrast between the rapid escalation of the commitment in
Vietnam since February and his election platform a mere seven months ago. The London Times, in a report headlined "New Offensive Role For U.S. Troops", concentrated mainly on the need for the American troops in this new role and quoted McCloskey as saying that it was "probably related to the new Vietcong offensive in the first week of which 1,900 South Vietnamese troops were killed, wounded, or captured."1 The report then discussed the military situation in South Vietnam:

"By almost any standards, the war there has already been lost. The Vietcong hold most of the countryside, and its strength is increasing. The South Vietnamese Army is weary and weakened by desertion. In Saigon there is little hope of establishing a viable civilian government, and the United States is treating with war lords. What has to be done is to begin afresh, and under different ground rules. Hence the committing of American troops and the talk of no privileged sanctuary."1

Thus The Times highlighted the most serious aspect of the State Department announcement - the reason underlying the role change. Finally the report focussed on the communications side of Johnson's Vietnam policy. Noting Johnson's constant emphasis on peace in the last few days and quoting his latest rhetorical question about whether the other side's response would sound as "'the tread of marching armies or the footsteps of millions walking towards peace'", The Times put Johnson's rhetoric in context:

"Congress might possibly want to hear a little more from the White House before the tread of American marching feet drowns out further communication."1
Clearly the Administration had dug a pit for itself in changing the U.S. troop role back in April, then continuously emphasising their defensive posture and now announcing the change in such a cavalier manner. However, as if there were not already enough anger and dismay, the White House then compounded the error by issuing a statement on 9 June flatly denying that there had been any change in the U.S. troop role "in recent days or weeks". In addition this statement also claimed that Westmoreland had already been granted the authority to commit U.S. troops in a combat support role, in the original mission assigned to the troops.

In effect the White House was saying that since March U.S. troops had been authorised for combat support and was using this justification to deny a role change. Both claims were untrue: the President had authorised a change in troop role on 1 April, and in March the Marines had not been authorised for combat support. On the other hand both claims were consistent with the information policy that the President had pursued so far: to keep policy decisions escalating the U.S. commitment as secret as possible, or alternatively, if secrecy was impossible, to give as little information as possible; and then to present such decisions as consistent with past policy, not a new policy or stage in the U.S. commitment. Indeed Johnson spent much time and effort presenting his entire Vietnam policy as merely an extension of past Presidential policies; and he referred each individual escalatory step back to previous
steps, pursuing his middle course and endeavouring to stifle public speculation and debate on the escalation. However this was precisely what his secretive approach did stir up, and the more the Administration's credibility was eroded, the more Administration statements were questioned.

Press reaction to the White House statement on 9 June was incredulous. The Guardian pointed out that far from denying a change in role, the White House statement actually confirmed that the Marines' role had changed and suggested that as a support role had been denied "until yesterday" by the State and Defense Departments, "there would seem to have been an astonishing lack of co-ordination recently" between those departments and the White House. At the very least this made the Administration look completely incompetent on a vital policy issue. Even the Daily Telegraph headlined its report "Washington Fog on Viet-Nam Policy" and wrote that the White House statement, intended to "soften the effect" of the State Department's announcement, had engendered "worse confusion". The report then highlighted the fact that "official explanations in Washington are only now starting, inefficiently, to catch up with what has been a reality in Viet-nam for weeks."

This view, that the Administration was in arrears with its policy announcements, rather than deliberately withholding information, was the general view in the press reports. There were also recommendations that the
President should be "more communicative" and warnings of much graver domestic dissent unless he took his own nation into his confidence. However, some press reports were obviously associating 'communication' with 'information' and where the Administration was concerned the two were not necessarily linked. For the President had on occasions been most "communicative" on certain issues, about his desire for peace for instance, but this merely obscured the Administration's real intentions. And the amount and type of 'information' he actually gave on the Administration's real intentions was minimal compared to the amount and type he could have given, as The Pentagon Papers clearly demonstrate. In addition, much of the more accurate information in press reports on future actions or policy on Vietnam 'emerged' through 'private sources' or the 'private' reflections of unnamed Administration officials, thus showing the gap between official announcements and private views on the war. This may have been a way of quietly preparing the public for greater commitments, but it was not the best way to run a propaganda campaign with the prospect of full-scale war looming rapidly.

Concerning Britain, this latest propaganda blunder again focussed press attention on Britain's relationship with America over Vietnam, and on the nature of the conflict. Press reports were divided over whether or not Britain had been informed of U.S. intentions, and Whitehall refused to comment directly, leaving the matter
still open to public speculation. A *Times* report discussed left-wing Labour pressure and the possibility of a Cabinet split over Vietnam, while an editorial analysed America's decision that the conflict was a test of U.S. "will to resist communist expansion". Though suspending judgement on "the final verdict", the *Times* editorial suggested that as "past remedies" had failed, it might be a mistake to persist escalating "beyond the point of no return." In the *New York Herald Tribune*, Walter Lippmann analysed Europe's lack of confidence in the "wisdom and competence" of U.S. policy on Vietnam. The *Observer* again focussed on the disastrous effects of U.S. policy in Vietnam on world politics and called for the Government to dissociate from current U.S. policy, pointing out that Britain could not help to end the conflict "if we appear simply to be clinging on to President Johnson's coat-tails." The latter aspect was also highlighted in *The Guardian* in a column captioned: "Mediator in chains?", but this comment was balanced by an editorial appraising the benefits to Britain of Wilson's deliberate policy of seeking good relations with the U.S.

Nevertheless, despite the public comment and the prospect of more party pressure, the British Government continued its firm public support for U.S. policy. And amazing though it seemed, President Johnson was still portrayed as a man of peaceful intentions who was receiving bad advice, although as a London *Times* report from Washington noted about a "general feeling of
entrapment", doubtless Americans would "eventually" ask "if the President calculatingly led his country into the trap."¹⁵⁷

That Vietnam was a trap implying an open-ended American commitment appeared to be increasingly obvious, particularly as there had been another change of government in South Vietnam, highlighting yet again the chronic political instability of Saigon and its concomitant inability to pursue the war effectively.

Against this background of inexorably deepening U.S. commitment, Britain proposed another peace mission, centring on the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference that was due to be held in London on 17 June. Immediately before this however, Oxford University held a teach-in on Vietnam at which both the British Government and the Administration fielded representatives. Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart most ably defended U.S. policy and British Government support for this policy, using the standard American arguments.¹⁵⁸ According to The Times, the U.S. representative, Henry Cabot Lodge, "misjudged" his audience, talking about "lavish American aid" and referring to Churchill, and was "given a much rougher ride of moans, groans, and hisses".¹⁵⁹ After this sideshow on Vietnam came the serious business, apparently, of the Commonwealth Peace Mission.

The idea was proposed by Wilson and was to consist of a peace mission by four Commonwealth Prime Ministers, led by Harold Wilson, visiting Moscow, Washington, Peking,
Hanoi, Saigon, and the International Control Commission members. Johnson approved the mission and publicly welcomed it on 17 June. But as usual when a peace initiative was involved, there were reports of contradictory reactions in Washington, and on 18 June it was reported that after a Cabinet meeting chaired by Johnson, Rusk "politely but firmly played down" the significance of the Commonwealth Peace Mission. And the Financial Times left its readers in no doubt that the current beliefs held in Washington about the prospects for, and basis of, negotiations with Hanoi "seriously affect the value of any Commonwealth move". This of course assumes that the Peace Mission proposal was a genuine attempt to mediate the conflict. For the Crossman Diaries suggest that one of the prime values of the Peace Mission for Wilson himself was that it was likely to ease domestic political pressure and the proceedings of the Commonwealth Conference. Add to this the fact that according to The Pentagon Papers Administration thinking at the time would have rendered null and void any peace move, and the futility of the peace initiative becomes apparent. In any case, genuine or not, and desired or not, the communists once again aided the Administration by rejecting the Peace Mission a week later.

An effort was later made in mid-July to persuade the North Vietnamese to receive the Commonwealth Peace Mission by sending the British MP, Harold Davies, to Hanoi. But
this effort also foundered when news of the trip leaked out after Davies had left, and it ended in recriminations on the North Vietnamese side.164

From mid-July onwards most of the news concerned speculation about an increase in U.S. forces in South Vietnam. At a widely reported press conference on 13 July, the second in only four days, the President helped fuel the speculation by stating that he was considering the possibility of a reserve call-up, increasing the draft, increasing the defense budget and expanding the U.S. troop commitment.165 Immediately after this and just before he was due to go on a fact-finding trip to South Vietnam, McNamara too held a press conference, reiterating and emphasizing the same points as Johnson.166 The final stage in the preparation for the Presidential announcement on troop increases came in another week of publicised policy review meetings at the White House.167 On 28 July in a televised press conference address containing the now standard references to the need to combat communist aggression and open unconditional discussions, the President announced that the troop levels in Vietnam would be increased by another 50,000, that more troops would be sent if required and the draft would also be increased, but that there would be no need to call up the reserves.168 Because of the contrast with Johnson's earlier press conference remarks and the subsequent press speculation, Johnson's 28 July announcement was almost received as good news in America. The Financial Times captured the mood:
"It sounds paradoxical to the point of perversity to suggest that the commitment of 50,000 fresh troops to a land war on the Asian Continent - with the promise of worse to come - should be regarded by anyone as a merciful relief, but there is no other way to describe the common reaction.

"To some extent this can be explained as an emotional response to the President's masterly handling of the announcement. Having allowed an unbearable tension to build up during seven days of highly-publicised conclave with his advisers, and widespread reports of a massive call-up of reservists, he let his audience down gently with a mere increase in the National Service draft and a refusal to put guns before butter."169

It was a brilliant piece of stage-managing by Johnson.170 But the fact that it was recognised as stage-management was unlikely to help the Administration, because it gave the accurate impression that the Administration was quite simply manipulating and controlling public opinion. It was also a clever propaganda move because it gave the impression of needing fewer troops to fight the war than had been predicted, whereas Johnson was already about to authorise the dispatch of another 60,000 troops. And in the press conference following this announcement, Johnson denied that there would be any change in the U.S. troops mission.171

British press reactions to Johnson's announcement varied from noting the "sacrifices, human and material" that the U.S. was prepared to expend defending the "free world", to noting that the war was being progressively taken over from South Vietnam by America and that: "Wars to expel the foreigner are usually successful in the end..."172 For as the U.S. commitment deepened, so the
differences in the British press on the conflict emerged more clearly and sharply and this sharpened the debate on the British Government's role. However, despite the differences in attitude on the conflict, what was apparent to all was that the U.S. had now embarked publicly on a ground war in Vietnam and was set firmly on an escalatory course.

D.) British Government Reaction and Opinion

Throughout this period of rapid escalation in the U.S. commitment, the British Government continued to support U.S. policy publicly, but also coupled this role to a search for a peaceful solution to the conflict. Thus the Government proposed a number of peace initiatives, which yielded nothing in the way of a solution to the conflict, but which did decrease domestic political pressure on the Government.

The Government's policy of strong public support for U.S. policy meant that its own image as an independent government and ally was tied to, and affected by U.S. policy and actions in Vietnam. And as the war escalated in Vietnam, so the role of supporting the U.S. became more difficult for the Government: domestic pressure in Britain increased over the war itself, over Government support for U.S. policy and over the Government's inability to exert any influence over U.S. policy, which was helping to create an image of passive acceptance of all U.S. actions on the part of the British Government. For increasingly, with escalation of the war, the Government's role and
The image of faithful ally was seen to be overshadowing and discrediting - in British critics' eyes - its image as an independent government, engendering domestic criticism on that aspect and thus increasing the Government's difficulties over supporting U.S. policy.

However, to some extent the converse was also true, in that when the U.S. desire for peace was emphasised in Presidential speeches, accompanied by offers to talk and develop Southeast Asia, domestic criticism in Britain of U.S. policy and of the British Government's support for the U.S. lessened - until the next escalatory step. In addition, any peace moves undertaken by the British Government were usually greeted enthusiastically by the domestic audience and therefore not only eased the pressure on the Government, but by dint of conforming to certain expectations about the Government's role, such moves improved the Government's image among critics - temporarily. The image improvement was never lasting because the peace moves always failed and the war continued to escalate, and thus the problems facing the British Government because of its policy remained.

On the U.S. side, the Administration was well briefed by its Embassy in London on opinion on Vietnam and the problems encountered by the British Government, both inside Parliament and outside. For in addition to analysing the pressures on Wilson from his own party, the Embassy assiduously provided the Administration with information on the attitudes of the various newspapers.†
Thus the Administration was made aware of the effect of its policies and actions on the British Government's position as a supporter of U.S. policy. In order to assist the British Government in maintaining its support for U.S. policy on Vietnam, which was mutually advantageous, the Administration undertook to keep the Government informed about U.S. policy on Vietnam, as a cable dated 3 June from the U.S. Ambassador in London, David Bruce, to Secretary of State Rusk on the subject of the British Government support makes clear. Bruce first outlined the difficulties entailed by the Labour Government's policy of support for the U.S.:

"Michael Stewart's statement to the Commons on June 3 (on the preparation of which he personally spent a great deal of time and thought) indicates how much the British remain preoccupied with Vietnam. While the Wilson Government will continue to give us solid support we must recognize that uneasiness persists and that the domestic political problem for the Labor Government is correspondingly difficult. The pressure on Wilson comes not just from the Left but from Labor moderates and from the general public as well..."174

Bruce then analysed the particular aspects of the Vietnam conflict which aroused concern and pointed to the likelihood of continuing support from the Labour Government, if only on the negative grounds that the Government could not afford to offend the Administration. In passing, he also confirmed that the British Government did know of the change in mission of the U.S. troops in Vietnam:
"With all of this, it is understandable the British are sensitive to the problem of Southeast Asia. They are very much aware of the increased US troop commitment and our expanded combat mission, of the dangers of the air war in North Vietnam and of the Russian SAM involvement. As you know, also, the Dominican Republic experience has sharpened worries here about Vietnam. Under the circumstances the temptation might be to buy some easy political credit at the expense of the US on the Vietnam issue. Wilson has not done so and I do not think he will. If nothing else, self interest dictates that he must risk no serious split with the Americans." 17c

Finally Bruce stressed to Rusk the importance of keeping the Labour Government informed of U.S. policy on Vietnam, in order to help the British Government continue its support. Bruce also indicated the type of U.S. military actions which the British Government would particularly wish to know about in advance, presumably because these actions would entail domestic political consequences that the Government would then have to deal with:

"In order to manage their own party and public, however, the Labor Government are depending very much on our undertaking to consult with them about any major changes in our policy or in conduct of the war in Vietnam. If we fail to do so when there are things they think we should talk about, it greatly complicates Wilson's political problems and our mutual relations...I hope we can keep the British fully and currently informed of our thinking and of our plans in Vietnam. This applies especially to any escalation that might involve bombing Hanoi or even Haiphong, with attendant possibility of civilian casualties." 17c

The fact that the Administration did keep the British Government informed about the important features of U.S. policy, gave the Government the advantage of the prior
knowledge it needed if it was to "manage", in Bruce's words, party and public opinion. However this prior knowledge did not in itself lessen the problems of supporting U.S. policy, for the foundation of domestic criticism against supporting the U.S. rested on the war itself: its nature, its world impact, and increasingly, the way it was conducted by America.

In addition, where escalatory moves were concerned, the British Government was placed in the awkward situation of being criticised whatever the state of its knowledge. For, on the one hand, if the public impression was gained that the Government had not known of such moves in advance, then this caused an outcry about the U.S. keeping its ally in the dark while merely requiring slavish support. On the other hand, if the Government was thought to have advance knowledge of escalatory moves, then it could be accused of the same sort of public relations practices as the Administration — charged at the moment simply with not keeping its public informed, but with the obvious possibility ahead of being accused of lying to the public. In addition, the public criticism of U.S. escalation was also likely to rub off on the British Government, due to its support for the Administration.

That the Administration's war policy, coupled with its information policy, was likely to complicate the British Government's position was well illustrated by the furore over the State Department's 9 June announcement of the changed U.S. troop role. For given that this change
had been kept secret from the public on the President's express orders, there was little the British Government could do to prepare or influence either its party or public opinion on this issue. The Government was thus forced to weather the storm, unexpectedly created by the Administration, as best it could.

E.) British Public Opinion

In March, Gallup Poll\(^7\) had recorded that among the general public more people approved than disapproved of "recent American armed action in Vietnam". However, when this standard question was asked in April, the percentages were reversed, and 41% disapproved while 31% approved, with the number of undecided respondents dropping only 1% to 28%. It is possible that this reversal was connected to the aftermath of the gas warfare incident, because the figures recorded in March were based on fieldwork completed before this incident. For immediately after the gas incident, based on data gathered between 25-30 March, Gallup Poll recorded that 45% disapproved of recent U.S. action in Vietnam and thus the April figures, although still recording a reversal, in fact represented a slight drop from that level of disapproval. This supposition about the reasons for the drop in public support in April is strengthened by the fact that the April figures were recorded before President Johnson's Baltimore speech and the figures in May after this speech showed a rise in public support for U.S. armed action and a corresponding drop in disapproval.
National Opinion Polls (NOP)'s also recorded a slight drop in April in support for the U.S., asking its standard question about whether U.S. "handling of the situation in Vietnam has been too firm, not firm enough, or about right". The percentages quoted by NOP, compared with the March figures, showed a 2% percent increase over the previous 17% in respondents thinking U.S. handling was too firm, and a 3% drop from the previous 17% in those thinking U.S. handling was not firm enough. NOP loosely attributed this "small swing" in public opinion to "recent events in Vietnam". Presumably NOP was referring to the gas incident, for the other incident of note in early March was the dispatch of U.S. Marines to South Vietnam, and Gallup Poll, which kept a much closer watch on British public opinion on Vietnam than NOP, had not recorded any fluctuation in public support at that time.

Gallup Poll's other findings in April showed a 6% increase in those who did not want Britain to help the U.S. in Vietnam if asked, now totalling a clear majority of 56%, while the numbers prepared to send either troops or war materials had also dropped by 4% and 3% respectively from the March figures. This pacific trend was reinforced by the finding that an overwhelming majority of the public, 71%, thought that Britain's main task was to try for peace talks on Vietnam, whereas a mere 9% judged it "most important" for Britain to support the U.S. over Vietnam. On the subject of the likelihood of a World War, 62% of the public thought there was little
danger while 20% thought there was much danger. However the latter figure showed an 11% increase over the September 1964 percentage recorded in answer to this question, thus posing the question as to whether the escalation of the Vietnam conflict might have been one of the factors responsible for raising fears of a World War, especially as the Administration's rhetoric on the war, officially echoed by the British Government, stressed the features of communist aggression and expansion.

As noted above, by May, in answer to Gallup Poll's standard question, the percentages of the general public approving or disapproving U.S. armed action were now roughly even at 37% and 36% respectively. As the number of "don't knows" was only 1% different, it is apparent that there was a direct correlation between the drop in public disapproval and the rise in approval. In addition Gallup Poll also recorded that President Johnson was believed by 69% of the public to be sincerely trying to end the war with his appeal for unconditional discussions and offer to develop Southeast Asia.

To judge from Gallup Poll's findings on opinion about relations with America, fluctuations in public opinion concerning the Vietnam conflict did not arise from anti-Americanism, for in May over half of the public, 54%, considered the U.S. to be "Britain's best friend", with the runner up, Australia, coming a lot further down the list with 14%. Also, the public was evenly balanced on the more sensitive issue of whether Britain should or should
not work "more closely with the U.S. in its political and military policies": 31% thought Britain should work more closely with the same percentage opting for less close cooperation; 20% opted for no change, while 18% had no opinion. Thus on these figures over half the public approved of cooperation with the U.S. in these spheres, with a preponderant percentage of this half preferring closer cooperation.

By June, public opinion had again fluctuated, showing an increase in both approval and disapproval in answer to Gallup Poll's standard question. Disapproval was marginally greater at 40% compared with 36% approval. What appeared to have happened was that briefly the number of "don't knows" decreased at the time of this survey around 27 May-1 June, after a big rise immediately before when Gallup recorded the number of "don't knows" as 37%. These two sets of figures could possibly be accounted for by the confusion over the unacknowledged bombing pause of 15-18 May thus causing the percentage of "don't knows" to rise, while the subsequent communist rejection of this overture then dissipated some of the confusion.

By contrast with previous months, July's Gallup Poll contained more information than usual on opinion about events concerning Vietnam. The standard question showed a slight increase of 2% in disapproval of U.S. armed action, corresponding to a 2% decrease in approval, giving figures of 42% and 34% respectively, with the number of "don't knows" remaining the same as in June. However, public
opinion now seemed to be split evenly three ways on the issue of whether the U.S. should "continue its present efforts in South Vietnam" or withdraw its troops. This picture contrasted with the figures in March when 40% had favoured a continuation of U.S. efforts. Now 33% supported a continuation, the same percentage favoured withdrawal, while 34% had no opinion. That the decline in those favouring a continuation of U.S. efforts was matched by a rise in the number of "don't knows", suggests that possibly the Vietnam conflict was beginning to be seen as more complicated and difficult to solve than at earlier stages; for it does not seem likely that a portion of the public which previously favoured continuing U.S. efforts would simply lose interest in the issue. The figures recorded when Gallup Poll asked which side was thought to be winning in the war tend to confirm this hypothesis, with 39% reckoning that neither side was winning; 33% with no opinion; while of those who did pick one or the other side, 19% thought the communists and Vietcong were winning and only 9% thought the South Vietnamese Government "and supporters" were winning.

However on the issue of the Prime Minister's peace mission proposals there were more firm opinions expressed, with the proposals approved by a 65% majority. On the other hand, there was much less certainty about whether the peace mission would succeed for 38% thought that it would not, while 42% were undecided on the matter. Possibly this low assessment of the peace mission's
chances of success accounted for the figures when Gallup asked whether the Prime Minister's position had been "improved or harmed" by this peace mission proposal, for though 38% thought his position had improved, 46% thought either that his position had been unaffected or did not know. Finally the Prime Minister's dispatch of Harold Davies to Hanoi was approved by 49% of respondents with 25% disagreeing with the visit and 26% undecided, thus confirming that almost half of the general public preferred to try and settle the conflict peacefully through talks.

During this period from April to July, NOP evinced less interest than Gallup Poll in British public opinion on Vietnam. After the April survey using its standard question, it next polled public opinion on the same question in July and recorded an 8% increase in the percentage of respondents stating that American handling of Vietnam was not firm enough, correlating directly to an 8% decrease in those who thought either that U.S. handling was "about right" or who were undecided. Unfortunately NOP did not distinguish between the latter two categories in its July poll and simply lumped the two together, registering the percentage drop. NOP summed up British opinion on Vietnam at this stage in relation to the U.S. troop build up and stated that this had not "alienated British support". On the question of Harold Davies visit, NOP's figures were slightly different to Gallup Poll's, registering a lower percentage favouring the visit - 42%;
much the same percentage disagreeing with the visit - 27%; but a higher percentage of "don't knows" - 31%. Thus NOP's respondents seemed to be less convinced than Gallup Poll's of the value of the Davies visit.

One of the most revealing factors in these general public opinion surveys was the fairly high percentage of respondents who were undecided or unconcerned about a variety of issues concerning the war. However this was not the whole picture of British opinion on the war, for there were sections of the British public which were acutely concerned with, and often opposed to, the Vietnam conflict and the Labour Government's attitude to U.S. policy and the war. These sections comprised a mixture of elements, including groupings such as the high-profile, vociferous left-wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party (itself a group with diverse views), an ad hoc MP's Committee on Vietnam, CND, the Committee of 100, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and its youth wing the Young Communist League (YCL), individual unions, individual university committees and an umbrella organisation formed in April called the British Council for Peace in Vietnam. This umbrella organisation was chaired by Labour Peer Lord Brockway and drew its support from a number of other organisations which included 29 political, religious and labour groups. 179

In these early days of the Vietnam War, the aims of most of these groupings concerning the conflict could be summarised broadly in terms of the aims of the British
Council for Peace in Vietnam: to help to achieve a cease-fire, a negotiated political settlement and to stop the war spreading. There were of course two constituent elements that these groups considered when pursuing these aims: firstly, U.S. policy and conduct of the war in Vietnam; and secondly, the British Government's public support for the U.S. over Vietnam. Concern about the Vietnam conflict was manifested when it began escalating after the Pleiku attacks. Then, following the subsequent escalatory moves, the protests against the conflict began. And whereas the general public’s attitude to the war was not apparently based on anti-Americanism, some of these groupings were undoubtedly anti-American in character, such as the left-wing of the Labour Party.

The methods which these groups used to express views on the war included rallies, marches, demonstrations, public meetings and lobbying Parliament. Inside Parliament the methods used included letters to the Prime Minister, signed motions and the use of Question Time to interrogate the Government on the Vietnam conflict and its policy. In addition the letter columns of the newspapers were a more amorphous channel to express views on the war, sometimes by well-known individuals, and sometimes protest took the form of full-page advertisements, often signed by prominent figures, in a newspaper.

Not surprisingly, where press coverage of these rallies and protest marches was concerned, it was the Communist Party organ, the Daily Worker, which carried the
most information. The Daily Worker also played an active part in coordinating opposition to the war by publishing advance information on planned marches and protests, and urging attendance. However, other newspapers also covered such protests and meetings, particularly if these were large meetings in prominent public places such as Trafalgar Square and attended by Labour MP's, whose presence was likely to embarrass the Government. In addition, the issue of Vietnam might be raised at other events - ostensibly unconnected with this subject - attended by Government figures and these too were covered by the press.

An example of a rally which attracted wider press coverage took place in early April. It began in Trafalgar Square with a Christian Action rally, then the demonstrators, who included the Transport Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary and three Labour MPs, marched to Downing Street. At Downing Street a letter was delivered to the Prime Minister on Britain's duty to promote negotiations and on the concern felt over U.S. methods of fighting the war with napalm and U.S. Ambassador Taylor's statement delimiting escalation. Although this rally was held in the early days of protests against the Vietnam conflict, there were still 15 people arrested, including the well-known figure of Tariq Ali. And the Daily Telegraph headline revealed what were seen as the important elements of the demonstration: "15
Arrests After Vietnam Rally; Labour MPs in March on Downing Street".183

Soon after this demonstration, the Labour Party's May Day rally in Hyde Park provided a prominent occasion, unrelated to the Vietnam issue, for the expression of opposition to the conflict. The Guardian reported that at the rally Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart was unable to speak over the crowd chants of "Hands off Vietnam", and finally sat down "white-faced".184 The Guardian summed up what it saw as the main effect of this display:

"There can be no doubt now in Mr. Stewart's mind of the strength of feeling about Vietnam, or of the hostility that this issue has stirred up between different sections of Socialist supporters."185

However Stewart was not the only Government figure who received this treatment over Vietnam on May Day, for at the Labour Party rally in Hull the Prime Minister too was heckled on his Vietnam policy.186

As to the importance of this opposition to the Vietnam conflict and British official policy, at this early stage the Labour Government had no real cause for concern. For although the public demonstrations were noisy and attracted press attention, they were still relatively small gatherings of that small section of the British public which was actually concerned about the war. Nevertheless, there was the obvious danger for the British Government that this public opposition could grow and strengthen, and become a real source of embarrassment, although not a serious political threat.
The source of opposition that could pose a political threat to the Government came from within the Labour Party, but the Labour Party opposition worked within constraints which severely curbed its effectiveness. For the limit of the Parliamentary Labour Party protest was defined by the Labour Government's slim majority and there was no desire on the part of the Labour MPs to bring down their own Government. In addition to this constraint, there was also the fact, noted in a *Financial Times* analysis, that the Parliamentary Labour MPs who opposed the Government's policy on Vietnam were not a particularly cohesive group and occupied a range of positions on the left-wing spectrum, which tended to dilute the effectiveness of their opposition.¹⁸⁷ And as this *Financial Times* analysis also pointed out, the ability of the left-wing to influence Government policy depended on the amount of support that the left-wing could generate in the rest of the Labour Party, and the left-wing's "tactician", John Mendelson, well understood what was required to achieve this support:

"For Mr. Mendelson is extremely careful not to let the 'Left' seem either sinister or wild. His tactics are clearly based on the principle that only by apparent moderation can the Left exploit the wider misgivings in the Party."¹⁸⁸

These constraints worked in the Government's favour, but nevertheless the Government was careful to emphasize its desire for, and efforts to achieve, a negotiated settlement - a goal which broadly coincided with that of
the Labour left and the 'concerned' section of public opinion.

However, although Labour MPs inside Parliament were under these constraints in opposing the Government's support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam, there were no such constraints on groups outside Parliament. Already in May, soon after its formation, the British Council for Peace in Vietnam had announced a mass lobby of Parliament, planned for 'Vietnam Day' on 30 June. The lobby and the accompanying teach-in in Central Hall in Westminster, received varying degrees of press attention, with The Guardian and the Daily Worker concentrating on the lobby, while the Daily Telegraph reported on the teach-in.

The Guardian report on the lobby caught the atmosphere at the "highly excited rally", stating that the audience of approximately 1,500 "came with a lust for blood; chiefly Mr. Wilson's, with President Johnson as a close runner-up". The Daily Worker however estimated the numbers at the rally to be approximately 10,000 and reported that a deputation had had a "very frank discussion" with Lord Walston, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office.

Despite two arrests during the mass lobby, this event appeared to be relatively well ordered. However the teach-in was a different matter and the Daily Telegraph caption to its report reflected this: "MP Shouted Down at Vietnam Teach-in; Gathering Loses Dignity". The report stated that Labour MP Dr. Jeremy Bray was "hissed and
screamed at" and that the meeting quickly "degenerated into an anti-American free for all".193 This was not the form that the 'teach-in' took in America, where it was used to examine issues, rather than merely provide a platform for the noisy expression of anti-American or anti-government views. This point was made by Professor Kenneth Boulding of Michigan University who had attended the Central Hall teach-in and was quoted in the Daily Telegraph194; while Professor Hans Morgenthau from Chicago University, a well-known opponent of U.S. policy in Vietnam and participant in American teach-ins, labelled this teach-in a "debacle" with "disgraceful scenes".195

Clearly the issue of Vietnam was capable of provoking strong reactions among some sections of the British public. Some of these reactions appeared to be based primarily on a dislike of U.S. involvement in the conflict, while others appeared to be based on a dislike of the conflict itself, in addition to dislike of the British Government's support for the Americans. Whatever the combination of dislikes however, while there were sections of public opinion which disliked U.S. intervention in the conflict it was obvious that the protests would continue until the U.S. ceased to prosecute the war, regardless of British Government policy.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4


2. Ibid, P442.

3. Ibid, P401.


5. Ibid, P410.


12. Ibid, P53.


17. Ibid, "Pattern for Peace in Southeast Asia": Address by the President at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 7 April 1965, P144.


21. For example see Financial Times, 30 July 1965: "Public Sigh of Relief on 'Vietnam' Escalation".


24. The Guardian, 2 April 1965: "U.S. Expected To Fight Harder In Vietnam"

25. The Times, 3 April 1965: "Increase Of 160,000 In Saigon Government Forces". (Italics in original.)


27. Observer, 4 April 1965.


29. Daily Telegraph, 9 April 1965: "America Cannot Lose By Viet-Nam Offer". See also Chapter 2.


33. Ibid.


35. Ibid.


38. The Times, 9 April 1965: "Speech Welcomed By Mr. Wilson And Opposition Leaders".


40. Ibid.

42. *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 April 1965: "Baltimore Address - And After".


47. *New York Times*, 11 April 1965: "Initiative For Peace".

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.


51. Ibid.


53. Ibid.


56. See *The New York Times*, 14 April 1965: "Hanoi Proposes A Plan For Talks; Washington Cool; North Vietnamese Call For Settlement In Line With Program Of Viet Cong ...". See also *The New York Times*, 15 April 1965: "U.S. Urges Hanoi To Answer Plea By Neutral Lands; Also Asks Soviet And China To Reply To Bid For Talks Without Preconditions; Red Peace Plan Studied...".

57. See Note 55.


60. Ibid.


67. Ibid.

68. The significance of Pearson's suggestion lay in the fact that Canada was on the International Control Commission (ICC) set up by the Geneva Agreements of 1954; the Canadian representative on the ICC, J. Blair Seaborn had been used by the U.S. between June 1964 and June 1965 to explore North Vietnam's views on the conflict and to signal U.S. determination to support South Vietnam.

69. *The Times*, 19 April 1965; Fulbright's remark and an interview are more fully reported in the *The New York Times*, 19 April 1965: "Fulbright Urges Halt In Bombing".


74. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. New York Herald Tribune, 21 April 1965: "Unbuttoned Diplomacy".

78. Ibid.


80. See Note 73.


83. Ibid paragraph 1.

84. See The Times, 19 April 1965, in Note 65.

85. See Note 73.

86. Daily Telegraph, 23 April 1965: "U.S. Divided Over War In Viet-Nam".

87. Observer, 25 April 1965: "Destroying Tomorrow".

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. The Guardian, 30 April 1965: "Another Flag In Vietnam".

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. The Times, 27 April 1965: "Critical Students".

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.


99. Ibid.

101. *The Times*, 7 May 1965: "Quick Response By Congress".

102. Ibid.


104. Ibid, PP50 - 51.

105. Ibid, P52.

106. Ibid, loc cit.

107. Ibid, P53.

108. See *Financial Times*, 14 May 1965: "Johnson Returns To Plea For S.E. Asia Development".


110. Ibid.

111. *The Times*, 11 May 1965: "U.S. Liberals Using 'Teach-in' Against Mr. Johnson".

112. Ibid.


114. Ibid.

115. See Note 82, paragraph 2 of Memorandum.


118. See *Daily Telegraph*, 17 May 1965.


120. *The Times*, 17 May 1965: "Failure Of Air Attacks On The North".

121. Ibid.


127. Ibid.


129. Ibid.

130. *The Times*, 20 May 1965, see Note 124.

131. Ibid.


133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.


137. Ibid.


139. See *The Times*, 4 June 1965: "British Moves for Vietnam Conference"; also *The Guardian*, 4 June 1965: "Britain To Continue Efforts For Vietnam Conference".


146. Ibid.

147. Ibid.


152. *The Daily Express* and *The New York Times* stated Britain was informed; the *Daily Telegraph* stated Britain was not informed; *The Guardian* noted Whitehall's reluctance to comment; all articles on 10 June 1965.


155. *The Observer*, 13 June 1965: "Mr. Wilson And The President".

156. *The Guardian*, 11 June 1965, Lena Jaeger column: "Mediator In Chains?" and "Mr. Wilson, LBJ and The Alliance".

157. *The Times*, 11 June 1965: "Congress Calls For Debate On Vietnam Policy; Mr. Johnson's Critics Ask Him To Speak Honestly".

158. See *The Times*, 17 June 1965: "Dons, Students And Politicians Wage Vietnam War Of Words"; also *The Guardian*, 17 June 1965: "Mr. Stewart Shows He Is No 'Straw Lackey'".

159. *The Times*, ibid.


173. See **NATIONAL SECURITY FILE (NSF)**, Country Files United Kingdom (305); BOXES 207 – 208; VOLUMES III – VI, CABLES 2/65 – 4/65 to 7/65 – 9/65. Held at Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas.

174. **NATIONAL SECURITY FILE (NSF)**, Country File United Kingdom (305); BOX 207; VOLUME IV, CABLES 5/65 – 6/65; ITEM No. 22; Incoming telegram Department of State from London, reference No. EMBTEL 5834; dated and received 3 June 1965.

175. Ibid.

176. Ibid.
177. See *Gallup Polls* for April - July 1965.

178. See *National Opinion Polls Limited* for April and July.


181. See for example *The Times*, 1 July 1965, a John Gittings letter on the Geneva Agreements and *The Times*, 23 December 1965, a full page signed advertisement.

182. See the *Daily Worker* for example on 15 April 1965; 3 May 1965; 31 May 1965; 11 June 1965; 12 June 1965; 14 June 1965; 1 July 1965; 3 July 1965; 5 July 1965.

183. See *Daily Telegraph*, 5 April 1965 for a full report; also *The Times*.

184. *The Guardian*, 3 May 1965: "Vietnam Chant Cuts May Day Speeches; Mr. Stewart Shouted Down".

185. Ibid.


188. Ibid.

189. See *The Guardian*, 20 May 1965 for advance details.


191. See the *Daily Worker*, 1 July 1965.


193. Ibid.

194. Ibid.

195. Quoted in *The Observer*, 4 July 1965: "The Quiet American Leftist".
THE PRESSURE INCREASES: AUGUST-DECEMBER 1965

The Administration's July announcement of increased troop deployments and draft calls publicly signalled the beginning of the open-ended war in Vietnam. Now the Administration could concentrate on its main objective of fighting and winning the war, pouring in more money and troops and exploring various methods to increase the pressure on North Vietnam and the Vietcong. Apart from military and bombing pressures, some Administration officials also envisioned a bombing pause as a form of pressure, to be undertaken prior to escalating the war. During these months the military build-up continued rapidly. And with this greatly increased visible involvement, Administration statements tying U.S. prestige and honour in general to this war in South-East Asia now became reality: henceforth U.S. prestige and honour was inextricably bound to the outcome of this war.

A.) Administration Planning

As with previous announcements on escalation, when President Johnson increased the number of troops in Vietnam he also combined this with a peace move. Thus the 28 July escalation announcement also contained an invitation to the United Nations to work for peace in Vietnam. In addition Johnson also stated that he had dispatched the U.S. envoy to the United Nations, Arthur
Goldberg, with a letter to United Nations Secretary General U Thant requesting that all United Nations resources "be employed to find ways to halt aggression and to bring peace in Viet-Nam." Again the impression was given that the United States was serious in its pursuit of peace and was prepared to use every method at its disposal. However, this favourable impression was soon to be contradicted by public revelations about a previous United Nations initiative which apparently Administration officials had rejected, for Johnson was later to state in private that he had been unaware of the initiative and its subsequent rejection.²

Ironically, in view of the later recriminations over the rejected United Nations initiative, throughout August 1965 the Administration was in contact secretly with the North Vietnamese (although hints of these 'secret' contacts may have leaked to the press - see Section C), trying to discuss negotiations. These secret contacts, code-named XYZ, in fact followed on from the ambiguous and abortive North Vietnamese diplomatic move in Paris which was made after the resumption of U.S. bombing on 18 May.³ Initially a private U.S. citizen, acting on his own initiative, approached the North Vietnamese in Paris in mid-July and then the Administration took over the contact in early August. The fact that President Johnson gave the task of exploring this initiative to Under Secretary of State George Ball seems to indicate that this initiative was treated seriously by the Administration. For George
Ball was well known in the Administration as an advocate of withdrawal from Vietnam, and he was thus the official most likely to take the greatest care in pursuing this contact thoroughly, to determine whether or not it did offer a chance for negotiations.

The person Ball chose to continue this contact was a former Foreign Service Officer, Edmund Gullion, who had been Deputy Chief of Mission in Saigon, and who was now a private citizen. The North Vietnamese contact was the same diplomat who had been involved in the May initiative, Mai Van Bo, head of the North Vietnamese Economic Delegation in Paris. Although the discussions initially appeared promising during the first three meetings held on 6, 15 and 18 August, with little mention made of the bombing and apparent agreement on mutual staged troop withdrawals, at the fourth meeting on 3 September the North Vietnamese diplomat stated that U.S. bombing must cease immediately and he then retreated on the staged troop withdrawal agreement. In fact that was the last meeting between Gullion and Bo and the end of substantive discussions, for the North Vietnamese diplomat did not attend the fifth meeting which had been scheduled for 7 September and further efforts to rekindle the contacts, using a different U.S. intermediary, failed.

On the surface the abrupt end to these contacts appeared to justify the Administration's claim that North Vietnam was uninterested in negotiations. However, the analyst writing in *The Negotiating Volumes of The Pentagon*
Papers suggests a number of possible reasons for the breakdown in discussions, including the increase in U.S. troops; the particular bombing targets selected in this period, a suggestion supported by William Bundy, former Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, who noted in his Oral History Interview that the bombing had caused flooding in North Vietnam and could therefore have accounted for the breakdown; the pressure caused by the differences between the USSR and China, and possibly between China and North Vietnam on strategy in liberation wars, that is, differences over a strategy comprising an absolute refusal to contemplate negotiations (China's position), and a strategy including the possibility of negotiations (North Vietnam and the USSR); and the possibility that the North Vietnamese had simply been probing the U.S. negotiating position and had discovered what they wanted to. However, in addition to these possible reasons, there was also the fact that Gullion's negotiating instructions followed the Administration's pattern of trying to negotiate on its terms alone, which included the goal of a separate and independent South Vietnam:

"The U.S. was sending X with the intention of seeking peace from a position of strength. X was to show a desire for ending the conflict along lines 'compatible with the Four Points, but he was also to say that the prolongation of the war' is bound to lead to progressively larger U.S. pressures and long-term China control of North Vietnam. X was to convey that pressures in the U.S. to widen the war were growing and that 'it would be increasingly harder to exercise restraint.'"
According to the same study, Gullion took these instructions seriously, to the extent of threatening to break off the contacts when Mai Van Bo disagreed on reconvening the Geneva Conference — and it was the North Vietnamese diplomat who then "demurred" and scheduled the next meeting. The analyst also noted the North Vietnamese diplomat's conduct during the discussions:

"Except for the last meeting when R [Mai Van Bo] grew heated about the recent U.S. escalations, R was serious and responsive. Throughout and even at this last meeting, there were no ideological harangues."

However, despite the indications that both sides were taking these discussions seriously, in the final analysis the efforts failed, but for no readily discernible reason, as The Negotiating Volumes conclude:

"Because the R and X exchanges were so responsive and productive and because these exchanges were severed so abruptly, no explanation is really satisfying."

Thus ended what seem to have been the most serious discussions between the Americans and the North Vietnamese before the Paris Peace Talks in 1968, for though there were subsequent contacts between officials of the two countries, these contacts were far less prolonged and substantive than the XYZ exchanges."

In addition to the secret XYZ contacts, there were two other important events during August. Firstly, on 9 August the news leaked out publicly that in both 1963 and 1964 the U.S. had turned down the chance of discussions on the conflict with the North Vietnamese. Initially these revelations caused little stir, but in
November the 1964 episode was discussed again, in the context of the death of former UN Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, and this time they sparked off a press furore which forced the Administration to acknowledge the claims and defend its position. Secondly, on 18 August the Senate approved Johnson's second request for additional defense funds of $1.7 billion: the U.S. commitment in the war had started in earnest only six months previously, but already the financial costs were climbing rapidly.

The war's increasing costs in manpower were also becoming ever more apparent to the Administration. Before considering Westmoreland's request for a further 100,000 men in mid-July, Defense Secretary McNamara had requested assurance from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff, General Earle Wheeler, that the U.S. could win the conflict in South Vietnam. Following a Defense Department study, Wheeler duly assured McNamara that "there appears no reason we cannot win if such is our will - and if that will is manifested in strategy and tactical operations." Interestingly, the definition of 'winning' that had been provided for Wheeler by Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton harked back to the old idea of "demonstrating to the VC that they cannot win." This passive concept of 'winning' implied both an open-ended commitment to fighting the war - for as long as the Vietcong carried on fighting - and also appeared to envisage victory as a stalemate, both of which were unusual and vague goals to pursue using such large numbers of troops and amounts of
money. And there were propaganda problems with this version of 'winning', for there was confusion over what 'winning' meant and communicating this to the public. In addition this concept appeared to contradict the definition of 'winning' that was implied in Westmoreland's search-and-destroy strategy for fighting the war, which, though equally open-ended, had the concrete goal of attacking, destroying and defeating the enemy in South Vietnam. And it was this method of fighting the war that determined Westmoreland's disposition of resources and partly fuelled his troop requests which the Administration responded to.

In pursuit of these tactics and impelled by the enemy's response, Westmoreland soon requested more troops, despite the huge increases authorised during July. Endeavouring to explain Westmoreland's new request for another 154,000 men in November, The Pentagon Papers surmises that either the U.S. military reckoned from the beginning that winning the war would require approximately 1 million troops which would be politically easier to acquire in instalments, or the U.S. military Command thought little about U.S. troop requirements and also underestimated the enemy's rate of build-up. Of the two explanations The Pentagon Papers analyst opts for the latter, which merely gives an impression of U.S. military short-sightedness, rather than deliberate deception.

As The Pentagon Papers study also points out, the U.S. military apparently underestimated the rate of enemy
build-up despite the numerous public Administration statements about the early 1965 rate of North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam. Yet this rate of infiltration had been cited as the precise reason for U.S. bombing of North Vietnam and increased involvement in, and escalation of, the war in South Vietnam. The study makes no attempt to reconcile this contradiction, but if the earlier rate of infiltration had been exaggerated for Administration propaganda purposes, then this would provide an obvious reason for the U.S. military's later miscalculations.

In addition, the Pentagon Papers analyst drew the conclusion from U.S. military documents that Westmoreland's overall military plan of action stemmed from the manpower that would be available, rather than Westmoreland requesting the troops necessary for a particular plan:

"'The President's July 28 announcement that the U.S. would commit additional massive military forces in SVN necessitated an overall plan clarifying the missions and deployment of the various components. [The general's] concept of operations was prepared to fulfill this need.'"15

The analyst then concluded:

"'If this is a true reflection of what happened'...'[it] would indicate the [sic] MACV's plan of what to do was derived from what would be available rather than the requirements for manpower being derived from any clearly thought out military plan.'"16

However, while this points to a grievous lack of thought about the needs of a rapidly escalating war, and indeed the nature of this particular war, it nevertheless
remains the case that Westmoreland's aggressive search-and-destroy military tactics would always have required huge force levels. For not only was this a much more active method of fighting the war, but these tactics were being applied to jungle warfare among a population that at best was not prepared to aid South Vietnamese and U.S. forces, and at worst actively aided the Vietcong and North Vietnamese against the South Vietnamese and Americans.

Thus, against a background of rapid North Vietnamese and Vietcong build-up and increased combat, Westmoreland's requests for more troops continued to flow into Washington. When McNamara was considering Westmoreland's request in November for another 154,000 troops, the projected total troop deployment to the end of 1966 was then close to 400,000. On 16 December Westmoreland requested more troops, which would bring the total for 1966 up to 443,000 and then at the end of January 1966 he requested another 16,000 men. And of course, as the troop levels soared so did the Administration's casualty projections. In mid-July McNamara had estimated that at the end of the year U.S. killed-in-action could be approximately 500 per month, but by the end of November McNamara's estimate for the coming year was 1,000 killed-in-action per month. McNamara also accompanied this estimate with an evaluation of the results this policy might achieve:
"...and the odds are even that we will be faced in early 1967 with a 'no decision' at an even higher level.'"22

But despite this gloomy evaluation McNamara recommended continuing the Administration's current war policy.

The increased U.S. troop commitment was also accompanied by an expansion in the Rolling Thunder bombing programme. At this stage of the war the publicly declared purpose of the bombing raids on North Vietnam was to interdict North Vietnam's lines of communication and to reduce its war-making capacity. To achieve this and "'emphasize American airpower''", the Administration envisaged a "'slow, steady, deliberate'" bombing campaign, "'beginning with a few infiltration-associated targets in southern NVN and gradually moving northward with progressively more severe attacks on a wider variety of targets.'"23 In the period from July to December, according to figures provided in The Pentagon Papers the bombing attacks increased greatly, from 900 sorties per week to 1,500 per week.24

As when the sustained bombing began in March, the Administration continued to be acutely aware of the sensitive nature of the bombing programme and still exercised tight control over the selection and authorisation of the bombing targets, which were approved on a weekly basis by senior officials in the Defense Secretary's Office, the State Department and the White House.25 The only latitude in picking targets that Washington allowed to pilots was in "armed reconnaissance"
attacks against certain "broad" target categories, "such as vehicles, locomotives and barges", which were obviously seen as militarily useful, but politically harmless targets. And even these "broad" target categories were decided by Washington. There was thus little chance of sensitive targets being bombed without high-level Administration approval.

As to the effectiveness of Rolling Thunder, at the end of July Secretary of Defense McNamara evaluated the results of the bombing programme in a Memorandum for President Johnson. McNamara cited the two broad "major purposes" of the bombing programme as: "to promote a settlement" and "to interdict infiltration". In promoting a settlement the bombing was expected to influence North Vietnam to negotiate and to give the U.S. a "bargaining counter within negotiations." On these two overall purposes McNamara concluded that the programme had not achieved its objectives; for there was no settlement, and "substantially uninterrupted supply" was continuing "to meet major North Vietnamese military, industrial and civilian needs." Only as a bargaining counter did McNamara view the programme as a success, reckoning that it "has become an important counter in the current tacit and explicit bargaining process and will be an important counter in any future bargaining." But, what the Administration appears to have disregarded is that without negotiations the bombing was useless as bargaining counter, and the North Vietnamese had already made it
plain that they would not negotiate under the threat of bombs. In addition, McNamara concluded that the bombing had had no effect on Vietcong activities in the South.\footnote{33}

However, despite this negative evaluation McNamara still recommended continuing the bombing programme, but with the main emphasis on the threat of "future destruction which can be avoided by agreeing to negotiate or agreeing to some settlement in negotiations."\footnote{34} In other words the Administration was using Rolling Thunder, among other purposes, to bomb North Vietnam to the negotiating table - an objective which the Administration had always denied publicly.

By November the bombing campaign had again been assessed as ineffective. The Defense Intelligence Agency reported to McNamara that although North Vietnam's industry was "'reduced'" by the bombing, "'the primarily rural nature of the area permits continued functioning of the subsistence economy.'"\footnote{35} This report also stated: "'The air strikes do not appear to have altered Hanoi's determination to continue supporting the war in South Vietnam.'"\footnote{36} For as The Pentagon Papers analyst points out:

"'NVN was an extremely poor target for air attack. The theory of either strategic or interdiction bombing assumed highly developed industrial nations producing large quantities of military goods to sustain mass armies engaged in intensive warfare. NVN, as U.S. intelligence knew, was an agricultural country with a rudimentary transportation system and little industry of any kind. "'What intelligence agencies liked to call 'the modern industrial sector' of the economy was tiny even by Asian standards...There were only a handful of 'major industrial facilities.'"
When NVN was targeted, the JCS found only eight industrial installations worth listing."

In addition, the gradual build-up in U.S. bombing had allowed North Vietnam's industry to be dispersed into the countryside. These were the concrete reasons why the bombing campaign could not greatly hurt North Vietnam, partly explaining why neither the threat of destruction, nor actual destruction, had so far influenced North Vietnam's policies in favour of negotiations. Added to this was the North Vietnamese will to resist the bombing and to continue fighting the war.

However, despite the demonstrable ineffectiveness of the bombing, the Administration's view of Rolling Thunder as both a form of pressure and a bargaining counter, meant that the Administration continued to use the bombing as a large part of both its military effort and its diplomatic effort. Thus, militarily the Administration calculated that if North Vietnam could not be bombed to the negotiating table, then it could be lured there with the suggestion of a bombing halt in return for North Vietnamese concessions. And obviously this meant that the bombing had both to continue and to become heavier, inflicting enough of a degree of 'pain' on North Vietnam for a bombing halt to constitute a sufficiently attractive negotiating proposition to the North Vietnamese.

In diplomatic terms, at this stage of the war the Administration's war objectives and bargaining counter concept of the bombing ruled out a permanent halt to the bombing unless, in effect, the North Vietnamese
surrendered and negotiated on U.S. terms. However, in late 1965 a temporary bombing pause was viewed as a useful device to probe North Vietnam's willingness to negotiate on U.S. terms, and as a demonstration of the Administration's peaceful intentions in the face of growing public pressure, prior to escalation. In fact this was to be a repeat performance of the 'secret' and unofficial May bombing pause, but with the vital difference that this bombing pause was 'official' and was to be conducted with maximum publicity.

According to The Pentagon Papers, the impetus for this bombing pause came from McNamara, who had proposed the idea to President Johnson as early as mid-July. At that time McNamara suggested:

"'After the 44 U.S.-third country battalions have been deployed and after some strong action has been taken in the program of bombing in the North, we could, as part of a diplomatic initiative, consider introducing a 6-8 week pause in the program of bombing the North.'"38

The Pentagon Papers study states that McNamara's rationale for a longer pause was due to his belief that the May pause "'had been too short and too hastily arranged to be effective'" and the study also comments on the lack of time allowed for Hanoi to reply to the pause in May.39 McNamara's purpose in proposing a bombing pause followed the rationale for the May pause: negotiations favourable to the U.S., or escalation of the war effort. Overall, McNamara's concept of a bombing pause was pressure by another means:

"'As he [McNamara] and Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton envisioned it, the pause
would be used as a kind of "'ratchet,'" - which the analyst likens to "'the device which raises the net on a tennis court, backing off tension between each phase of increasing it.'" 39

In addition, it seems that Administration officials were certain that this pause would be temporary, because the terms that were set for a permanent cessation of the bombing were acknowledged to be unacceptable to Hanoi, as McNaughton pointed out to McNamara:

"After noting these conditions [for a permanent cessation of the bombing], Mr. McNaughton wrote that they amounted to 'capitulation by a Communist force that is far from beaten.'" 40

However, even a temporary bombing pause was opposed by the Secretary of State and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. 41

Replying to McNamara's reasons for a pause, Secretary of State Rusk calculated in early November that at this stage a pause would merely be using "'a very important card without receiving anything substantial in return.'" 42 For as he pointed out:

"'There are no indications that Hanoi is yet in a mood to agree to a settlement acceptable to us. The chance is, therefore, very slight that a pause at this time could lead to an acceptable settlement.'" 43

Rusk also cited the dangers of Hanoi "'indefinitely dangling the prospect of negotiations'" without actually intending to achieve an "'acceptable settlement'", in order to prevent the U.S. resuming the bombing and to "'demoralize South Vietnam'". 44 Rusk also reckoned that the Saigon government would be loathe to agree to a pause because it could "'adversely affect the Government's solidity.'" 45 And finally the Secretary of State argued
that expanding the bombing programme after a pause would make such an expansion appear much more "'dramatic...both internationally and domestically'" and thus the USSR would face "'difficult choices'".47

Despite this opposition, according to Johnson's memoirs, by early December the Vietnam 'principals', including Rusk, had decided that a bombing pause might be useful and only the U.S. military and the U.S. Embassy in Saigon still opposed a pause.48 Johnson writes that he been doubtful of the value of a pause when it was first mooted, citing Rusk's objections.49 But eventually in mid-December, despite his fear that resuming the bombing would be difficult after a pause, Johnson states that he decided to accept advice proposing a bombing halt and "risk" a pause before escalating the war:

"If there was a chance, however remote, that stopping the bombing might open a road to peace, I was prepared to take a few risks. I knew too that I faced a serious decision regarding sending more men to Vietnam. I wanted to explore every possible avenue of settlement before we undertook additional military measures."50

William Bundy's account of the agreement to a bombing pause differs considerably however. He states that it was only on the night of 27 December that Johnson decided, after previous refusals, on a "'real full pause'", by extending the Christmas bombing truce "for another twenty-four of thirty-six hours."51 This last minute decision resulted in hasty diplomatic cables to both the South Vietnamese and Russian Governments, informing them both of the pause and enlisting the former's agreement to
it. After that the Administration "went into wholesale full gear." Bundy's version of events thus endows the decision on a pause with a much more makeshift character than does Johnson's version of deliberate discussions with a decision in mid-December. And Bundy states clearly that the style of the diplomatic 'offensive' that accompanied this bombing pause was "very much the President's idea." That is, the diplomatic moves did not follow the scenarios that had previously been discussed in the Administration.

This official bombing pause lasted until 31 January 1966, allowing plenty of time for the Administration to try to achieve its diplomatic and propaganda goals.

As for the results of the pause, previous Administration judgements that Hanoi would not settle the war on the terms offered, proved to be correct. As a propaganda move Bundy considered the pause of great value, stating:

"To me the pause was essential in terms of domestic things alone, but also had an immensely useful impact abroad, particularly in Britain..."

But Johnson viewed the pause as a failure, reckoning that his main worry about it had been vindicated, for he wrote: "...we received little credit for stopping the bombing and heavy criticism for renewing it." In Bundy's estimate the President felt that the pause was "essentially a sucker's move" that he had been "talked into". As a result Johnson's attitude on peace efforts, and the war alike, hardened, and Bundy viewed this as
something of a "break point in policy". So, the Administration's public attempts to open discussions — even on its own, uncompromising terms — through a bombing halt, came to an end. The war continued to escalate, the public clamour about the bombing increased, and the North Vietnamese public position hardened with the requirement for the bombing of North Vietnam to be halted permanently and unconditionally before discussions could begin. Eventually the U.S. Administration was faced with the choice of indefinitely escalating a war which it was not winning, or beginning negotiations on North Vietnam's terms by unconditionally halting the bombing of North Vietnam. Thus where the bombing was concerned the Administration based its attitude to negotiations on a 'bargaining counter' that was essentially non-negotiable to the North Vietnamese. But it took another two years of war for the Administration to begin to come to terms with its misjudgements.

B.) Administration Propaganda Techniques

President Johnson's statement on troop increases on 28 July was a dramatic and highly publicised escalation of the U.S. involvement in the war. However, this escalation was 'balanced' by a peace gesture, which was intended to reinforce the image of the Administration's commitment to peace, rather than war, and thereby reassure public opinion. The means chosen to demonstrate the Administration's desire for peace was a very public appeal to the United Nations requesting assistance in settling
the conflict. This appeal was made in Johnson's announcement on escalation and then followed up in letters, from Johnson to U Thant, and from the U.S. envoy to the UN, Arthur Goldberg, to the president of the Security Council. In his letter to U Thant Johnson stated:

"Your efforts in the past to remove that dispute [Vietnam] from the battlefield to the negotiating table are much appreciated and highly valued by my Government. I trust they will continue."\(^{50}\)

Goldberg's letter recapitulated the many U.S. attempts to solve the conflict peacefully; regretted that North Vietnam "denied the competence of the United Nations to concern itself with this dispute"; reiterated the U.S. determination to "search for a negotiated end" to the "cruel and futile violence that ravages the Republic of Viet-Nam"; and reminded the UN Security Council of its "responsibility - to persist in the search for peace". His letter concluded with the standard Administration justifications for aiding South Vietnam - independence, sovereignty, choice of government and decisions - accompanied by the equally standard offers of Asian economic development and U.S. readiness to search for peace.\(^{61}\)

The UN Secretary General publicly welcomed the U.S. President's appeals.\(^{52}\) But Johnson's reference to U.S. Government "appreciation" for U Thant's peace efforts was totally at variance with the way in which these efforts had actually been received by the Administration. For in September 1964 U Thant undertook a secret peace initiative
with Washington's concurrence, and obtained North Vietnamese agreement, via Moscow, to a private meeting between a representative from Hanoi and Washington. U.S. Administration officials had then privately rejected this proposal for a meeting, without Johnson's knowledge. In addition U Thant's later public proposal for negotiations had similarly been rejected, but this time quite publicly. Yet now the U.S. Government was referring to these same rejected initiatives in order to bolster its image as a nation seeking peace.

U Thant did not comment publicly at the time on this rejection of his initiative, except for a cryptic allusion to the event in a press conference in February when he had put forward his later peace proposal. He had stated:

"I am sure that the great American people, if only they knew the true facts and the background to the developments in South Vietnam, will agree with me that further bloodshed is unnecessary... As you know, in times of war and of hostilities, the first casualty is truth."

In his memoirs U Thant wrote that this statement "ended whatever utility I might have as a prospective go-between... as far as Washington was concerned."

Although it was known in February that U Thant had been engaged in mediation efforts, for some considerable length of time the full details of this potentially damaging episode - particularly the specific reactions of the U.S. and North Vietnam - were not pieced together publicly. In the interval the Administration continued to appeal, apparently sincerely, to the UN for assistance.
However in August, newspapers carried reports of this peace initiative and the Administration rejection of it. At this time the Administration had no need to comment on these reports, which created little public impact. This lack of impact may have been assisted by remarks attributed to the U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge, about U.S. troops staying in South Vietnam even if the Saigon Government were to ask them to leave, remarks which had aroused press interest and necessitated a series of Administration denials. In addition, towards the end of August the Administration launched a new peace and propaganda effort, coupling a published vindication of its Vietnam policy, with press reports of the U.S. desire to negotiate and televised appearances of top U.S. Administration officials discussing the war and the basis for negotiations.

This new propaganda effort began with the publication on 23 August of a White House pamphlet entitled, "Why Vietnam", setting out the Administration's case for its Vietnam policy. This official apologia, containing two addresses by Lyndon Johnson and extracts from Congressional testimony by Rusk and McNamara, repeated the standard charge of "aggression by North Vietnam against the brave and independent people of South Vietnam", while the U.S. "roots of commitment" which now necessitated "supporting American military action" were justified on the familiar grounds of past U.S. Presidents' pledges of support and America's SEATO commitments. Rusk's section
on diplomacy's tasks detailed the peace efforts made by many countries, including the abortive Commonwealth Prime Ministers' initiative. Under the emotive subheading, "The Bulwark of Peace", were listed the many occasions when the U.S. and its allies had defended "peace and freedom and the right of free choice" in Iran, Turkey, Greece, West Berlin, Korea, had aided the UN in the Congo and had obtained the removal of USSR missiles from Cuba. Ironically, "a great and beloved American, Adlai Stevenson," was quoted in this section using "his last public utterance," on his refusal to oppose the Administration's policy in Vietnam and his hope for peaceful change in Asia. 

McNamara's impressive series of statistics on the war, demonstrating the need for U.S. troops in the face of the decline in the ratio of South Vietnamese troops to Vietcong, were introduced with a simple description of the war's importance:

"What is at stake in Vietnam today is the ability of the free world to block Communist armed aggression and prevent the loss of all of Southeast Asia, a loss which in its ultimate consequences could drastically alter the strategic situation in Asia and the Pacific to the grave detriment of our own security and that of our allies." 

Just in case the reader had missed the point the third paragraph again repeated the struggles' "enormous implications for the security of the United States and the free world, and for that matter, the Soviet Union as well." And the point was made that Vietnam was a test
case for national wars of liberation, with the following consequences:

"Thus the stakes in South Vietnam are far greater than the loss of one small country to communism. Its loss would be a most serious setback to the cause of freedom and would greatly complicate the task of preventing the further spread of militant Asian communism. And, if the spread is not halted, our strategic position in the world will be weakened and our national security directly endangered."73

The insurgency in South Vietnam was stated to be "planned, directed, controlled and supported by Hanoi", and this view was also reinforced by what was in effect a sophisticated admission and dismissal of the endemic political unrest in South Vietnam:

"True, there is a small dissident minority in South Vietnam, but the Government could cope with it if it were not directed and supplied from the outside."74

Finally, the pamphlet's appendix listed fifteen peace initiatives undertaken by various countries, all rejected by North Vietnam and China.75

This pamphlet was thus a concerted attempt by the Administration to justify its Vietnam policy by presenting a one-sided, and in parts subtly distorted version of events. But on two counts the pamphlet had unfortunate consequences for the Administration. Firstly former President Eisenhower was reported to have objected to the use of one of his letters to Diem being used to justify current military support, rather than the economic support he had originally offered.76 Secondly the Administration's use of Adlai Stevenson to bolster their case was to boomerang very soon when Stevenson's last interview with a
U.S. commentator was published, which highlighted the rejected UN peace initiative with which Stevenson had been involved.

Thus it was that in mid-November the Rangoon episode resurfaced, when an American magazine published an interview by the U.S. television commentator Eric Sevareid with Adlai Stevenson, and this time the revelations about the rejection of U Thant's peace initiative generated a press furor, forcing a response from the Administration. In this situation, when the Administration could no longer remain silent about this episode, or deny its rejection of U Thant's efforts, the method it chose to combat the public criticism was to lay the blame for the U.S. rejection on what the Administration stated was Hanoi's own lack of interest in "serious peace talks." This lamentably inadequate explanation merely fueled the uproar, for in the early days of the conflict the Administration had placed the entire blame for the lack of negotiations on North Vietnamese unwillingness to talk, and this incident had now contradicted that early Administration version of events. To add to the Administration's propaganda and credibility problems, after the U.S. admission of its rejection U Thant now felt free to comment publicly, airing his personal disappointment on the matter.

The press debate that followed was not confined to discussing just this issue, for as had happened with previous policy and propaganda blunders, all aspects of
the Administration's policy on Vietnam came under review. Thus revelations about this rejected peace initiative sparked off a much wider-ranging debate about the war. There was much questioning and criticism of the Administration's information policy, not only on this issue but also on previous incidents. This was a serious enough blow to the Administration, but in addition this line of enquiry naturally widened into querying and criticising the Administration's credibility in general. This considerably increased the damage incurred to the Administration's decreasing reputation for veracity, which in turn affected its propaganda effort.

That this was yet another propaganda disaster for the Administration on a crucial issue was confirmed in retrospect by William Bundy. Bundy judged the peace initiative itself to be of little significance, but he assessed the entire incident as "a very damaging episode." However, the point is, that whether or not this peace initiative could have been a significant opening to negotiations, the Administration had repeatedly stated that the North Vietnamese would not consider talks and it was these statements that were given the lie by this episode. Thus again the Administration had fallen into a trap of its own making.

In practice this meant that future Administration statements about North Vietnamese intransigence on negotiations would not automatically be believed, even if these were true statements. Furthermore, one of the
Administration's justifications for escalating the war - North Vietnam's unwillingness to talk - had now been thoroughly undermined, and increasingly U.S. escalation was shown for what it actually was: a method of fighting a war, not a means to achieve peace.

That the war was escalating was indisputable. The dispatch of large numbers of U.S. troops to South Vietnam had provoked a similar build-up on the North Vietnamese and Vietcong side and the conflict intensified. Again the Administration faced the dilemma it had confronted in March when the war was going badly, and which would always recur in this war: in order to maintain the combat status quo, and then perhaps to tilt the balance in its favour, it would be necessary to dispatch yet more troops. Following the propaganda technique it used for troop dispatches prior to the 28 July announcement, the Administration simply did not announce the authorisation of vast increases in troops, nor did it publicise Westmoreland's requests for troops.\(^1\) As a result, press speculation on the figures for troop deployments ranged from 200,000 up to 400,000 troops, adding to the confusion over the true extent of the war, and still leaving a gulf between what the public could glean of the scale of the war, as opposed to what the Administration privately knew was the scale.\(^2\) Added to this the Administration gave no public indication of the gloomy evaluation of the chances for success in the conflict, or the predictions on U.S. casualties.
In the short term this propaganda technique served the Administration's war policy well: it was able to prosecute the war vigorously without informed public scrutiny of the consequences of these decisions. But in the long term this propaganda method proved disastrous, for as the war continued, the Administration required support from a public that had not been prepared for such a long and vicious conflict. Additionally, the charges against the Administration that it had secretly committed the U.S. to a major war without Congressional/public consent were bound to be raised again.

Where America's foreign allies were concerned, the Administration was well aware of the effects of the conflict and U.S. conduct of the war on its own image and on public support for allied governments. Above all, it was the bombing programme that was the focus of attention in allied countries. When McNamara evaluated the effectiveness of the bombing programme in July for Johnson, he also included this assessment of its impact:

"The price paid for improving our image as guarantor had been damage to our image as a country which eschews armed attacks on other nations. The hue and cry correlates with the kind of weapons (e.g., bombs vs. napalm), the kind of targets (e.g., bridges vs. people), the location of the targets (e.g., south vs. north), and not least the extent to which the critic feels threatened by Asian communism (e.g., Thailand vs. the UK). Furthermore, for a given level of bombing, the hue and cry is less now than it was earlier, perhaps to some extent helped by Communist intransigence toward discussions... Within such allied countries as the UK and Japan, popular antagonism to the bombing per se, fear of escalation and belief that the bombings are the main obstacle to negotiation, have created political problems for
the governments in their support of US policy."

However, the propaganda problems created by the methods chosen to wage the war were destined to grow, because the Administration and the U.S. military could conceive of no other way to fight the war which would not lead to a rapid defeat, that is, to the very eventuality which had first dictated the bombing and the troop dispatches.

With massive troop deployments in the pipeline at the end of the year, a proposed expansion of the bombing programme, and the knowledge that the war was escalating rapidly, President Johnson finally authorised the bombing pause that McNamara had proposed several months before. As noted previously, the purpose of the bombing pause was either to allow North Vietnam the chance to surrender under the cloak of negotiations, or in the case of North Vietnam's anticipated refusal, to escalate the war using this refusal as a public justification. By contrast with the secrecy on troop deployments and escalation of the war, this official bombing halt in December 1965/January 1966 was conducted with the maximum amount of noise. Johnson's memoirs give some idea of the attendant blaze of publicity:

"We informed our other allies in the Pacific and several additional governments, including the Russians. We also advised UN Secretary General U Thant... I wrote personal letters to many heads of state and government leaders describing our position and underlining our desire for peace. Vice President Humphrey... conveyed our stand to a number of government leaders, including Soviet Chairman Kosygin... Secretary Rusk talked with
numerous Ambassadors and foreign ministers, both in Washington and in foreign capitals. Ambassador Averell Harriman visited Warsaw, Belgrade and many other capitals to describe our views. Ambassador Goldberg did the same in Rome, Paris and London, as well as the United Nations. G. Mennen Williams...discussed the matter with African leaders. Tom Mann, then our top man on Latin American affairs, conveyed our position to governments of the south."94

Clearly there was no corner of the world that was overlooked in this overt diplomatic and propaganda offensive. In addition Johnson mentions channels of "'quiet diplomacy'" that were used: a message delivered to the North Vietnamese via the U.S. Ambassador in Burma and a similar message via North Vietnam's Moscow Embassy.95

As far as negotiations were concerned, the bombing pause achieved nothing. Hanoi may have responded slightly, though ambiguously, to the pause, primarily through a drop in military operations, but the Administration concentrated on the amount of troops and supplies that North Vietnam had sent to South Vietnam.96 Hanoi publicly labelled the bombing pause a trick and the bombing resumed on 31 January 1966. In terms of public opinion though, the pause was useful, despite the problems caused by U Thant's revelations about the U.S. 'desire' to negotiate. Although the style of the campaign grated on some observers, nevertheless the length of the pause and Hanoi's uncompromising public response created the desired impression of a genuine U.S. peace initiative that had been turned down.
C.) Press Reporting and Reaction

At the beginning of August press reports were analysing the decisions that the Administration had recently announced: to send more troops to South Vietnam and to appeal for UN assistance. The dual nature of the Administration’s approach to the conflict revealed in these decisions - the dichotomy between its escalatory actions and its public rhetoric emphasising peace - tended to be reflected in the press reports, which attempted to reconcile these mutually contradictory positions.

A Sunday Times editorial, captioned "Keeping the roads to peace open", began with this discouraging assessment:

"Now that the United States has been compelled virtually to take over the Vietnam war for itself, it becomes even easier than before to produce arguments against its policies and actions there. The Americans are not fighting for any vital U.S. national interest; they are indulging in a thoroughly out-dated war of white men against non-white men; they are forfeiting the good opinion of most of that 'third world' which used to be the apple of the American eye; they are fighting the unfightable, in the sense that China's renaissance as a great Asian power, with a natural sphere of influence, is a fact which cannot be denied and which only a bigot or an ignoramus would compare with Hitler's crazy dreams of domination. On a wider, international front, the continuance and now stepping-up of the war places the prospects for world peace continuously in jeopardy."

Yet despite this scathing analysis of the very basis of the war and the U.S. role, the editorial blamed Hanoi for refusing to negotiate "(except on terms tantamount to an American surrender)" and stated that because of this and the deteriorating military situation in South Vietnam:
"The Americans have, therefore, no reasonable alternative to what they are doing, however perilous or hopeless it may look from afar." The editorial then dismissed the analogy linking Vietnam with Korea, on the grounds that in Korea the U.S. had acted with allied support under UN aegis, and noted that allied support for Johnson's Vietnam policy was "only forthcoming insofar as U.S. actions can fairly be judged to be milestones, and not obstacles, to peace." And it was further pointed out:

"Unavoidable though it may be in the circumstances, sending another 50,000 men to a theatre of war seems a curious way of bringing peace nearer."  

However, after noting this "curious" discrepancy between U.S. means and declared ends, the editorial nevertheless comforted its audience with the concluding observation:

"But until further notice there is still no cause to doubt that peace really is the American objective, and that in its pursuit any initiative is worth trying."  

Thus the Sunday Times managed to point out the anomalies in the U.S. Government's war policy, but still preferred to trust and disseminate the Administration's rhetoric about its peaceful intentions.

An Observer editorial on 1 August set the conflict in a global framework and lamented the "adverse effect" that the war was exercising on U.S.-Soviet relations on other issues. The remainder of the editorial was then devoted to the issue of negotiations, proceeding from the premise that it was the communists who were now uninterested in
negotiations, who would press for victory in the monsoon season and who, until the season was over, would probably maintain the "impossible condition that all American troops must withdraw from South Vietnam before negotiations can start." According to the editorial this communist intransigence and the current situation in South Vietnam explained Johnson's recent decisions:

"The American position has been getting steadily weaker and the South Vietnamese State has been crumbling away. The Americans are having to reinforce in Vietnam merely to hold the present position and stave off collapse."

On the basis of this pessimistic evaluation, the editorial predicted the consequences of this latest U.S. move:

"It is possible that American reinforcements may help to increase the authority and efficiency of the Saigon Government. But it is more probable that the Americans will be forced to take over responsibility for running both the war and the State."

According to the Observer, the current situation left Johnson with only two options. The first would be to withdraw from South Vietnam, at the cost of casting "doubt on America's reliability as an ally everywhere else" and also vindicating "the Chinese thesis in the Sino-Soviet dispute that national liberation wars can be fought and won without risking nuclear war."

The second option open to Johnson was to "use America's military might to compel the Vietcong to consider negotiations." There was clearly no doubt which option the Observer favoured - and any sane reader would favour - given a choice between the possibility of the
U.S. protector appearing 'unreliable' with the implied consequence of more national liberation wars unless nuclear weapons were used, or the comparatively less drastic course of forcing a negotiated settlement of the war. The editorial then pointed to the flaws in Johnson's chosen method for pressuring the communists into negotiations, that is, the bombing of North Vietnam:

"It may be that the bombing attacks on North Vietnam diminish the rate of supplies to the Vietcong. But it is doubtful whether such attacks can produce the required political effect in Hanoi: and it is arguable that their international disadvantages to the American case outweigh their military advantages." 

It was presumably the thought of these disadvantages that prompted the *Observer* to draw the conclusion that Johnson's decision to increase U.S. troops would enable Johnson "to resist those who want to extend the bombing and, when the monsoon season is over, enable him to call it off altogether as part of a new drive to get negotiations started." Displaying great faith in U.S. official rhetoric, the editorial added: "It is certain that bombing would stop tomorrow if this were Ho's only condition for talks." And building on this belief in the U.S. clear desire for peace - although noting Washington's lack of clarity on the issue of a settlement - the editorial then concluded with a discussion of ways to achieve a neutral Vietnam.

The Administration's peaceful image was enhanced at this point by the adamant refusal of both North Vietnam and China to countenance UN mediation in the war. At
the same time press articles in The New York Times on 2 and 3 August and The Guardian on 2 August reported that both George Ball and Dean Rusk had hinted that the bombing could be suspended if Hanoi was prepared to decrease its own war efforts. But this 'hint' from the Administration was ambiguous enough for observers to perceive what they wanted to, and hence the New York Times report on 3 August was sub-headlined, "Secretary Hints Bombings can Halt - Reds Rule Out Any U.N. Intervention"; while The Guardian headlined its 3 August report on Rusk's press conference: "US not planning to stop bombing"; and a Daily Express report on 3 August was captioned: "Bombing goes on, says Rusk". This Guardian article also highlighted the vagueness of the U.S. appeal to the UN, when it noted that Rusk had "also confirmed the impression that Washington, in asking the United Nations to help to restore peace in Vietnam, has no positive proposals for action." The New York Times was clearly looking for, and finding, signs of a degree of Administration flexibility that was not reflected in these British press reports. The Guardian article in particular displayed some scepticism about the Administration's attitude to negotiations as portrayed in Rusk's press conference.

In general however, the Administration's insistence on its desire for peace was eliciting a favourable response from press columns that had previously criticised U.S. involvement and policies. For instance a Guardian editorial on 5 August captioned, "Mr Johnson as a man of
peace", seized on the U.S. appeal to the UN and the hint that the NLF might be permitted to attend negotiations, as evidence that the U.S. had "abandoned" some of its "old hard attitudes".¹⁰⁵ Note was taken of the fact that President Johnson had recently refrained from referring to South Vietnam as an independent nation and that he now appeared to accept the Geneva Agreements with their provision for elections, prompting the writer to state:

"This suggests that he now sees the war in a new and altogether more realistic light; perhaps he has profited after all from all those talks with Mr Walter Lippmann and his other critics, as no doubt they have too."¹⁰⁶

The editorial did indeed point out the discrepancy between the Administration's political statements and its actions:

"Yet while abandoning political terrain at a rate which he and most members of his Administration would no doubt have thought inconceivable at the beginning of the year, President Johnson is steadily increasing his country's military involvement in the war."¹⁰⁷

But this contradiction was rationalised as an example of the use of Johnson's political style to achieve his desired, peaceful aim:

"Aiming at a single goal by simultaneously pursuing two not necessarily consistent policies is commonly considered to be characteristic of his successful political methods. And his goal, which once might have been winning the war, is now peace."¹⁰⁸

Furthermore the editorial posited a distinction between the Pentagon's objectives and the President's current aim, thus strengthening the portrayal of Johnson as a 'man of peace' surrounded by bellicose advisers:
"We may suspect that high officials in the Pentagon would do almost anything to avoid an American defeat... President Johnson also wants to avoid defeat, but we can be fairly sure that he also wants desperately to bring the war to an end. He may not be consciously trying to circumvent the Pentagon; nevertheless, the effect of his political progression may be the same."

And the editorial concluded that these developments augured well for negotiations:

"The Vietnamese Communists, North and South, have hitherto dismissed as a 'hoax' his appeals for discussions; they are afraid (to quote the old American argument against negotiations) that their opponents will win at the conference table what they could not win on the field. But President Johnson is coming nearer and nearer to offering what they want, and one day they will accept. The President's greatest domestic battle lies before him. It is fortunate for us all that, as everybody conceded, this is where he excels."

Thus at this stage a former critic of the Administration perceived that the absence of specific references to South Vietnam's status in Johnson's latest press conference and a declared desire for peace, meant that Johnson actually wanted peace sufficiently to meet the communists' terms for negotiations, despite the dispatch of more U.S. troops to the war. Apparently the Guardian too was looking for, and finding, encouraging indications in Administration rhetoric, which at this point the Guardian believed to be a more accurate guide to the Administration's 'peaceful' intentions than its fundamentally escalatory actions.

On 9 August came the first revelations that the U.S. Administration had rejected the opportunity of talks on the conflict with the North Vietnamese. Both the Guardian
and the New York Herald Tribune published long reports on this episode, with other newspapers carrying shorter versions. The Guardian article, headlined "N. Vietnamese feelers rebuffed by US" and subtitled "Ho Chi Minh was willing to attend secret talks", by a correspondent at the United Nations, began with the blunt statement:

"It has become known here this weekend that Washington has cold-shouldered at least two opportunities for contacts with North Vietnam in the past two years." Citing "unimpeachable sources" the report stated that North Vietnam appeared to have been willing to discuss establishing a "coalition neutralist government" in South Vietnam after Diem's removal in 1963, and that furthermore "President Ho Chi Minh wanted a secret meeting with United States representatives in September last year..." The article then detailed Washington's responses to those proposals:

"In the first case, Washington did not respond at all. In the second case, Washington waited for five weeks before delivering a negative reply, first arguing that a meeting with Ho Chi Minh could never be kept sufficiently secret to prevent Mr Goldwater's supporters from making capital of it during the presidential election campaign and accusing the Administration of appeasement; or to prevent violent protestations in Saigon that might topple the Government there."

However, despite the potential for damage to the Administration's image as government striving for negotiations and a peaceful settlement, the State Department chose merely to brush aside questions about these lost opportunities, as the Guardian reported:

"The State Department, however, seems to be dismissing the report of Ho Chi Minh's
willingness to talk last year as irrelevant, it says that there was no indication that anything would come of it, and hints that President Johnson was not involved in the matter at all."

After mentioning that Adlai Stevenson knew about these proposals and had greatly regretted Washington's response, the article gave the "intermediaries" view of the consequences of this response, stating that they "believed the Communist position hardened as a result of Washington's negative attitude." The report then concluded with a general discussion on negotiations.

Thus, although the central issues were raised, the Guardian article did not include any analysis of the Administration's explanation and nor did it specifically mention one of the most important features of this episode: the now publicised contradiction between Administration rhetoric on negotiations, and reality. However, the New York Herald Tribune remedied this deficiency with a report headlined, "U.S. Barred '64 Talks On Vietnam", subtitled, "Hanoi Accepted; Election a Factor". This report concentrated on the most recent proposal in 1964 and began:

"The Johnson Administration last fall rejected a proposal for Vietnamese peace talks that had been accepted without conditions by Communist North Vietnam, it was learned yesterday."

In the next paragraph came the most damaging conjunction of information as far as Administration propaganda was concerned:

"This information, from reliable sources, is in direct conflict with President Johnson's at his July 29 press conference that 'we are ready
now, as we have always been, to move from the battlefield to the conference table. "[^119]

The report produced the same two reasons as the Guardian accounting for the Administration's rejection and discussed the peace talks proposal in greater detail. The article then recapitulated Johnson's latest press conference statement on U.S. "willingness" for "unconditional discussions" and his plaintive summary of the abundant U.S. peace efforts that he said had met with no communist response: "'Fifteen efforts have been made to start these discussions with the help of 40 nations throughout the world, but there has been no answer.'"[^120]

Finally there was a reference to the sources' view of the importance of this rejected proposal

"The sources pointed out yesterday that last fall's U.S. rejection and Hanoi's acceptance of a negotiation proposal is now a footnote in history. They maintained, however, that had a meeting taken place, a road to peace in Vietnam might have been mapped out."[^121]

However, despite the serious contradictions between Administration rhetoric and events according to other participants that were revealed in these press reports, at this time the episode did not generate a press furor, thus sparing the Administration the effort of trying to explain the discrepancies with the consequent embarrassment and damage to its image.

One possible reason for this generally muted press response could lie in the fact that immediately after these revelations, the new U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge, was reported to have stated to the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee that U.S. troops would not leave South Vietnam even if the Saigon government were to ask them to leave.\(^\text{122}\) This statement received considerable press coverage and was perceived by the Administration as a problem that required explanation, for all U.S. official propaganda had always stressed that the U.S. was merely helping South Vietnam at the latter's invitation, in line with past U.S. policy. In turn the official explanation, advanced by the State Department and Presidential press spokesman and supported by Johnson, that Lodge did not make these remarks, was also widely disseminated and disputed in the press.\(^\text{123}\) Thus the rejected peace talks episode vanished beneath the welter of claims and counter-claims over Lodge's statement.

In addition to this incident, press reports from mid-August to the end of the month depicted a deteriorating situation in South Vietnam. On 12 August The Times published a Washington dispatch headlined, "America Faces Desperate Vietnam Situation", subtitled, "Saigon's Power Shrinks In A Hostile Country".\(^\text{124}\) Quoting an "optimistic assessment" of the amount of the country controlled by the South Vietnamese Government as "little more than half", with three-quarters of the country "in a kind of administrative limbo", the report highlighted the consequences of this for U.S. political and military policy:

"Political stability in these circumstances is of course impossible, and there is no longer any pretence that South Vietnam is a viable state. Instead, there is the admission that it is not a national state, that no national consciousness
exists, and that in effect the United States is supporting an army in search of a country.\textsuperscript{126}

Summarising the current military situation, the report mentioned the Vietcong's "especially disturbing" ability to "replace losses and increase their forces", contrasting with the "alarming" (although apparently "improving") desertion rate in the South Vietnamese Army; and the fact that the bombing had not impaired North Vietnam's supply lines to the South.\textsuperscript{126} Drawing conclusions for U.S. policy from this, the article stated:

"The only comfort drawn from the review [by the Administration of the situation] is not likely to be widely shared abroad. The major American accomplishment is seen to be the development of a sound strategy based on the hard realities of the situation...

In other words, the only battle won has been in Washington. An overall decision, encompassing many previous ones, has been made to fight a large war with American troops."\textsuperscript{127}

This policy of fighting the war with U.S. troops with the South Vietnamese Army in a 'detection and pacification' role was expected to be successful, despite the poor results so far of U.S. military efforts that the article had just detailed:

"The results of such a strategy should be inevitable. It is difficult to see how a small country such as North Vietnam can withstand an American counter-attack, and sooner or later the objective of bringing Hanoi to the conference table should be realized."\textsuperscript{128}

The article was thus reproducing much the same belief that the Administration presumably held; that despite all evidence to the contrary, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong would finally succumb to U.S. superior military might.
However, from the point of view of the U.S. propaganda effort, the most important issue raised in this article was addressed in the final paragraph, when it was pointed out that the U.S. dependency on "ambitious Asian generals with little popular backing" in fact undercut the U.S. claim to be in South Vietnam at the Government's invitation, with the result that: "The validity of that position is highly questionable if no government is seen to exist." Here the very basis of the U.S. role in the Vietnam conflict was undercut on a point of principle and for this very reason was all the more dangerous for the U.S. propaganda effort, which would then be attacked on two fronts: both the principle of the war and the means used to fight it. For already U.S. methods of fighting the war had caused a certain amount of revulsion, which was likely to increase as the full weight of the U.S. military machine was brought into action in Vietnam. In addition the length of the war would be a factor which would affect perception of the conflict and the U.S. role, would strain the U.S. propaganda effort, and would also multiply any doubts about such factors as U.S. war methods, civilian casualties and refugees, and the bombing of North Vietnam.

Thus, if the very principle of the war came to be seriously doubted, as it later was, then U.S. propaganda faced the impossible task of justifying an enormously destructive war which observers thought carried risks of a general conflagration, and which was being fought for none of the more immediate and principled reasons advanced by
the Administration, that is, democracy, freedom and the 'South Vietnamese Government'. In other words, when this situation came about U.S. propaganda had the task of endeavouring to justify what some observers had decided was inherently unjustifiable.

This dilemma over the South Vietnamese Government was well illustrated in reports towards the end of August. The Times headlined its Washington dispatch, "Vietnam Dilemma for Washington", subtitled revealingly, "Should U.S. Run Country As Well As Defend It?", with the further helpful subtitle, "Need To Create Viable State In The South".130 Following a lengthy discussion of the problems encountered by the U.S. in South Vietnam, the article concluded that the U.S. now had two options. The first option was to withdraw, as the original conditions for U.S. commitment in 1954 had not been met by the South Vietnamese Government(s) (undertaking reforms and responding to people's "national aspirations"). The second option was to run the country:

"Withdrawal, of course, is now out of the question. Too much is involved. Unless some kind of miracle occurs in Saigon, the United States will almost inevitably have to run the country. This at least is the unhappy conclusion drawn here."131

The Daily Express report from Washington was headlined, "The bitter truth America is facing now" and began:

"The United States of America - founded on an anti-colonial revolution - is today facing up to a bitter truth in Vietnam. That if Communism is to be defeated it may be necessary to turn South Vietnam into virtually an American colony..."
Many leading officials here are talking about an American civil authority - headed by a sort of proconsul - which would take over, rebuild and run Vietnam for perhaps 20 years, as the only practical way to make it a viable state."

And the report highlighted the vital point that because of the situation in South Vietnam, "the increasingly growing realisation is that even if a huge American army wins crushing victories over the Vietcong this will not necessarily solve the problem." The cause of this unpalatable state of affairs was stated to be the lack of a "strong Government in Saigon, genuinely representative of the South Vietnamese people" and the need for: "A stable and expanding economy, and an efficient civil service coupled with effective local government in the provinces." The South Vietnamese Government itself was described in this article as "arrogant, super-sensitive, and totally remote from the monumental problems."

However, it was only seven months since the U.S. first 'responded' to the Vietcong attack on Pleiku in defence of the Saigon Government, which, it was claimed, would be able to deal with South Vietnam's problems if only its Northern neighbour would cease its 'aggression'. Now it was being stated that even if the war was being won and presumably Northern 'aggression' ceased, South Vietnam's problems would remain, because firstly the problems themselves were not caused by the war, and secondly, the Saigon Government was not capable of tackling the problems, irrespective of the war. Earlier
U.S. propaganda was thus already being contradicted by the deterioration of the situation in South Vietnam and the need for an effective solution.

Nevertheless, the 'realities' of the political and military deterioration in South Vietnam appear to have been accepted by most press observers as justification for the possibility of a U.S. take-over, in whatever form, of the Saigon Government's functions. The general impression was that this was a necessity, although not all observers displayed the insouciance of a Daily Telegraph editorial on 31 August, captioned, "New Realism In Vietnam". This editorial began with a stark reminder of South Vietnam's chronic political instability and then brushed aside the Saigon Government's inability to command the support of its people as now unimportant in the face of the expanded war, and in effect dismissing one of the main platforms of U.S. official propaganda - that the U.S. was in South Vietnam in the service of democracy, freedom and the South Vietnamese peoples' right to command their own destiny:

"South Vietnam's ninth Government in two years is beginning to experience the same sort of domestic trouble as helped to dislodge its predecessors...A few governments ago such manifestations [a "hostile demonstration"] were a good deal more disquieting for the Americans than they can be today. Indeed Washington itself has in the past anxiously tried to bring about precisely what the present demonstrators are demanding: the installation of a civilian Government in Saigon in place of military rule."

The editorial then encapsulated the difference between past and present U.S. policy on the issue of
'democracy' in South Vietnam, and its current relative unimportance in the list of priorities:

"Political stability and at least some semblance of democratic forms were seen as an essential background to successful prosecution of the war. But with the intensification of the war and full American commitment this background has lost its importance. It remains desirable, of course, as an ultimate objective, but realism now relegates its possible achievement to a more distant future after the war is over."

Concerning the outcome of the war, this editorial presented much the same analysis as *The Times* in its 12 August assessment, arguing that the communists had little chance of military victory in the face of U.S. military technology:

"Soon the advantage of weather [end of monsoon season] will be on the other [U.S.] side, and with it will come more American troops, new weapons and - as Our Special Correspondent reports - daily bombing raids against Viet Cong bases. This is the prospect that now faces the Communists, confronting them more starkly than at any earlier juncture with the choice between continuing a hopeless war and accepting the negotiation [sic] for which President JOHNSON is ready '"'at the drop of a hat.'"

As the *Daily Telegraph* mentioned in passing, there had again been flurries of activity concerning peace talks, firstly referring to a private British initiative and then secondly to Administration attempts.

On 21 and 22 August the press reported that Lord Brockway, chairman of the British Council for Peace in Vietnam, had visited Moscow to contact North Vietnamese representatives. Initially press reports were optimistic about the outcome of Brockway's talks, with North Vietnam appearing to make some concessions - for instance the
Observer headlined its report on 22 August, "N.Vietnam softens on cease-fire" - but by 25 August North Vietnam had disagreed publicly over Brockway's version of the talks that had appeared in the press and denied agreeing to any form of concession.¹⁴⁰

There was, as usual, some confusion over Washington's reaction to Brockway's efforts. On 23 August USIS published a summary of U.S. officials' views on the conflict, optimistically titled, "Vietnam Turning Point Thought Possible Soon".¹⁴¹ The thesis advanced here and in press reports at this time was that due to the increased U.S. commitment, North Vietnam had now to decide whether to pursue an expanded, costly and ultimately lost war, or whether to opt for negotiations. On the issue of peace probes the USIS report juxtaposed the most contradictory statements, making it clear - presumably inadvertently - that Washington intended to be the ultimate judge of the significance or otherwise of any peace probes, although still encouraging these efforts verbally:

"At this stage in Vietnam, it also remains important that those in various world capitals who are interested in getting the Communists to the conference table continue their efforts. Out of these efforts might come some significant indication from the other side that was worth probing, the U.S. officials explained. At the same time, they made it clear that Washington was not unduly excited on Friday by press reports reaching here late in the day about the talks in Moscow between North Vietnamese representatives, and Lord Brockway, the British Labour M.P.."¹⁴²
After a discouraging evaluation of the reported results of Brockway's talks, the USIS report noted disparagingly:

"The American officials stated that these reported points could be developed and discussed at a peace conference. But they questioned how much of what Lord Brockway stated was his own formulation and how much was North Vietnam's."  

Thus the results of Brockway's efforts were apparently dismissed officially as wishful thinking. But on the other hand, The New York Times reported on 27 August that Brockway's discussions had been viewed as "one in a series of current contacts" and that: "Officials eagerly studied reports of those talks and thought that they detected some significant nuances." This seems a curious assessment in the light of the earlier USIS report, but of course by this time North Vietnam had already denied Brockway's statements, and as there was no longer any danger that the Administration would have to take this peace initiative seriously then possibly Administration officials felt able to offer a more charitable view of Brockway's initiative.

Concerning North Vietnam's denial, The New York Times stated that the Brockway "incident is thought to have demonstrated the risks of premature disclosure of the substance of diplomatic conversations about the war." Although the Administration was in no danger at this point of disclosing the "substance" of diplomatic conversations, nevertheless hints and vague references to current peace moves, however secret, were often used by the
Administration to counter criticism - particularly when military action was being intensified - and apparently regardless of whether public disclosure in even vague terms might jeopardise any such peace moves. And at this juncture the press was discussing in vague terms certain approaches to the North Vietnamese which the Administration was undertaking as part of another U.S. peace 'offensive'. This came immediately after the U.S. Marines inflicted heavy losses on the Vietcong in a battle at Chu Lai, amid reports that the communist offensive was slowing down and the Vietcong were experiencing supply shortages.

There were several strands to this peace and propaganda effort, comprising the publication and dissemination of the Administration's pamphlet "Why Vietnam?" on 23 August; a televised panel discussion of the Administration's Vietnam policy with Rusk, McGeorge Bundy and UN Ambassador Goldberg; and leaks to the press about current Administration approaches to North Vietnam, followed by elliptical official references to these approaches. Press reports covered these developments in considerable detail, particularly the Administration's views on negotiations and the current peace moves.

On 24 August The New York Times published a lengthy report headlined, "U.S. Aides Explain Position On Truce", which covered both the television discussion and the pamphlet, but devoted much more attention and analysis to the former. But there was one point that the report raised
about the pamphlet that was important, for after a brief factual description of "Why Vietnam?", the report then mentioned the "controversy" over the inclusion of an Eisenhower letter to Diem to justify current U.S. policy, stating that Eisenhower himself "declared last week that the message was intended to offer economic assistance, not military aid." Eisenhower's declaration obviously detracted from the Administration's insistence that its current policy merely followed past policies.

On the television discussion, The New York Times reported that "experienced observers" judged the television discussion to be of importance chiefly because it was such a high profile presentation of the Administration's "full range of offers", not because "any clearly new positions had been stated". But even so, the television presentation itself was taken to be a form of official U.S. diplomacy. After basing the U.S. position on compliance by both sides with the 1954 Geneva Agreements, Rusk was reported to be "bidding strongly for negotiations" when he stated that "'there are many details [of the U.S. position] which can't be elaborated because we are not at a negotiating table'". And The New York Times underlined this point by interpreting this statement as an indication that "the United States might be willing to make concessions not mentioned in tonight's discussion." The next day The New York Times again reported on this discussion under the headline, "U.S. Diplomacy by TV". The article began:
"The Johnson Administration has begun a subtle effort to discover whether it can agree with North Vietnam on a broad but deliberately ambiguous statement of objectives for future negotiations.

Last night, before a nationwide television audience that was never fully briefed on what it was witnessing, leading United States policy-makers addressed the North Vietnamese Government in Hanoi and responded, point by point, to its four-month-old proposal for a 'basis' of settlement."

But for all this 'subtle' probing, the Administration's fundamental strategy for achieving negotiations had not in fact changed, for as the article then pointed out:

"The exercise [television discussion] was part of a new Washington peace offensive that is not, however, confined to peaceful means. Officials acknowledged today that their call for negotiations, "'the sooner the better,'" was being reinforced by increased military pressure against the Communists in both North and South Vietnam."

However, because the Administration's goal was stated and seen to be negotiations, these combined military-diplomatic efforts were portrayed in this report as a "bid for a peace conference" which "marked the biggest stride yet away from the Administration's reluctance of last winter to move toward the bargaining table and its hesitation, as late as February, even to utter the word 'negotiation.'"

The Financial Times summed up the Administration's efforts in a Washington date-lined report, "U.S. Drive To Get North Vietnam to Negotiate", which stated: "The most sustained American attempt so far to induce the Government of North Vietnam to come to a conference is now in full
And the report also described the Administration's method of communicating its message: "Official Washington is full of carefully orchestrated hints and statements indicating the American desire for peace and flexibility." Further proof of this U.S. desire for peace came when The New York Times carried a long article about Administration peace moves, which may have referred to the supposedly secret XYZ peace initiative. First it was reported that through "a series of unpublicized and indirect approaches" the U.S. was now "offering to exchange demonstrations of a desire to slow down the war."

Next the report discussed the channel of communication:

"The North Vietnamese are said to be receiving unidentified third-party representatives with evident interest, although they have not yet given anything that might be construed as a reply. Some informed sources believe a response may be received or become discernible within a week or two."

Then the positions of the two sides was revealed:

"In its indirect aproaches, the Johnson Administration is said to be urging the Hanoi Government to consider a withdrawal of all or part of the 325th Division of the North Vietnamese Army from South Vietnam in exchange for a reduction in United States military actions, including the bombing of North Vietnam."

Finally the article explained that North Vietnam was "being told" that this "exchange of signals...could be the first step toward further reductions in the fighting and bombing in preparation for more formal negotiations."

Thus these "unpublicized approaches" had by now received a fairly thorough and detailed public airing,
adding considerably to the impression that the Administration was seriously striving for negotiations. President Johnson had also projected this image at a press conference on 25 August when he stated that "...peace, that simple little 5-letter word is the most important word in the English language to us at this time and it occupies more of our attention than any other word or subject." And as the Financial Times noted, he then remarked: "'We do expect they (the Communists) are listening...we do hope they are listening.'" However the Administration's interest in peace and Communist attentiveness did not prevent it broadcasting its low estimate of the chances of success, as The New York Times reported, and this struck a rather sour warning note: "Washington sources insist, however, that there is no hint yet that the reaction will be less negative than before." 

At this point the Administration view of the Communists' reactions to peace moves, past and future, was helpfully reinforced by press coverage of a British Government White Paper which detailed its own and other countries' unsuccessful attempts to achieve negotiations during the last six months. The White Paper also included a note outlining its position that the U.S. Government sent to the British Government on 8 August.

However this concerted propaganda effort by the Administration, aided by the British Government, and the recent U.S. victory at Chu Lai, still did not lead all
observers to conclude that peace was about to break out. And more important, not all observers thought that the Administration was in reality pursuing negotiations, but was instead projecting an image of such a pursuit. Thus at the end of August the British press produced radically differing interpretations of the Administration's campaign. On the one hand there was an Observer article headlined, "Peace hope in Washington", reporting that:

"People with power in Washington are beginning, just beginning, to allow themselves to believe in the possibility of a moderately satisfactory solution in Vietnam..."

At his press conference this week the President...expressed a cautious optimism about the way the war was going...

His hopes are not of outright military victory. But suddenly this town is full of rumours of negotiations and these rumours do not emanate from Saigon but from the White House. They come from Johnson's aides, who say nothing - for the sake of their career survival - that is not carefully premeditated. There really is something in the air."¹⁶²

According to the Observer the Administration's current "diplomatic offensive" was "shrouded in a secrecy unfamiliar in recent American history."¹⁶³ But this was a curious view of secrecy, considering the details that had already appeared in the press. However, after observing that "publicity would kill" any contacts with Hanoi, the article nevertheless insisted that: "Something like preliminary negotiations are now going on and the chief stumbling-block at present is the uncertainty of the demands of the other side."¹⁶⁴ Hanoi must have been pleased that its reported response was being kept so secret.
On the other hand there was a *Sunday Times* article entitled, "Rumours of Vietnam 'peace' are just eye-wash". As the headline suggests the view taken of the Administration's peace moves was highly sceptical, and this was coupled with what was in fact a much more accurate account of the situation:

"MR DEAN RUSK, the US Secretary of State, has been careful in his latest press conference neither to affirm nor deny that something might be afoot behind the scenes to reduce the intensity of the conflict in South Vietnam. But an assessment of the situation today can only lead to the conclusion that there is still the same diplomatic stalemate, the same military standoff and an undiminished prospect of the war extending indefinitely into the future."\(^{1}\)

But as the article then pointed out:

"That assessment, however, is just about contrary to everything that is being fed out here, publicly and privately. In the past week Washington has been the theatre of leaks and hints hardly equalled in modern experience. My own conclusion is that all this has been mostly eyewash."\(^{1}\)

The article then pieced together the components which had led other observers to conclude exactly the opposite, first mentioning press conferences by Rusk and McNamara, followed immediately by a week of articles in "influential journals" about the U.S. military effort having "'turned the corner'" and North Vietnam now having to choose whether to escalate or negotiate.\(^{1}\) Then came the reports of peace moves and the Administration's encouraging reactions:

"Comment on television by Mr Rusk and officials, a sort of comment by silence on the part of President Johnson in his press conference on Wednesday, and a comparable acquiescence by Mr Rusk in his press conference on Friday - all combined to suggest that something was really
going on and that, therefore, the prospect of welcome results had been enhanced."\(^{169}\)

But as the last paragraph of the article emphasised, there was in fact little change in the situation:

"There is substantial evidence that the Vietcong are tired and short of supplies. But to proceed from these circumstances to a judgement that Hanoi wishes to arrange a face-saving peace is to fall off the edge of the logical process."\(^{170}\)

Thus not only did this article disagree with the hypothesis that a U.S. victory, a tired Vietcong and a presumably thoughtful North Vietnam added up to a significant chance for negotiations, but in addition the Administration's recent propaganda moves, suggesting that negotiations were imminent, were effectively dismissed as misleading.

However, support for the Administration's efforts came in a major speech by Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield, defining U.S. conditions for settling the conflict in Vietnam. Furthermore, because Mansfield's speech was reported to have been approved beforehand by President Johnson it was invested with a greater degree of authority and generated press interest.\(^{171}\) But in addition to prolonging the press life of the peace moves, Mansfield's speech was also consciously optimistic about the length of the war, effectively intimating that negotiations could end it soon. In its report on the speech the Guardian noted:

"Mr Mansfield told reporters before delivering his speech that he had sent advance copies to the President and the Secretaries of State and Defence. The Senator said that the President felt, as he did, that the American public should
not assume that this country was irrevocably committed to a long war in Vietnam."172

In the circumstances this optimism was not justified, for the Administration had already stated that it expected little from this current round of peace moves. Thus, unless the U.S. was prepared either to withdraw unilaterally or negotiate on North Vietnam's terms, and first stop bombing the North - neither of which courses was the Administration prepared to pursue - then the war was bound to continue. The only other possibility was for the U.S. to win a quick military victory and this did not seem likely either in the wake of the desperate situation that had recently forced the Administration into vastly enlarging its troop commitment.

The saga of this peace 'offensive' finally came to an end in early October, with the Administration claiming that yet again the Communists had shown that they were not interested in negotiations. This conclusion was generally supported in press reports - even the Guardian headlined its report: "Vietcong as stubborn as ever."173 However, as in the past, the Administration's diplomatic 'failure' contained a useful bonus, which was highlighted in The New York Times' analysis of the unsuccessful peace campaign. Firstly, Hanoi's rejection of the "intensive 10-week" U.S. overtures again helped pave the way for the Administration to escalate the war: "Washington officials believe that a long and costly military campaign is necessary before diplomats can try again."174 And secondly, some of the
criticism levelled at the Administration had been countered by the very fact that the Administration had involved itself in approaches to North Vietnam, had urged other Governments to lobby for peace and most importantly, had been widely reported to be doing all this:

"But they [Washington officials] also believe that the offers to negotiate have improved the United States position in many parts of the world without upsetting the frail political structure in South Vietnam."175

These were important results for the Administration, for though it was only eight months since the U.S. began sustained bombing of North Vietnam, and of course South Vietnam, already the destruction was generating adverse press coverage - even from supporters of the U.S. commitment in Vietnam. This was demonstrated strikingly in September, for though the border conflict between India and Pakistan had diverted press attention temporarily from the Vietnam war, nevertheless both the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian carried editorials criticising the U.S. air raids. Noting that 10,000 gift packets from South Vietnamese children to North Vietnamese children had been dropped on one of these air raids, and pondering whether this was a "vulgar, even ghoulish display, of American wealth and power, a cynical ringing of the changes - bombs one day, goodies the next", or a "legitimate, indeed necessary, use of psychological warfare", the Daily Telegraph editorial stated flatly:

"But the good work [gifts lowering communist morale] can be completely undone if the Americans get a reputation for unnecessary brutality in their bombing raids. Targets must be strictly military, and accurately pinpointed,
despite increased risk. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese prisoners should be properly treated, and this should be made known."

The Guardian editorial was set in the context of the latest Communist rejection of negotiations, due to which the editorial was now supporting the British Government's refusal to condemn U.S. policy and thereby lose its influence with Washington and its chance to ameliorate the conflict. But the editorial actually began with a harsh condemnation of the U.S. military effort:

"Posterity (in America as elsewhere) will find it hard to forgive the United States Administration's methods of waging war in Vietnam."  

By the end of September the India-Pakistan conflict was over and Vietnam was once more the focus of media attention. Just at the time that the U.S. peace campaign was reported to have failed due to Communist intransigence, the largest demonstration against the war so far took place in America on 15-16 October. Other countries, including Britain, responded to the appeal by the U.S. organisers, the Vietnam Day Committee, and organised similar demonstrations over the same weekend. Though the demonstrations in Britain were relatively small, they resulted in a number of arrests and once again attracted considerable press attention.

At this stage in the war, in late October and early November, Administration officials were now reported to be more optimistic about the outcome of the conflict. Their optimism was based on the perceived beneficial effects of the introduction of U.S. ground troops, and the belief
that these troops and other U.S. military measures had prevented a Vietcong victory and South Vietnam's military collapse. McGeorge Bundy also believed that the combat initiative now lay with the U.S. and South Vietnamese troops instead of with the enemy forces. But this official public optimism about the fighting was accompanied by official public pessimism on the possibility of negotiations. The Administration's reported view was that the communists appeared "'determined to slug it out'" and thus the U.S. would "continue the battle, hitting harder with a rapidly expanding military force and increased diplomatic pressure". Against this background Senator Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee suggested another bombing pause in order to start negotiations. In response the Administration reiterated its willingness to stop the air strikes if the North Vietnamese indicated that a bombing halt would lead to negotiations, but the Administration also made plain its belief that North Vietnam did not currently want negotiations:

"'But we have had no indication that another cessation of the military strikes at military targets in the North would change anyone's mind anywhere else,' said Bill D. Moyers, the Presidential press secretary." Fulbright's suggestion was thus dismissed and again communist intransigence was blamed for the continuation and escalation of the war. This combination of Administration optimism about military progress in Vietnam, coupled with warnings that the conflict would
intensify before the communists would be prepared to negotiate, continued into early November. So far press reports had accepted the Administration's interpretation of events involving both the conflict and negotiations. But there was still concern about the general level of carnage inflicted by U.S. methods of fighting the war. A Guardian editorial illustrated the price that could be paid, even entirely accidentally, by South Vietnamese peasants for U.S. military assistance, when it described the destruction by U.S. bombers of a South Vietnamese village because of a map reference error and then stated:

"...villages, in both North and South Vietnam are suffering day after day the fate of the inhabitants of De Duc." Westmoreland too was reported to be worried about civilian casualties. This concern about civilian suffering implied that if the Administration's escalation of the conflict was not perceived to be aimed at, or achieving negotiations and peace, contrary to repeated U.S. statements, then on the grounds of human suffering alone U.S. involvement in the war would be criticised - quite regardless of any additional allegations about U.S. official misinformation or straightforward deception.

On 16 November newspapers began reporting for the second time on the U.S. rejection of the Rangoon peace initiative in September 1964, details of which had just been published in Look magazine. The Administration had already commented on the magazine article in a press conference on 15 November by State Department spokesman
McCloskey, in which he said that the peace talks offer was rejected, because the Administration doubted that Hanoi seriously wanted talks and Secretary of State Rusk had sensitive antenna and would have recognized a serious peace move. The first press reports merely recapitulated the facts as presented in the Look article, including the allegation that it was Defense Secretary McNamara who had twice turned down peace proposals from U Thant, and then reproduced both McNamara's and the State Department spokesman's rebuttals. Then on 17 November the press began analysing the whole episode and its implications for the Administration. In a stinging editorial The New York Times commented:

"The details, and just what each person did or said at the period a year ago when Hanoi sought a discussion with the United States on ending hostilities in Vietnam, must and will be sifted by history. The outstanding - and many will think devastating - fact is that Hanoi offered to talk and Washington refused. This may well prove a heavy burden for the Johnson Administration to justify."

Pouring scorn on McCloskey's reference to Secretary Rusk's sensitivity to 'serious peace moves', and also revealing considerable anxiety, the editorial stated:

"Secretary Rusk, according to Mr. McCloskey, has a 'sensitive antenna' and he would have known - or sensed - when North Vietnam was really prepared for peace talks. This comment reminds one of the ancient Roman practice of drawing auspices from the flight or entrails of birds. It would be a shuddering thought that the fate of nations and of thousands of young Americans depended on Dean Rusk's antenna. Yet this is what Mr. McCloskey indicated."

Finally, after recalling Washington's past reasons for refusing to contemplate negotiations, due to the
requirement for a "peaceful gesture in action, not words" from Hanoi, the need for a strong U.S. stance, and a "widely held belief" in the domino theory, the editorial concluded:

"Therefore, it was not until April, in his now famous Johns Hopkins speech, that President Johnson asked for 'unconditional discussions.' The might-have-beens of history are forever incapable of proof. Perhaps nothing would have come a year ago of some quiet talks with Hanoi. Yet, as U Thant observed yesterday, much of the present tragedy might have been averted if 'some bold step' had been taken last year. The gnawing thought will never be erased: that opportunity tapped faintly on the door - and the United States would not open it."

New York Times commentator James Reston began his critique of the Administration's conduct with the observation:

"In the midst of the most savage battle of the Vietnamese war, the State Department has confirmed that it rejected a year ago an offer to enter into peace talks with the North Vietnamese in Rangoon, Burma.

This has created such a stir in Washington and provoked so many charges of bad faith on the part of the Johnson Administration by foreign diplomats and others that it is important to try and sort out the facts."

Reston then pointed out that at the time of the Rangoon offer the Administration completely opposed negotiations and this policy was only reversed with Johnson's Baltimore speech. But as Reston continued:

"This much can be said in explanation of the Administration's position, but that is about all. It has not been caught rejecting the peace talks it says it wants. It rejected them before it changed its policy against negotiations, but it is still in trouble because it has consistently given the impression that Hanoi was never prepared to talk."

Quoting Johnson at a 13 July press conference, in which he said that "'candor'" compelled him to state that
North Vietnam had never shown any interest in negotiations, Reston expostulated:

"Candor did not compel the White House, however, to give a very accurate account of U Thant's message about the peace feelers...
The imprecision - to use the polite diplomatic word - of the Administration's statements on this whole Vietnamese business is astonishing."  

Reston concluded his examination of the contradictions in the Administration's statements with this damning indictment of U.S. official information on the war:

"In the Vietnamese war, from beginning to end there has been a serious and widespread lack of trust in the Government's statements about how well the war was going, what role our men were playing, and how well the South Vietnamese Government was doing. The Administration's first problem, therefore, is not how to talk to the North Vietnamese but how to talk candidly to the American people. If there is a crisis, it is not a crisis of diplomacy abroad but of confidence at home."

A lengthy Guardian dispatch on 18 November, headlined, "Rising criticism in US over rejected peace feeler", analysed this latest Administration debacle. The dispatch initially referred to the Guardian's earlier report published in August and then surveyed U.S. press reactions to this "major Washington political issue", first noting the general tone of these press reactions:

"In brief, the handling [by the Administration] of these reports [about the rejected peace feeler] and similar more recent instances of what is here politely called 'news management,' are being pondered with some passion and forthrightness in the press. It could build up into a serious indictment of the Administration for being less than frank with the public about events and policies in Vietnam and elsewhere."
Reproducing U.S. press criticism of Administration statements on Vietnam, the Dominican Republic crisis and the recent aluminium price war, the Guardian assessed the future consequences to the Administration of these inaccurate or misleading pronouncements:

"There seems to be a real possibility that the Administration has done itself serious damage by thus sowing seeds of distrust among the public, less ready than most to accept unquestioningly the statements of its leaders.

This growing distrust coincides with the sharp escalation of the American military effort in Vietnam and the imposition of an increasingly pervasive censorship. Soon 200,000 American troops will be fighting in Vietnam. It is a sizeable war. There will be mounting casualties and there will be setbacks as well as victories." 137

The Guardian's summary of U.S. press criticism also noted an observation by a Washington Post commentator that Dean Rusk "took it upon himself to ignore last year's approach" without informing President Johnson. 138 This version of events thus corroborated Johnson's private assertion to U Thant that he had not known of this peace feeler. However, on the very same day that the Guardian reproduced this story, a columnist in The New York Times added an extra twist to it, pointing out that this version of Rusk's rejection of the peace feeler ran counter to the current image that the Administration was seeking to convey:

"Yet of all the beliefs which the Administration has sought to inculcate in the minds of the people, foremost among them is that the President personally passes on every detail involved in the conduct of the war in Vietnam. And the tender from Hanoi which was conveyed to the Government by Secretary General Thant of the
United Nations was much larger than a
detail."193

The columnist continued:

"For the President to be represented as having
been kept in ignorance of such a proposal while
a subordinate made the decision on his own, was
damaging to the 'image' of a President in full
command of Government policy that is verified by
the facts as well as by the Administration's
publicity canon that he must be featured in
every official announcement of acts presumed to
be popular with the people."200

The Administration's solution to this dilemma was to
"restore the President to the foreground" in an
alternative version of these events, fed by "anonymous
officials" to United Press International, in which the
President's "'top advisers, particularly Secretary Rusk'"
formulated the reasons why the peace feeler should be
rejected and "'The President agreed.'"201 The New York
Times columnist rounded off this article with an account
of the Administration's sensitivity to "published news",
concluding that "secrecy is an undiscriminating passion of
this Administration."202

There were now two versions of how North Vietnam's
agreement to meet for peace talks came to be rejected,
neither of which reflected any credit on the
Administration. Indeed the second version, in addition to
further eroding the Administration's credibility, also
undermined President Johnson's personal image, both his
own credibility and his image as a man of peace. Thus the
distinction that had formerly been made in the press,
between President Johnson's manifestly peaceful intentions
and his advisers' bellicosity, was now being blurred, thereby limiting what had been a useful Administration propaganda technique to defuse public criticism.

The debate on this episode continued to widen and inevitably some observers speculated whether the light thrown on the Administration's past attitude to negotiations was not also a reflection of its current attitude. The Daily Express discussed this aspect in a dispatch from its Washington correspondent on 19 November, headlined: "The hottest topic in the White House". The dispatch began dramatically:

"Is the United States now bent only on bludgeoning North Vietnam to sue for peace after inflicting a crushing, humiliating military defeat? This is emerging from the fog of Washington's half-truths this week about the history of repeated peace overtures from Hanoi over 13 months."

These opening paragraphs shaped and disseminated to the audience the precise impression of its policies that the Administration had taken such pains to avoid creating. The dispatch then dwelt on the diplomatic results of Washington's "half-truths":

"I find sincere doubt in the embassies of many allied and neutral nations that the U.S. will agree to cease-fire talks short of complete surrender by North Vietnam, the Vietcong, and the National Liberation Front of all their interests and claims south of the 17th parallel. Over the next six weeks a torrent of reinforcements will build American forces on the ground to over 200,000. Early in 1966 the U.S. will have amassed 250,000 troops in Vietnam."

And the dispatch quoted a Western embassy ambassador on the "'alarmingly grim'" mood in Washington, a topic the
correspondent returned to at the end of the article, where it was suggested that this "mood of frightening tough intent" was "perhaps...deliberately conjured up" by Johnson "to convince Hanoi that he means business." However, as the correspondent also noted, this mood was "beginning to alarm America's friends perhaps as much as its enemies."

Interestingly this report also mentioned the ambiguous peace feeler by North Vietnam in May following the unofficial U.S. bombing pause, explaining that Washington rejected this offer because it was "'woolly'". Summing up the climate of opinion on peace moves, the report stated:

"Usually well-informed sources say that the White House and the State Department will eventually have to acknowledge that Washington has rejected several similar Hanoi feelers while claiming there were none."

Although wide of the mark, the correspondent's expressed belief that Johnson would be forced to negotiate because of popular criticism over these rejected peace feelers reflects the controversy stirred up by this rejection. And as the correspondent also noted, pressure was mounting on the Administration, including another peace march in Washington planned for 27 November.

Not all press criticism of the Administration treated this episode as a lost opportunity for peace. In the New York Herald Tribune, Joseph Alsop, commenting from his hawkish standpoint, took the Administration to task for its public attitude to negotiations. Alsop brushed aside
North Vietnam's "exceedingly vague" negotiation offer, made at a time when South Vietnam's resistance "was very nearly on its last legs" and would have completely collapsed if the U.S. had negotiated "behind" South Vietnam's back. Stating that this why Rusk had rejected the offer, Alsop then attacked the Administration's propaganda on peace talks:

"But these facts [about rejecting the peace offer] do not exonerate the administration from all blame. The administration is to blame, not for rejecting the Hanoi offer, but simply for creating the public climate in which so much nonsense is talked. Unless very high authorities are also very good liars, the whole prevailing notion of the official American attitude toward negotiation about Vietnam is almost completely false and misleading. The truth is that the president made his original offer of 'unconditional' negotiations, and has since repeated that offer, for the main purpose of disarming the domestic and foreign critics of his Vietnamese policy."

After a brief discussion about the meaning of 'unconditional' talks - the U.S. would continue to bomb North Vietnam while negotiating - the columnist returned to the theme of the Administration's "misleading" public stance on peace talks. Quoting a recent speech by Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson about the "mistake" of the Korean War negotiations, Alsop concluded:

"The fact remains that Gen. Johnson's speech is almost the only forthright word that has been officially said. All sorts of wrong interpretations of the American attitude have been accepted without rebuttal, and have even, on occasion, been sedulously fostered. This, it must be said, is a dangerous thing to have done."
Alsop's illuminating analysis, revealing the gulf between the Administration's private and public views on peace offers, could not have been helpful to a Government which was intent on fostering the false impressions that Alsop both exposed and fulminated against.

Uncertain about whether the Administration was truly as interested in peace talks as its public rhetoric claimed, press reports focussed again on the growing scale of the war and increasing casualties. Some reports pondered where the war was leading and how it could be stopped, reporting that South Vietnamese refugees "now total a million." Supporters of the U.S. effort in Vietnam such as the Daily Telegraph, noted the destruction caused by a war now "in an intermediate phase of maximum horror" and then focussed on the difficulties caused by the Administration's attitude to information on this destructive war:

"President JOHNSON keeps his own counsel so closely that it is hard to guage the substance of reports that he ignored earlier feelers from the Vietnam Communists. However that may be, he should not ignore the existence of a good deal of doubt abroad about the American conduct of the war which is essentially a Western confrontation of China. America's effort deserves support which need not be uncritical and cannot be wholehearted unless she takes her allies more fully into her confidence." 214

The confusion and concern that could be engendered by top Administration officials' statements on U.S. war aims was again demonstrated at the end of November, when McNamara visited South Vietnam on another fact-finding mission. Press reports at this time reflected the
increased North Vietnamese commitment, the rising intensity of the fighting, and the corresponding rise in U.S. casualties which were now heavier than the average weekly losses in the Korean War. A Times editorial noted that the war was still expanding, that the U.S. was "slowly" establishing "an ascendancy", that "political objectives" still required "clarification" and that: "Negotiation - not victory - remains the American objective." However, although The Times was certain about American objectives, it was clearly uneasy about a contradictory statement on U.S. objectives which McNamara made in Saigon. The Times editorial analysed McNamara's declaration that it was necessary to "destroy the insurgency movement" to preserve South Vietnam's independence, and concluded that this meant "total surrender by the guerillas...and victory for the Americans." Fortunately McNamara had also stated at the same time that the U.S. had no plans to incorporate South Vietnam into the "western alliance or to maintain bases in the country" and The Times was thus reassured that U.S. goals in the war - "political definitions" - remained at a "possible and surely negotiable level."

However, the 'negotiability' of U.S. war goals was clearly a proposition that the Administration did not expect to test in the very near future, for McNamara returned from his Saigon visit admitting that this would not, after all, be a short war. A New York Herald Tribune editorial, stating that the Administration still desired a
"negotiated settlement...honorable to both sides", placed the blame for the lack of negotiations on the North Vietnamese and expected that negotiations would begin only as a result of "more effective and more persuasive military results than we have achieved so far", namely further escalation and air strikes that McNamara and the President were assumed to be preparing. This editorial firmly supported the Administration's propaganda on the war and negotiations and thus its opening paragraphs on the Administration's latest public turnaround were all the more noteworthy because no criticism was intended:

"Defense Secretary McNamara has returned from his latest visit to Saigon with word that it's going to be long war. That contrasts sharply with his previous estimates that it would be a short one. Something has obviously gone awry. Increased American ground and air intervention in South Vietnam has prevented the war there from being lost to the Communists; but air strikes against North Vietnam have failed in their dual purpose of driving Ho Chi Minh to the negotiating table and of halting the flow of his troops southward."

The Guardian too decided that the war would not soon end, but it drew this conclusion from McNamara's optimism after his Saigon visit, which, on past experience, the Guardian took to be an indication of imminent U.S. increases in troops and weapons. On 3 December in an editorial captioned, "The bottomless pit in Vietnam", the Guardian pointedly recalled the Administration's optimistic statements on the conflict in 1963 and later - often after a McNamara visit to South Vietnam - juxtaposing past predictions with the current reality:
"By the end of this month "'the major part of the United States military task'" in South Vietnam was due to be "'completed'"; at least, that is what the White House said on Mr McNamara's return from a visit to Saigon in September 1963. Not long afterwards, he announced the imminent withdrawal of the first thousand of the 16,000 American "'advisers'" (as they were then called). But he has made several visits since, and the 16,000 have not come home. Instead they have multiplied tenfold, and are still no nearer success in their "'military task.'" Meanwhile, however, the country is being bombed, burned and blasted to ruins. A million Vietnamese are homeless, and uncounted thousands have lost their lives in those two years."

Another of McNamara's statements in South Vietnam was also dissected in this Guardian editorial:

"I have been surprised by the intensity and the scale of the attacks by the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese forces in recent weeks," Mr McNamara said in Saigon. He had no right to be. The confession is a fresh little piece of evidence that, as his critics have warned him all along, he does not seem to understand what the war is about. If they are right, it is no wonder that his policies have always gone wrong. But the longer he persists in them, the harder it is for those critics (or anybody else) to suggest alternative policies."

The editorial delineated precisely the vicious circle which was now U.S. policy: unable to allow the Vietnamese to solve their own problems because this would seem "too much like unconditional surrender...and they now seem so committed that they would rather see Hanoi in ruins first" and even if the U.S. won "they would still presumably be imprisoned in the desert they had created", so "how, on their terms, could they ever leave?" Nevertheless, the Guardian still hoped, against all its own analysis and logic, that the Geneva Agreements could be revived and form the basis for a peaceful settlement. And this was the
solution that the editorial urged the Prime Minister to press upon President Johnson during his visit to Washington in mid-December.  

The Sunday Times Washington correspondent also noted that the Vietnam dilemma facing the Administration was "now more closely resembling a set of antlers than just one pair of horns" and at a time when U.S. public opinion had just been "badly jolted" by recent U.S. casualties, although the public still supported the war. The correspondent listed the issues Johnson was considering, among which were several propaganda problems which related as much to external opinion as to U.S. domestic opinion:

...How to convince the public that a pause in the bombing might only grant the enemy a priceless military advantage. How to head off pressure from the United States Right-wing to increase bombing. How to quiet public fears that the war is developing a life of its own, overwhelming the power of human decision among leaders of both sides. How to soothe the moral disquiet latent even among many supporting the war. How to counter the hypothesis that escalation lessens rather than heightens chances of negotiation.

While not attempting to supply answers to these problems, the article outlined the President's "central courses":

"...the commitment of however many troops seem needed, continuation of bombing, barring assurance of abated action on the other side in exchange for a pause, constant probing for signs of willingness to negotiate, and preparation of opinion for a long, hard war."

Also, according to this article the Administration was now relying primarily on one main propaganda tenet to
justify its commitment in Vietnam: "More and more the
basic Government theme is the assertion that aggression
must always be stopped on its first appearance, that
mistakes of the thirties must not be repeated." Thus it
appears that as the war grew more complex, killing more
people, devastating greater areas of South and North
Vietnam and requiring ever more U.S. troops, the
Administration at this point tended to concentrate its
propaganda in a simplistic historical analogy. Although in
general a simple propaganda message, which can be easily
remembered by an audience, is preferable to multiple
messages, which might even be mutually contradictory (as
the Administration's often were), to place such emphasis
on this particular analogy was folly in terms of the
Administration's propaganda effort. For this analogy could
be refuted with any number of arguments, not least the
argument that under the Geneva Agreements Vietnam was one
country divided into two zones, and that far from
repelling 'external aggression' the United States was
intervening in a civil war.

At this juncture, against this background of press
speculation on the latest Administration policy review;
the expectation of further escalation, engendering press
reports suggesting required U.S. troop numbers ranging
from 300,000 up to 400,000; and rising pressure in the
U.S. for another bombing pause, a remarkable series of
articles by veteran British journalist James Cameron was
published simultaneously in the Evening Standard and The
New York Times. Cameron became the first western correspondent allowed to visit North Vietnam for some years, and he compressed his experiences into five articles which created a tremendous impact when they were published. Cameron stayed in Hanoi, then journeyed into the countryside "'fighting areas'" and finally had an interview with North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong at which President Ho Chi Minh made a brief appearance. Two important aspects of Cameron's visit were that he travelled under his own auspices, and that while he obviously disagreed with the U.S. involvement in the conflict, particularly with the bombing of North Vietnam, he was known to be a journalist who recorded accurately what he saw and heard. Also he had considerable experience of reporting South East Asian affairs. Thus Cameron's articles could not easily be dismissed as the outpourings of a fellow traveller of the North Vietnamese, or of a naive and gullible writer with no understanding of developments – although such a dismissal was attempted by the American magazine *Time*. In view of what he wrote and the ensuing controversy, these were necessary credentials for Cameron to possess. Indeed, the publication of the first of Cameron's reports on 7 December 1965 was accompanied by an *Evening Standard* disclaimer pointing out that Cameron had a "deservedly high reputation as a foreign correspondent. But his views are not necessarily those of the Evening Standard."
Cameron's most important conclusions concerned the North Vietnamese attitude to negotiations and the Geneva Agreements, the effects of U.S. bombing on North Vietnam, and North Vietnam's war aims, as delineated by Pham Van Dong. In addition Cameron also interviewed a North Vietnamese army officer who liaised with the National Liberation Front in the South.

In his first article Cameron set out his own view of the war succinctly:

"What is taking place in Vietnam, both South and North, is an offence to international decency, both disgusting and absurd, and one of its chief wrongs is that it is corrupting both the assailants and victims alike."  

Moving on to negotiations and the Geneva Agreements Cameron then wrote:

"However, what is quite clear in this lunar landscape of North Vietnam is that the people have a totally unshakeable determination to win the war, on their terms. Not to make an end to it, or find a way out of it, or 'conclude an agreement' about it. They have the extraordinary and rather impressive nerve to insist upon winning it.

Victory, however, has a strict definition, which is the implementation of the Geneva Agreement of 1954, which requires a Vietnam united under popular elections, and the elimination of all foreign troops from both South and North. To Hanoi, winning the war does not mean the crushing or destruction of U.S. forces; it means their departure. This they will achieve, they say, if it takes forever."  

While acknowledging that the North Vietnamese attitude to victory was "militarily illogical", Cameron also noted that "the mood is extremely pervasive." And he pointed out that for North Vietnam the negotiations "were concluded in 1954" and that now mention of
negotiations for the North Vietnamese " merely mean some devious strategem to get the U.S. off the hook, to rescue her from a cruel and intolerable situation."

On the effects of U.S. bombing in North Vietnam, Cameron's reports confirmed what the Administration in fact already knew: that the bombing was affecting neither North Vietnamese morale, nor its capacity to continue the war. Cameron also analysed the benefits that had accrued to the North Vietnamese Government:

"One thing is sure, if the bombing of North Vietnam is designed to terrorise the people into submission or to crush their economy into ruin, its effect on both counts is precisely the reverse...  
So far from terrorising the people, the bombings have stimulated and consolidated them. By the nature of the attacks so far, civilian casualties have not been very great, but they have been great enough to provide the Government of the Vietnam Republic with the most totally unchallengeable propaganda they could ever have dreamed of. A nation of peasants and manual workers who might have felt restive or dissatisfied under the stress of totalitarian conditions have been obliged to forget their differences in the common sense of resistance and self-defence. From the moment the United States dropped its first bomb on the North of Vietnam, she welded the nation together unshakeably. Every bomb since has been a bonus for Ho Chi Minh."

The only comfort that the Administration could draw from this account lay in Cameron's confirmation that North Vietnamese civilian casualties had been limited, and his observation elsewhere in the article that he had seen only one bombed hospital during his visit. Cameron also noted that North Vietnam's economy could not be wrecked by the bombing and that the "peasant agrarian society" had been, and still was, "immensely resilient":
"Every single industrial enterprise in the country could be ruined - and it would directly affect about five per cent of the working population. Vietnam is not Detroit, nor even Washington or London. Its people can survive the inconveniences of destruction, dismay and death. They have learned how, over 25 years."239

Cameron's final article covered his interview with North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, in which the latter stated North Vietnam's war aims in simple, and at the same time, emotive, terms:

"'We're not trying to vanquish the United States. There seems to be some preposterous belief, in America that we are threatening them - a poverty stricken little country like Vietnam threatening the most powerful nation on earth! We are trying to get rid of them. They're on our soil, and we don't want them there. Let them go away and the war is over.'"239

Pham Van Dong reiterated these aims and also emphasised the importance of the Geneva Agreements, driving home the point with a reference to former British involvement in the Geneva Conference:

"'I wish you could understand how simple our demands are... We don't want thousands of American corpses or American prisoners. We want them to go away. We want the acceptance of the legal agreement - which remember your Government not only signed, but initiated. It was a British Prime Minister who presided over our independence.'"240

However the reference to British involvement in 1954 was no indication of a desire for similar involvement now, for on the question of whether "any nation group of nations" was considered "honest enough to initiate some sort of conference", Pham Van Dong ruled out any form of British mediation:

"'If you mean your own [Government], I am afraid no. Let me go no further than to say that the British Government's attitude is now so
clearly a permanent reflection of Washington’s that it can have no standing as a mediator whatsoever. Any nation of goodwill that wants to contribute to a settlement must first condemn U.S. aggression and respect the Vietnamese people’s inalienable rights. There isn’t any half-way.”

Pham Van Dong’s statement thus confirmed the fears of some observers that British support for the U.S. vitiated its ability to mediate the conflict, despite Britain’s formal duties in its role as co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference. His clear and uncompromising insistence on returning to the provisions of the Geneva Agreements was also accompanied by a firmly expressed belief that North Vietnam would win the war, and the opinion that U.S. soldiers were "unexpectedly easier to fight" than the French soldiers during the colonial war, implying that the difference in fighting quality was due to a lack of desire to fight this war on the part of the U.S. troops. This view had also been expressed at greater length and in more detail in Cameron’s earlier article on his interview with the North Vietnamese Army Liaison officer.

In view of Cameron’s own strongly expressed opinions on the war and what he reported, about North Vietnam’s resolve, its belief that it would win the war, its stance on negotiations, and the apparently gratuitous insult to U.S. troops, it was not surprising that these articles created such an impact. And the nature of the articles elicited strong reactions from the media, tending either to support Cameron’s conclusions in general, or to detract from them. The American press was first to react, simply
because Cameron's articles were published in America a day or two ahead of publication in Britain.

In a round-up editorial captioned, "Eyewitness in Hanoi", Cameron's co-publisher, The New York Times, stated that Cameron's reports explained the failure of the bombing programme to achieve its aims of reducing North Vietnamese aid to the Vietcong and forcing North Vietnam to negotiate. The editorial also pointed out that the effect of the bombing in welding North Vietnam together was what had happened in Britain during the Second World War. The issue on which The New York Times dissented from Cameron's presentation was that of achieving a settlement. Although North Vietnam's position was quite clear, The New York Times was puzzled firstly by North Vietnam's equating winning the war with a return to the Geneva Agreements and withdrawal of U.S. troops, and secondly by its continued rejection of U.S. offers to negotiate an end to the war. For as The New York Times pointed out, Johnson had already agreed to return to the Geneva Accords and withdraw U.S. troops, yet the North Vietnamese called "'unconditional negotiations'" a "trick". The only partial solution that the editorial could provide to this conundrum was to suggest that another bombing pause might help to achieve negotiations, whereas escalation would "only prolong the war."

In fact, as Cameron's articles showed, North Vietnam's position was entirely consistent with the Geneva Agreements and therefore its attitude to the offer of
further negotiations was logical as well as strictly correct. It was the Administration's interpretation of the Geneva Agreements which was distorted, encompassing its goal of an independent, noncommunist South Vietnam — and it was equally logical in these circumstances for the Administration to desire further negotiations which would effectively annul the 1954 Accords. North Vietnam realised this, but *The New York Times* apparently thought that the Administration's interpretation of the Geneva Agreements was correct, and also that it did not differ from North Vietnam's interpretation.

However, while *The New York Times* generally agreed with Cameron's analysis, the *Evening Standard's* round-up editorial displayed more scepticism. For, while noting that for the Administration Cameron's reports "cannot be encouraging", the editorial then suggested that North Vietnam's view that the U.S. would "eventually" leave was based on a mistaken overestimation of public opposition to the war, and an underestimation of the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam and the possibility of increasing that commitment.  

An *Evening Standard* correspondent, writing from New York, reported the split reactions of the popular U.S. news magazines *Newsweek* and *Time*. Both devoted considerable space to Cameron's articles, but whereas *Newsweek* agreed with his conclusions and his description of the war as an "offence to international decency", *Time's* diatribe described Cameron as a "'conduit for North
Vietnamese propaganda" and his articles as "full of personal prejudices — all anti-United States and pro-Hanoi." Undoubtedly Cameron had relayed North Vietnamese propaganda from his interviews with North Vietnamese figures, just as all journalists relayed U.S. propaganda from Administration officials' press conferences and briefings. But the point was that this was the first time for some years that any Western journalist had been able to talk to such high-ranking North Vietnamese officials and Cameron had reported his conversations in a straightforward manner with no added personal comments. In fact this unembellished account should have been far more useful to U.S. officials, particularly intelligence specialists and propagandists.

Cameron then appeared on U.S. television with other correspondents in a CBS programme which was devoted to taking stock of the end-of-year situation in Vietnam. The Evening Standard's report focussed on Cameron's part in the programme, devoted to answering questions about his trip to North Vietnam, in which Cameron commented that he did not think that the North Vietnamese would now regard the halting of the bombing as sufficient to enable negotiations to start, and reiterated his observations about their confidence that they would win the war.

In Britain the South Vietnamese Embassy also entered the affray and dispatched a letter to the Evening Standard, "so that your readers may have the opportunity to form an unbiased opinion of the events...in
Vietnam. The Embassy's letter was published on 21 December and it reproduced the standard South Vietnamese/U.S. line on North Vietnamese "infiltration and subversive aggression", distorted the International Control Commission's report of 1962 by quoting only one part of it, and presented a biased view of events immediately after the Geneva Conference.

Unfortunately for the Administration, the argument over Cameron's articles was not the only controversy at this time. On 17 December, after a report in a U.S. newspaper that the U.S. had rejected another peace move, the State Department announced that a peace feeler was currently being explored by Amintore Fanfani, President of the UN General Assembly, and released the texts of letters on this matter between Fanfani and Secretary of State Rusk, dated 20 November and 4 December respectively. Rusk's letter by no means enthused over Fanfani's message on North Vietnam's terms to begin negotiations, but he suggested that Fanfani's sources might contact Hanoi again and Fanfani himself could discuss the issues further with UN Ambassador Goldberg. At the same time the State Department was reported to have "expressed scepticism about the sincerity of a communist peace feeler" and White House Press Secretary Bill Moyers supplied the now standard official comment that there were no indications that North Vietnam was ready for unconditional discussions.
On 18 December Hanoi denied having made any peace move, and the recriminations began. The New York Times reported that some UN diplomats, including some from friendly countries, blamed the U.S. for Hanoi's denial because since Hanoi's original peace feeler in November the U.S. had escalated the war and bombed a power station in the Haiphong area on 15 December. Also the U.S. was criticised for publishing the letters on Hanoi's peace feeler, which, it was pointed out, would probably place Hanoi in a difficult position vis-a-vis China. The Guardian published two reports on this issue, as well the texts of the Fanfani-Rusk letters and Hanoi's denial. The shorter of these reports noted that the effect of the publicity would "put the whole matter into temporary cold storage"; that Rusk's reply to Fanfani "indicated that Washington was less than enthusiastic about the prospects for peace which the latest approach opened up"; and that U.S. officials doubted that Hanoi would have used two "untested contacts" such as the visiting Italian professors to convey a serious peace offer. Another considerably longer Guardian report delved into the complex details of this affair, and concluded that now "an even larger number" of UN diplomats questioned "the good faith of the US in seeking negotiations." This conclusion was based on the belief held at the UN that the peace feeler from Hanoi was genuine and that President Johnson knew that "a bombing of Hanoi or Haiphong would automatically close the door to this approach." The report then continued:
"Nevertheless, only hours after the unenthusiastic and ambiguous reply of Mr Dean Rusk, the US Secretary of State, had been delivered to Hanoi, the bombing of an electricity power station only 15 miles from Haiphong was authorised. It is generally believed here [at the UN], especially by people closely involved in the recent exchanges, that it is this bombing rather than the publication of the story of the Hanoi approach which has prompted Hanoi's bitter denials of peace feelers."  

The damage to the Administration's image was further compounded in this report by the additional information that this latest debacle had prompted UN diplomats to recall previous peace feelers that had been brushed off by the Administration - which the report covered in some detail. But not all reports castigated the Administration. For instance a Times report took a more favourable view of the Administration's actions in this affair as its headline demonstrated: "U.S. Doubts Hanoi's Good Faith In Search For Peace".

However the fact remained that soon after the November revelations of rejected peace feelers, the Administration had once more become embroiled in arguments on the very important issue of negotiations, and had acted in a manner which required an evaluation and judgement of its stance on this issue. And to some observers and diplomats its actions again cast doubt on, and undermined, its credibility.

Press reporting during the remainder of December focussed on the forthcoming Christmas cease-fire, which was first mooted as a 12-hour truce by the Vietcong, reported on 8 December and finally agreed to by the
Administration on 22 December and extended to 30 hours for
U.S. and South Vietnamese troops. President Johnson was
also reported to have finally ruled out the bombing of
Hanoi and Haiphong, in which decision The Times detected
Prime Minister Harold Wilson's influence:

"The United States has depended heavily upon
British moral support for its war in Vietnam,
and the Prime Minister's refusal to condone the
bombing of North Vietnam cities must have
strengthened the President's revulsion from
advice to reduce North Vietnam to the stone
age."[262]

The Christmas cease-fire pressure was welcomed in
the press, but pressure was also mounting for another
bombing pause and on this issue some observers displayed
considerable scepticism on the reasons for a possible
pause:

"There are many reasons for the pressure [for
a pause], but it is likely to be effective only
because of President Johnson's concern for his
negotiating position. If he is persuaded that a
pause is necessary to regain international faith
in his protestations of peace, the bombing could
stop perhaps for about a month."[263]

All bombing was halted for the period of the
temporary truce, but after ground and air action had
resumed in South Vietnam, bombing strikes on North Vietnam
were still suspended. The Administration initially refused
to confirm that this suspension of attacks was in fact a
deliberate bombing pause and was criticised again for its
secrecy on its Vietnam policies. The Times tartly
observed:

"A lesson could at least be learnt from the
pause in May, which was not announced and was
over before most people knew that it had begun.
If President Johnson does have a decent respect
for the opinions of mankind, it should require
him to declare the causes of his present action."
At least he could persuade much of the world, to use his own words, that he is looking for peace and is not just merely available for it. The belief here is that little would be lost militarily even should Hanoi choose to continue the fight.\textsuperscript{264}

The overall atmosphere was gloomy, with some correspondents predicting that the bombing suspension would not last much longer, while others declined even to hazard a guess.\textsuperscript{265} U.S. officials maintained a strict silence or preferred not to comment, although a "well-informed official American source" did tell the Guardian's Washington correspondent that "no single initiative for peace has come from Hanoi in the past five years."\textsuperscript{266} This unnamed official then stated that Hanoi's third point of its Four Points - relating to settling South Vietnam's affairs on the basis of the NLF's programme - was the cause of this war and unacceptable to the American people.\textsuperscript{267} This exposition prompted the Guardian correspondent to point out a vital distinction - or sleight-of-hand - which the Administration skated over in its propaganda:

"In this presentation of their case, however, these official US sources appear to blur the picture by inviting us to confuse the North Vietnamese negotiating position - the demand contained in their four points - with their readiness or otherwise to take part in negotiations. Hanoi's conditions for coming to a negotiation have been confusing. US officials do not claim to know them with any certainty. Hanoi's reported private assurances have looked more favourable than their public statements."\textsuperscript{268}

In fact Hanoi's actions regarding negotiations were the complete opposite of the Administration's, for the
latter publicly welcomed negotiations but its private messages were often much less favourable.

As part of their propaganda effort the Administration now published a list of 14 points, representing a compilation of various previous statements of its position on peace and negotiations.\textsuperscript{269} Despite the Administration's clear effort to improve its image, this did not lead U.S. officials to welcome the Vietcong's offer of a Tet holiday truce: the \textit{Guardian} noted that the offer was received with "extreme coldness".\textsuperscript{270}

On 29 December the confusion cleared slightly. The \textit{New York Times} reported that "Administration sources" (the President and his staff were maintaining silence in Texas) had "revealed" that the U.S. had indicated to Hanoi that the bombing pause was in fact a peace feeler, an opportunity for Hanoi to "show its interest in negotiations".\textsuperscript{271} The following day speculation increased that the Administration was undertaking another peace offensive, as correspondents noted the sudden arrival of U.S. Ambassadors Harriman and Goldberg in Warsaw and Rome respectively (Goldberg saw the Pope), and that Harriman was travelling with a large party including specialist advisers. Vice-President Humphrey was scheduled to tour Asian capitals, visits which could be used as part of this diplomatic campaign. The forthcoming visit to Hanoi by a top-Soviet official, Aleksandr Shelepin, was also the subject of both Washington officials' and press attention, and was mixed into press speculation on possible peace
moves. Even at this early stage, when the Administration still refused to confirm that this was another peace initiative, President Johnson was firmly identified with these diplomatic moves and with any ulterior motives and future consequences:

"The entire venture bears the unmistakable stamp of Johnsonian diplomacy. The President is determined that his efforts to "explore every possibility" will not go unnoticed. Should these efforts come to nothing, and should the President decide to increase the tempo of the war, he will want to be able to claim that he tried everything that could be tried but could not bring the North Vietnamese to negotiate." 273

Other press reports too noted the Administration's need to reassure world opinion that all avenues to peace had been explored before escalating the war, and this requirement caused the Guardian to ponder whether the entire "dramatic operation" was not in response to any move from Hanoi, and rather than aiming for negotiations was primarily devoted to achieving a "better image for the United States". 274

On 31 December press reports quoted the statement by White House Press Secretary Bill Moyers that the current diplomatic activity was indeed a peace initiative, designed to "state and restate, to affirm and reaffirm, to clarify and reclarify our position on Vietnam as articulated in the President's Baltimore speech in April." 275 However Moyers refused to connect the diplomatic moves with the bombing pause - on the grounds that he didn't want to "unjustifiably" raise hopes. 276

From these reports it was also clear that the scope of the
diplomatic moves had widened, in terms of personnel - McGeorge Bundy had already been dispatched to Ottawa and other envoys were to be sent - and that it was being conducted both publicly and secretly. In addition it was reported that President Johnson briefed leaders who had recently visited Washington, including Prime Minister Wilson. The Guardian's Washington correspondent had been concerned to discover the genesis of these peace moves, whether they were a response or simply a U.S. initiative "for political reasons of their own", and reported a somewhat vague explanation:

"My understanding is that the truth lies about half way between these alternatives - that some information was received in Washington [sic] - probably on Monday evening - which fell far short of a formal suggestion by Hanoi that the two sides should explore the basis for negotiations, but which did, nevertheless, appear to the Administration here to hold out sufficient hope to make Mr Harriman's mission and the other steps worthwhile."

Up to a point the Guardian explanation was correct, but the version of events gleaned and disseminated by the correspondent was more simplified and concrete than the reality. According to William Bundy the Hungarians had made what he termed "funny approaches" to the Administration earlier in December, which he states the Administration did not believe were authorised; then Secretary of State Rusk had later seen Hungarian charge d'Affaires Radvanyi and pointed to the bombing pause; then the President decided to order a full-scale pause and accompanying diplomatic offensive. This version is basically corroborated by Radvanyi's own account -
although he sets the approaches at an earlier date - and the "funny approaches" Bundy mentioned was a message from Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Peter to the effect that "a few weeks' pause in the bombing would bring about negotiations"; and when Rusk later saw Radvanyi he delivered a message on the pause to be sent to Peter.\textsuperscript{279}

It seems that Peter's original proposal, coupled with a suggestion from Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin that a bombing pause should be tried and the USSR would endeavour to help - hence the interest in Shelepin's visit to Hanoi - apparently persuaded Rusk and possibly the President that a bombing pause would be useful.\textsuperscript{280} And if this bombing pause was to be official then it was to be accompanied by diplomatic moves, although previous scenarios had not envisaged such a noisy and high-profile campaign as the current operation was already becoming.\textsuperscript{281}

This episode well illustrates the tortuous channels and shadowy nature of many of the peace feelers during the war. And the Administration was correct in its original assumption that the Hungarian approaches were unauthorised: Radvanyi states that not only were they unauthorised by Hanoi, but Peter had "acted against their wishes", for Hanoi had expressly told Peter that this was not the time for negotiations.\textsuperscript{282}

Another point about the diplomatic offensive which the \textit{Guardian} mentioned was that the sudden decision to launch this initiative had provoked "a certain amount of criticism here that so little preparation was undertaken
that the success of the whole exercise may have been seriously jeopardised. Indeed the whole exercise already engendered differing press reactions and whereas the Financial Times discerned hope in the "mere fact that someone is now talking", a Guardian editorial took a longer perspective, noting that there was "little evidence yet that anyone of them [the concerned parties] has abandoned enough of its preconceptions to make a compromise likely." And this editorial further pointed out that where in previous years "peace makers...could concentrate on getting the United States "'off the hook'", now "President Johnson has committed his country's reputation utterly; being unhooked would now mean being defeated, and that, to most Americans, is as unthinkable as ever." In the light of the Pentagon Papers and subsequent escalation, the Guardian's editorial was a more accurate reading of events.

D. British Government Reaction and Opinion

During the period from August to December 1965, the British Government continued its policy of publicly supporting U.S. actions in Vietnam, while calling for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. However by mid-December it had become apparent that the British Government's policy was in fact vitiating its own ability to promote a settlement. For in supporting the U.S. so firmly, in the hope of wielding some sort of influence on U.S. policy, the British Government had rendered itself unacceptable to North Vietnam.
To the North Vietnamese, by December 1965 the British Government was too closely aligned to the U.S. to be able to act as a mediator. In diplomatic terms this meant that the British Government could act neither formally, in its role as co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference, nor informally as one of the many nations which desired an end to the hostilities, with any hope of success. Also, according to North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, speaking in December 1965, any country desiring to mediate would first have to denounce U.S. aggression. But, the British Government's policy was based on the assumption that public criticism - let alone denunciation - of U.S. actions would immediately diminish any influence that it could exert on U.S. policy, an eventuality it desired to avoid. There seemed little chance therefore that the British Government would ever be in a position to satisfy the North Vietnamese requirement, and certainly no chance that it would do so simply in order to be able to act as a mediator.

However, despite the desire not to criticise and thus offend the Administration, the Government's support for U.S. policy was not unlimited. The limit which the British Government set was that Hanoi and Haiphong should not be bombed; and if they were bombed then the Government would be forced to dissociate from this action. When Prime Minister Harold Wilson visited Washington in mid-December the Administration was reminded again of both the limit and the consequence of overstepping it.
The limitations that the Government's policy imposed on its mediation capability had the propensity to create more problems for the Government. For one of the ways that the Government had previously combated domestic criticism of its policy - frequently from within the Labour Party ranks - was to propose, and sometimes undertake, peace initiatives to achieve negotiations. If, therefore, the Government's capacity to credibly undertake such initiatives had been impaired because of its policy of support for the U.S., then not only would the Government have lost a weapon to combat criticism, but those groups who opposed the Government would actually have acquired another weapon to use against it. For it could now reasonably be said that as long as the British Government supported the U.S., the Government would never be able to help negotiate the settlement it publicly called for.

For most of this period, the saving grace for the British Government, as for the Administration, was that so often the North Vietnamese Government publicly rejected negotiation proposals. And until the revelations about the Rangoon peace initiative, followed soon after by the Fanfani debacle, the circumstances surrounding North Vietnam's rejections mattered little: it was the rejection that counted. So while the North Vietnamese and Vietcong (and Chinese) were perceived to oppose negotiations, the fact that the British Government was in the process of rendering itself unable to mediate the conflict was obscured. And thus in these circumstances British support
for U.S. policy was even endorsed in a *Guardian* editorial at the end of September. Commenting on Stewart and Wilson's speeches at the Labour Party conference at Blackpool, this editorial stated:

"But if the war is to end by negotiation, rather than by unilateral action, then Mr Stewart and Mr Wilson were right in arguing at the Labour Party conference yesterday that it is the Communist leaders who are at present holding the door closed.

For the British Government, therefore, there is little point in sacrificing, to the delusive prospect of mediation, more promising means of influencing the situation. If mediation becomes possible, many channels are open; Mr Wilson listed some of the attempts that have already been made and that could be revived. But a Downing Street denunciation of United States policy would not suddenly make the North Vietnamese Government or the National Liberation Front ready for negotiation; what it would do would be to cut Mr Wilson's line to Washington. And that would end the only possibility he has of mitigating the horror of the present crisis."

Also in September the British Government's policy on Vietnam was forced into the background by developments in Rhodesia, which had been simmering for some time and now assumed the proportions of a crisis as a Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence loomed on the horizon. Domestic and press attention not unnaturally focussed on this crisis, which was a serious and protracted one for the Government. And to the extent that domestic attention was focussed on Rhodesia, the Government had a slightly easier time over Vietnam.

Nevertheless Vietnam continued to occupy a certain amount of the Government's attention and it continued to render what assistance it could to the Administration. For
instance in late August the Government published a White Paper detailing rejected peace initiatives, and in mid-December it published a Blue Book setting out the Government's involvement in Indochina from 1945-1965.290

The Prime Minister's visit to Washington was only brief, lasting two days, during which he addressed the United Nations on the Rhodesia crisis. But in addition to discussing Rhodesia and other topical problems with the President, according to the Prime Minister, "Vietnam was high on our agenda".291 Vietnam was also still high on the Parliamentary Labour Party's agenda, and the Prime Minister was reminded sharply of this when he arrived in Washington, for he received a telegram from 68 Labour MPs demanding that he tell the President to stop the bombing of North Vietnam.292 This action had been sparked off by reports that the U.S. had bombed a power station only 14 or 15 miles from Haiphong. And as Wilson noted in his memoirs, the telegram was signed by Labour MPs across the party spectrum, not just left-wing MPs.293 About his talks with Johnson on the Vietnam conflict, Wilson wrote:

"I pressed the President hard, as I had in a number of Downing Street-White House exchanges, at least to suspend the bombing to test the sincerity of North Vietnamese hints that there might be a response on their side, possibly leading to negotiations. It was clear that his mind was not closed to this, and we discussed the modalities. At the same time I repeated that if US aircraft were to bomb Hanoi or Haiphong we should be forced to dissociate from that action. It was right that there should be no misunderstanding or subsequent recriminations between us."294
The visit generated some useful press comment for the Prime Minister, not least that he was credited by The Times with having helped to persuade Johnson to refrain from bombing Hanoi and Haiphong and also to declare a Christmas truce. With these factors in mind and given that the British Government was publicly so concerned that the conflict should be settled by negotiations and that Wilson had urged Johnson to try a bombing pause, it would be logical to assume that the late December U.S. diplomatic offensive would be enthusiastically supported by the Government. Thus the Guardian reported that the British and U.S. governments had been in "close touch over the situation in Vietnam and over moves to secure a truce to bring peace negotiations." It also transpired that the British Government had been informed beforehand about the Harriman and Goldberg visits and there was "close Anglo-American consultation over the attitude of the Soviet Union and over the special role of Mr Shelepin."

This all sounded encouraging so far, enhancing the Government's standing. However, the report then went on to discuss Whitehall's reactions and a somewhat different picture emerged. Whitehall was said to understand that the main purpose of the U.S. diplomatic missions was to clarify U.S. policy to Communist countries; that it was "too early to judge whether the chances of peace negotiations over the Vietnam conflict are improving"; and that "there was a somewhat sceptical feeling" because firstly North Vietnam was still not prepared to modify its
attitude on U.S. troop withdrawal, secondly North Vietnam was following "own inclinations" and not China's in fighting the war, and thirdly the motives of the Soviet Union in the conflict were still an unknown quantity.

Although these judgements may have been soundly based, this was hardly the time to air such views, considering the current delicate diplomatic situation, the fact that the British and U.S. governments were currently consulting on the Soviet role, and that Britain periodically addressed negotiation proposals to the Soviet Union as co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference. And airing these views publicly was no help to the British Government, for while the Government urged negotiations and pressed the U.S. President to halt the bombing in an effort to ascertain whether Hanoi was interested, the Government's own officials prejudged the outcome and publicly poured cold water on the putative diplomatic moves, as well as disparaging the Soviet Union, which was still generally thought to possess some influence over Hanoi. Whitehall's views in this case would be useful to Pentagon hawks and the U.S. Administration - when it was not engaged in a peace offensive - but they were a liability to a British Government which was endeavouring to support the U.S. without angering its critics too much.

As before, the U.S. Embassy in London continued to brief the Administration on sentiment about the war in Britain and in so doing the Embassy highlighted an important feature relating to the timing of meetings.
between the Prime Minister and the President and war developments. At the time of Wilson's visit to Washington a joint State/USIS telegram informed the Administration that there was currently strong criticism of U.S. policy in Vietnam, and by extension British Government support for that policy, and advanced a number of reasons for the current criticism:

"A. Underlying fear of many Brits that VN [Vietnam] may lead to Third world war. This fear nurtured [sic] by war's continued growth. It has been whipped up recently by apprehension that further [sic] and irreversible escalation imminent.

B. Belief that as PM [Prime Minister] sees President Johnson with war on threshold escalation it is high time for vigorous expressions criticism US policy in order to influence it."299

The Embassy also noted the "persistence of relatively small but well-organized and vociferous group left-wingers and pacifists who adept at exacerbating these fears and frustrations", and the "prediliction of press" to "play on popular fear themes...for all they are worth (in sales)."300 The Embassy concluded its analysis:

"4. In sum, fear, frustration and anti-Americanism are continuing, although not dominant factors which press and pacifists can quickly whip up whenever VN war escalates and/or PM sees President."301

Clearly the Embassy thought that the British press wrote about Vietnam mainly to increase sales figures. However the content and tone of most press articles indicates that those sections of the press which feared the consequences of the war, and highlighted its horrors,
did so for moral and political reasons, not for commercial advantage.

E. British Public Opinion

In the period from August to December, as compared with February to July, neither of the two main polling organisations recorded much data on British public opinion concerning the Vietnam war. Thus while a general trend can be observed, it is much more difficult in this period to assess whether public opinion was affected by specific U.S. actions, either military or diplomatic.

In August Gallup Poll asked its standard question about approval or disapproval of recent U.S. armed action in Vietnam and recorded that 27% approved; 38% disapproved; and 35% didn't know. Compared with July, this was a 7% drop in approval, a 4% drop in disapproval, and an 11% rise in the number of don't knows. This appeared to indicate that the public was either confused and/or indifferent to the war. If the public was confused then this might have been caused by the President's July speech, increasing the numbers of troops to be sent to Vietnam, but at the same time calling for negotiations. National Opinion Polls' only reference to Vietnam in its August poll, was a passing remark that the economy was of "more long-term to concern" to the Government than a "possible left-wing revolt over Vietnam or immigration policy".

In September Gallup Poll questioned its respondents on four issues, but omitted its standard question. Instead
respondents were asked whether they would approve or disapprove if the British Government sent British troops to fight with the South Vietnamese. A large majority, 69%, disapproved; 17% approved; and 14% did not know. Obviously a large majority declined any share of active involvement in the conflict, but in some ways this was a curious question to ask. Given that many of Gallup Poll's questions focussed on U.S. actions and involvement in Vietnam, it would have been more logical to ask whether British troops should fight alongside South Vietnamese and/or U.S. troops. The fact that the U.S. was Britain's ally in two World Wars and was still seen as a close ally, might possibly have affected the poll results.

Gallup Poll also ascertained the public's views on who was to blame for the lack of negotiations: the Communists, 21%; the Vietcong, 8%; the Chinese, 8%; the North Vietnamese, 7%; the Americans, 13%; the South Vietnamese, 1%; others, 1%; and 44% did not know. Unfortunately this is not a particularly useful set of figures. Firstly the category of "Communists" was too amorphous - there was no indication of which countries or groups either Gallup Poll or its respondents considered to be "communist". Secondly, whichever countries or groups were judged to be communist, Gallup Poll implicitly excluded the Vietcong, the Chinese and the North Vietnamese from this category by citing them separately, although they were most certainly communist. Had these countries been specifically identified as communist, or
even had the "Communists" category been differentiated, then the poll results might have been different, and they would in any case have had more meaning. The anomaly was pointed up by the fact that in another question Gallup Poll produced a category "Communists (Viet-Cong)". In addition the figures that Gallup Poll produced added up to 103%, instead of 100%, which would make future comparisons with this set of figures even more difficult. With these limitations in mind, the poll indicated that the "Communists" were judged the major culprits for the lack of negotiations, but that compared with the Vietcong, Chinese and North Vietnamese individually, the U.S. was clearly thought more culpable. The large percentage of don't knows could have indicated confusion, indifference, or ignorance, or a combination of all three.

On the issue of which side was winning the war, the South Vietnamese Government or the "Communists (Viet-Cong)", 43% judged that neither side was winning, which was a 4% increase over the June percentage; 17% thought that the "Communists (Viet-Cong)" were winning, registering a 2% drop compared with June; 11% thought that the "South Vietnamese Government and supporters" were winning, registering a 2% increase from June; and 29% didn't know, registering a 4% drop from June. Thus the belief that neither side was winning was now held by a little under 50% of respondents. However of the 28% of respondents who judged that one side or the other was winning, a greater proportion judged the Communists to be
ahead. These two sets of figures seemed to indicate that U.S. military technology was not thought to render the U.S. invincible. And it seems that optimistic Administration statements, echoed in some British newspapers, that the tide was turning in the war in favour of the U.S. and South Vietnamese, had either not yet been digested by the public, or were discounted.

Gallup Poll's last question in September asked whether the Americans would or would not be justified in using nuclear weapons if they could not make any progress in the war without using them. A vast majority of respondents, 81% thought they would not be justified in using them; 7% thought they would be justified; and 12% didn't know. Perhaps the surprising figures are that 7% of respondents either supported the Americans so strongly, or opposed the other side so bitterly ("Communists (Viet-Cong), and/or North Vietnamese, Chinese?) that nuclear weapons were perceived to be justifiable; and that 12% of respondents either had no opinion or were indifferent.

In answer to a question about the British Government's policy in Vietnam, National Opinion Polls recorded in September that 49% of respondents "neither approve or disapprove" of the Government's policy and NOP stated that this confirmed its earlier findings that "a large section of the electorate is not much concerned about Vietnam." Of those who did express an opinion, 33% approved of the Government's policy, while 18%
disapproved. NOP further recorded that a majority of those who disapproved wanted the Government to "play a more neutral role". Because NOP's figures were then broken down on a party political basis, it was apparent that this was a majority across the Conservative, Labour, Liberal political spectrum, although the Labour voters registered the highest percentage in favour of a more neutral role.

Gallup Poll returned to the issue of Vietnam in December with its standard question on recent U.S. armed action. Comparing the figures with August, this poll registered the same 27% approval; a 1% drop in disapproval, now registering 37%; and a 1% rise in the number of don't knows to a figure of 36%. There was thus virtually no change in opinion since August, with just over a third of respondents disapproving of U.S. armed action and much the same proportion having no opinion. It seems therefore that the U.S. build-up and escalation in fighting had not had much effect on public opinion since August. But on the other hand the fieldwork for this poll was completed between 25-30 November 1965, that is, before the U.S. bombed a power station close to Haiphong, which was a more spectacular act of escalation than in the preceding months. However, on the question of which side was winning the war, there was a considerable change from the August period: 36% thought neither side was winning, registering a 7% drop; 10% now thought the "Communists (Viet-Cong)" were winning, which was 7% drop; 14% thought the South Vietnamese Government and supporters
were winning, registering a 3% increase; but the number of
don't knows had increased to 40% from 29% in August. The
considerable fluctuation in the latter figure could well
have been due to the confusing nature of the war. Also a
steady trend seemed to be emerging indicating that of that
small proportion of respondents who judged that one or the
other side was winning, the South Vietnamese and
supporters were believed to be slowly gaining ground —
probably due to the huge U.S. buildup, while the drop in
the percentage of respondents believing that the
Communists were winning could well have been due to the
same factor.

In December National Opinion Poll varied its
September question "fractionally" and apparently recorded
an important change in opinion. Respondents were asked
whether they approved or disapproved of the "British
Government's support for American policy in Vietnam",
which in fact was a much more specific, even 'loaded'
question than September's more general formulation. In
answer, 36% approved - a 3% increase; 33% disapproved - a
12% increase; and 31% didn't know - an 18% decrease. As
NOP noted, there was a striking decrease in the number of
don't knows and a corresponding increase in the percentage
of respondents disapproving. The breakdown in party
political affiliation revealed the same results. And when
NOP polled disapprovers on its supplementary question on
whether the Government should play a more neutral role or
give the Americans more support, a decisive majority, 26%
(79% of the original 33%), wanted the Government to play a more neutral role and once again this figure held true for all three political parties. From these figures NOP concluded that: "There is no doubt that public hostility to the war in Vietnam has increased significantly during the last 3 months." But the September and December questions were considerably different, not merely "fractionally different", as NOP stated, and this could have affected the poll results. NOP's more general question on the British Government's policy did not highlight any particular aspect of this policy, and therefore respondents could as easily recall the Government's commitment to a peaceful settlement and peace initiatives, as the other side of this policy - support for the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. On the other hand December's question was directed specifically to the Government's support for U.S. policy. Therefore it could be possible that at this stage NOP's December poll may have tapped an anti-American sentiment, as well as an anti-war sentiment. Because the same questions were not asked each time and because of the specific variation it is difficult to attribute the increase in disapproval to one factor alone.

During the period from August to December, the "vociferous group of left-wingers and pacifists" as the U.S. Embassy in London termed them, continued their activities. Lord Brockway, chairman of the British Council for Peace in Vietnam visited Moscow in August and had
talks with the North Vietnamese Ambassador there. The North Vietnamese objected to Brockway's publicised version of the talks and the peace initiative failed, as it was probably bound to do, but the visit did underline the concern felt by some sections of the British public about Vietnam.

There were also two demonstrations against the war, the first in October and the second in November, which attracted considerable press attention. Both of these demonstrations were timed to coincide with U.S. 'parent' demonstrations (although the latter were much bigger). There were two days of non-stop protests organised over the weekend of 16-17 October, including a march to Grosvenor Square by 1,500 demonstrators where a letter of protest signed by the British Council for Peace in Vietnam was handed over to the U.S. Embassy, a protest rally at Trafalgar Square attended by the American singer and activist Joan Baez, and also a protest concert at the Royal Festival Hall. The demonstrations were promptly covered by the press – the Sunday Telegraph on 17 October reported on them – which noted the 78 arrests and the organising committees, the British Council for Peace in Vietnam, CND and the Committee of 100.

The second of these large protests took place during a week that had been designated International Vietnam Week, which was to culminate in demonstrations in Britain and the U.S. on the weekend of 27-28 November. The marches and demonstrations were well covered in the Sunday
newspapers. The *Sunday Telegraph* reported the protest by several thousand young people in London and similar protests in Liverpool and Manchester, while the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* covered the torchlight march in London. The *Times* report on 29 November focussed on the 11 arrests that took place in Manchester.

In addition, as noted in section D above, when U.S. military escalation appeared imminent, Labour Party MPs still exerted pressure on the Government, this time on the occasion of the Prime Minister's visit to Washington.

As discussed previously, during this period from August to December much of the Government, Parliament and press attention was focussed on Rhodesia. Even so the Vietnam conflict was still an important issue, but once the immediate crisis over Rhodesia had passed then it could be expected that Vietnam would again be a major focus of attention, involving the same close scrutiny of developments by all concerned.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5


8. Ibid, P79.

9. Ibid, loc cit. (Notation in original.)

10. Ibid, P87.


13. Ibid, loc cit.


15. Ibid, loc cit.


17. Ibid, P467. (Square brackets in original).

18. Ibid, loc cit. (Square bracket supplied).

19. Ibid, P466.
20. Ibid, P467.
22. Ibid, P466.
23. Ibid, P468.
24. Ibid, loc cit.
25. Ibid, loc cit.
27. Ibid, loc cit.


29. Ibid, loc cit.
30. Ibid, loc cit.
31. Ibid, P394.
32. Ibid, P393.
33. Ibid, P394.
34. Ibid, P395.


36. Ibid, loc cit.
37. Ibid, loc cit.
38. Ibid, P470.
39. Ibid, loc cit.
40. Ibid, loc cit.
41. Ibid, P471.
42. Ibid, loc cit.


44. Ibid, loc cit.
45. Ibid, loc cit.
46. Ibid, loc cit.
47. Ibid, loc cit.


49. Ibid, P234.

50. Ibid, P237.


52. Ibid, loc cit.

53. Ibid, loc cit.

54. Ibid, P18.

55. Ibid, loc cit.


62. Ibid, loc cit.


64. See for example *The Times*, 26 February 1965: "U.S. Turns Down Suggestion Of Negotiations".


66. Ibid, loc cit.


69. Ibid, P3.

70. Ibid, PP31 - 32.

71. Ibid, P33.
72. Ibid, loc cit.
73. Ibid, P35.
74. Ibid, loc cit.
76. See Section C.
77. See Newspapers for 16 - 18 November 1965; the Sevareid Article was published in November's Look Magazine on 15 November 1965.
80. William Bundy, Oral History Interview, (Tape 1), PP40 - 42; (Tape 3), P9.
82. Ibid, P466.
84. Johnson, The Vantage Point, PP237 - 238.
85. Ibid, P238.
86. The Negotiating Volumes Of The Pentagon Papers, P117 and Johnson, The Vantage Point, P239.
87. The Times, 1 August 1965: "Keeping The Roads To Peace Open".
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Observer, 1 August 1965: "Towards A Neutral Vietnam".
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. The Guardian, 5 August 1965: "Mr Johnson As A Man Of Peace".
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid, brackets in original.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid (date of Johnson press conference as cited; it should be 28 July).
120. Ibid.

121. Ibid.


124. The Times, 12 August 1965.

125. Ibid.

126. Ibid.

127. Ibid.

128. Ibid.

129. Ibid.


131. Ibid.


133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid.


137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid. (Capitals in original.)

140. See Observer, 22 August 1965; New York Herald Tribune, 25 August 1965: "Hanoi Denies Concessions In Its 4-Point Peace Plan".


142. Ibid.

143. Ibid.

145. Ibid.


147. Ibid.

148. Ibid.

149. Ibid.


151. Ibid.

152. Ibid.


154. Ibid.


156. Ibid.

157. Ibid.


159. *Financial Times*, 27 August 1965, see Note 153.


163. Ibid.

164. Ibid.


166. Ibid.

167. Ibid.

168. Ibid.
169. Ibid.

170. Ibid.

171. Ibid.


175. Ibid.


179. See Section E for a fuller discussion of these demonstrations.


185. The Guardian, 1 November 1965: "The Destruction Of De Duc".

186. Ibid.

187. See The New York Times, 16 November 1965: "Hanoi Offer In '64 To Discuss Peace Reflected By U.S."; also
U.S.I.S. bulletin, Tuesday, 16 November 1965: "U.S. Reiterates Readiness For Vietnam Talks".


190. Ibid.

191. Ibid.


193. Ibid.

194. Ibid.

195. Ibid.


197. Ibid.

198. Ibid, a reference to Chalmers M. Roberts' comments.


200. Ibid.

201. Ibid. (Italics supplied by *The New York Times*.)

202. Ibid.


204. Ibid.

205. Ibid.

206. Ibid.

207. Ibid.

208. Ibid.


211. Ibid, Alsop.

212. Ibid, Alsop.


214. Daily Telegraph, 23 November 1965: "Head-On In Vietnam".

215. See Evening Standard, 29 November 1965: "Vietnam Losses"; also Daily Express, opinion column, 30 November 1965: "They Will See It Through".

216. The Times, 30 November 1965: "Is Victory The Aim?".

217. Ibid.

218. Ibid.

219. New York Herald Tribune, 2 December 1965: "The Long War"; see also Note 213, Observer, article by Patrick O'Donovan.

220. Ibid.

221. The Guardian, 3 December 1965: "The Bottomless Pit In Vietnam".

222. Ibid.

223. Ibid.

224. Ibid.


226. Ibid.

227. Ibid.

228. Ibid.

229. See Note 221, The Guardian; and Sunday Times, 12 December 1965: "U.S. May Put 400,000 Men Into Vietnam".


232. **Evening Standard**, 7 December 1965: "Victory, If It Takes Forever!".  

233. Ibid.  

234. Ibid.  

235. Ibid.  

236. Ibid.  


238. Ibid.  


240. Ibid. (Bold type in original.)  

241. Ibid.  

242. Ibid.  

243. **Evening Standard**, 8 December 1965: "Day Two; A North Vietnamese Army Colonel Talking".  


245. Ibid.  

246. Ibid.  


248. **Evening Standard**, 14 December 1965: "Cameron's In Spotlight".  

249. **Evening Standard**, 16 December 1965: "'A Little Late' To Halt The Bombing - Cameron".  


251. Ibid.


255. Ibid.


262. *The Times*, 23 December 1965: "Christmas Cease - Fire For Vietnam Agreed; Mr. Wilson's Influence In American Decision".


265. See for example *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *Financial Times* on 29 December 1965.


267. Ibid.

268. Ibid.

269. Ibid. See also *The Times*, 29 December 1965: "America Sets Hanoi 14 Points For Negotiations".


281. Ibid, P18.


286. See Note 239. Pham Van Dong's Statement to journalist James Cameron, published in *Evening Standard*, 13 December 1945.

287. Ibid.


292. See The Guardian, 18 December 1965: "'Stop Bombing' Cable To Mr. Wilson From 68 Labour MPs".


294. Ibid, loc cit.


297. Ibid.

298. Ibid.

299. National Security File (NSF), Country File United Kingdom (305); Box 208; Volume VII, CABLES 10/65 - 1/66; Item No. 83; Incoming telegram to Department of States from London Embassy; reference No. 2786; dated and received 16 December 1965. (Square brackets added.)

300. Ibid. (Square brackets added.)

301. Ibid. (Square brackets added.)

302. See Gallup Polls for August, September and December 1965.


304. NB. Gallup Polls reproduced. Figures published in August but based on end of July field work.

305. See the Daily Worker, 15 and 16 October 1965 for details of planned marches; also Sunday Telegraph, 17 October 1965; The Times, The Guardian and Daily Telegraph on 18 October 1965.


307. The Times, 29 November 1965: "Eleven Arrested In Manchester".
By December 1965, after 10 months of almost continuous bombing of North Vietnam, large increases in the U.S. troop commitment, and steady escalation of the intensity of the fighting, the Administration was still no nearer to achieving its war objectives. On 3 December the Central Intelligence Agency had analysed the results of U.S. actions to date and predicted North Vietnam's future response to the continuing war:

"Present Communist policy is to continue to prosecute the war vigorously in the south... The Communists recognize that the U.S. reinforcements of 1965 signify a determination to avoid defeat. They expect more U.S. troops and probably anticipate that targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area will come under air attack. Nevertheless, they remain unwilling to damp down the conflict or move toward negotiation. They expect a long war, but they continue to believe that time is their ally and that their own staying power is superior."

Thus the Administration was left in no doubt by at least one of its sources of information and intelligence, that North Vietnam intended to continue the struggle come what may. But, just as in the previous year, despite this and other depressing estimates in early 1966, the Administration's response was to escalate the war. The most spectacular act of escalation involved the bombing of strategic targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong area in late June. As the British Prime Minister had earlier warned President Johnson, this was an action that the British
Government could not support, and the Government dissociated from this bombing. The limit set by the British Government had been crossed, and so for the first time America's major ally publicly opposed a U.S. action, creating something of a watershed in official British support for the Administration's policy in Vietnam. Given the escalatory logic of U.S. military action, it was unlikely to be the last time the British Government would be forced to dissociate.

A.) Administration Planning

The bombing pause that had been declared at the end of December 1965 continued until 31 January 1966. While the Administration's envoys toured the world, discussing the possibility of negotiations in various capitals, the efficacy of the bombing programme was once more under discussion by the President's advisers. According to the New York Times edition of The Pentagon Papers, in mid-January Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton drafted a memorandum which again highlighted the failure of the bombing programme to achieve its objectives of interdicting North Vietnamese supply routes and reducing North Vietnam's aid to the South, and noted that North Vietnam could still sustain the struggle. McNaughton then drafted a second memorandum - which the Pentagon Papers analyst stated complemented and modified his first memorandum - analysing the current developments and outlining possible results:

"The ARVN [South Vietnam Army] is tired, passive and accommodation-prone... The PAVN/VC [North Vietnam Army/Vietcong] are effectively
matching our deployments... The bombing of the North... may or may not be able effectively to interdict infiltration (partly because the PAVN/VC can simply refuse to do battle if supplies are short)... Pacification is stalled despite efforts and hopes. The GVN political infrastructure is moribund and weaker than the VC infrastructure among most of the rural population... South Vietnam is near the edge of serious inflation and economic chaos."

From this grim picture McNaughton moved on to consider why the U.S. was still involved in Vietnam:

"C. The present U.S. objective in Vietnam is to avoid humiliation. The reasons why we went into Vietnam to the present depth are varied; but they are now largely academic. Why we have not withdrawn from Vietnam is, by all odds, one reason: (1) to preserve our reputation as a guarantor, and thus to preserve our effectiveness in the rest of the world. We have not hung on (2) to save a friend, or (3) to deny the Communists the added acres and heads (because the dominoes don't fall for that reason in this case), or even (4) to prove that 'wars of national liberation' won't work (except as our reputation is involved). At each decision point we have gambled; at each point, to avoid the damage to our effectiveness of defaulting on our commitment, we have upped the ante. We have not defaulted, and the ante (and commitment) is now very high. It is important that we behave so as to protect our reputation. At the same time, since it is our reputation that is at stake, it is important that we do not construe our obligation to be more than do the countries whose opinions of us are our reputation."

Thus McNaughton dismissed most of the Administration's propaganda on the reasons for the U.S., commitment in Vietnam, focussing on one intangible, but to the U.S., vital, factor: the way in which other nations perceived the U.S., its world image. It should be noted however, that other advisers did not share McNaughton's views, for his colleague in the State Department, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs William Bundy,
still clung to a version of the domino theory as the underlying rationale for the U.S. commitment.  

Under the heading, "'We are in an escalating military stalemate'", McNaughton stated in his memorandum that there was "'an honest difference of judgement as to the success of the present military efforts in the South'" but his own analysis concluded: "'the best judgement is that, even with the Phase IIA deployments, we will be faced in early 1967 with a continued stalemate at a higher level of forces and casualties.'"  

Positing a revised commitment - or as McNaughton termed it "'the softest credible formulation of the U.S. commitment'" - to South Vietnam that precluded only a forcible North Vietnamese seizure of power, McNaughton outlined some results that would be less than a U.S. military victory, but which could still be acceptable:  

"b. A coalition government including Communists.  
c. A free decision by the South to succumb to the VC or to the North.  
d. A neutral (or even anti-U.S.) government in SVN.  
e. A live-and-let-live 'reversion to 1959.'  
Furthermore, we must recognize that even if we fail to [sic] in achieving this 'soft' formulation, we could over time come out with minimum damage:  
f. If the reason was GVN gross wrongheadedness or apathy.  
g. If victorious North Vietnam 'went Titoist.'  
h. If the Communist take-over was fuzzy and very slow.'"  

Despite this pessimistic analysis and the all-important conclusion that damage to the U.S. image could be minimised even if North Vietnam achieved victory, McNaughton's final recommendations followed the previous
pattern: increases in troops, in bombing, stronger support for the South Vietnamese Government and a greater pacification effort.° These surprising recommendations followed from McNaughton's fear that if the U.S. was known to have lowered its "'sights from victory to compromise'" then South Vietnam would come apart and North Vietnam would "'smell blood'". And McNaughton further concluded that the U.S. would have to be prepared to escalate the war if North Vietnam should "'miscalculate'" and interpret U.S. "'willingness to compromise'" as a sign of being "'on the run'".°

However, McNaughton's recommendations, far from facilitating a compromise solution, were a recipe for achieving what he himself had termed in his memorandum an "'escalating military stalemate'".

The Pentagon Papers analyst notes that these recommendations roughly agreed with those of the Saigon Embassy and U.S. military.' This was an interesting convergence because U.S. Ambassador Lodge held views on Vietnam that were diametrically opposed to McNaughton's: Lodge believed that the U.S. had a "'strong interest'" in Vietnam and that in order to avoid a Third World War the U.S. might "'have to decide how much it is worth to us to deny Viet-Nam to Hanoi and Peking - regardless of what the Vietnamese think'".°° Thus these two advisers arrived at the same recommendations by totally different routes and for quite different reasons, and forwarded the same proposals on the war to the decision-makers.
According to the *New York Times* summary of The *Pentagon Papers*, on 24 January Defense Secretary McNamara submitted to the President a revised version of his November memorandum on the bombing which "echoed much of his Assistant Secretary's pessimism."13

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were also concerned with the failure of the bombing campaign to achieve its objectives and they used this failure as an argument to bolster their case for bombing North Vietnam's petroleum, oil and lubricants - termed P.O.L. - stores in Hanoi and Haiphong. Since the autumn of 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had urged that the scope of the bombing be widened and changed into "'a program of strategic bombing aimed at all industrial and economic resources as well as at all interdiction targets.'"14 The Joint Chiefs had maintained, in a November memorandum to McNamara, that while there were "'constraints'" on the bombing "'only limited success in air operations in D.R.V./Laos'" could be achieved, and therefore what was needed "'is an immediate and sharply accelerated program which will leave no doubt that the U.S. intends to win and achieve a level of destruction that they will not be able to overcome.'"15 The effects of attacking North Vietnam's P.O.L., the Joint Chiefs stated, "'would be more damaging to the D.R.V. capability to move war-supporting resources within the country and along the infiltration routes to SVN than an attack against any other target system...The flow of supplies would be
greatly impeded...recuperability of the D.R.V. P.O.L.
system from the effects of an attack is very poor.'" 16
In January the U.S. Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC),
Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, sent the Joint Chiefs an even
more persuasive assessment of the effects of P.O.L.
attacks, stating that they would "'bring the enemy to the
conference table or cause the insurgency to wither from
lack of support.'" 17

Clearly the U.S. military expected great results from
P.O.L. attacks, results that had so far eluded the U.S.
despite huge increases in troops, weapons, and bombing.
However, not only was the Joint Chiefs' assessment of
P.O.L. attacks not shared by the Central Intelligence
Agency, but according to The Pentagon Papers the CIA had
also discounted the effects of virtually any type of
bombing, including strategic bombing:

"'The Chiefs did so [pressed for a strategic
bombing programme], it may be added, despite the
steady stream of memoranda from the intelligence
community consistently expressing skepticism
that bombing of any conceivable sort (that is,
any except bombing aimed primarily at the
destruction of North Vietnam's population) could
either persuade Hanoi to negotiate a settlement
on U.S./GVN terms or effectively limit Hanoi's
ability to infiltrate men and supplies into the
South.'" 18

On the effects of bombing P.O.L. the CIA had
estimated: "'It is unlikely that this loss would cripple
the Communist military operations in the South, though it
would certainly embarrass them.'" 19 Nevertheless McNamara
eventually accepted the recommendations to bomb P.O.L.
targets and submitted this proposal to Johnson in March. 20
But it was not until late May, "in spite of the near consensus among his top advisors on its desirability" that Johnson agreed to the proposal. The Pentagon Papers analyst suggests that the delay was occasioned by the severe political crisis in South Vietnam which erupted early in March and was not resolved until mid-June; and by a variety of international leaders' attempts at peace-making which had begun in February and continued until June, encompassing some 15 proposals for negotiations.

In late May the President also informed British Prime Minister Wilson of the proposed P.O.L. strikes and arranged a special, but ultimately unsuccessful, briefing for Wilson on the strikes in order to enlist the latter's support. Wilson thanked Johnson and then explained why he would be forced to dissociate; the main, interlinked, reasons being that the "'political disadvantages'" would outweigh the "'possible military benefits'"; that this was an undeclared war; and that the strikes were incompatible with the declared U.S. aim of a negotiated settlement. Though the Administration did not want to lose British support, nevertheless the persuasive military estimates of the effects of the P.O.L. bombings - that is, that the bombings would cripple the North Vietnamese war effort - were more important still to the Administration. And so, despite the knowledge that Wilson would dissociate, the P.O.L. air strikes were carried out.
The original date set for the P.O.L. attacks, apparently 10 June, was also delayed, at Rusk's request to the President, to avoid prejudicing a peace probe that the Canadians were then undertaking with U.S. concurrence. The terms of Rusk's subsequent explanation to McNamara reveal both his concern about the damage that could be caused to the U.S. image, and his desire not to interrupt the flow of events too greatly with his request:

"...I am deeply disturbed by general international revulsion, and perhaps a great deal at home, if it becomes known that we took an action which sabotaged the Ronning [Canadian diplomat] mission to which we had given our agreement. I recognize the agony of this problem for all concerned. We could make arrangements to get an immediate report from Ronning. If he has a negative report, as we expect, that provides a firmer base for the action we contemplate and would make a difference to people like Wilson and Pearson [Canadian Prime Minister]. If, on the other hand, he learns that there is any serious breakthrough toward peace, the President would surely want to know of that before an action which would knock such a possibility off the tracks. I strongly recommend, therefore, against ninth or tenth [June]. I regret this because of my maximum desire to support you and your colleagues in your tough job."

The P.O.L. strikes eventually took place on 29 June under strict operational guidelines aimed at minimising civilian casualties - which the Joint Chiefs and CINCPAC had estimated would be "'under 50'", as opposed to the CIA estimate of "'200-300'" - and avoiding damage to merchant shipping in the port of Haiphong. As the Pentagon Papers analyst points out: "The execution message is a remarkable document, attesting in detail to the political sensitivity of the strikes".
The Administration initially judged the strikes to be successful, and assessed international reaction as "relatively mild". But this appears to be a misjudgement, in view of the subsequent flood of international comment and criticism, by governments and press; and in view of the fact that in Britain's case there was violence for the first time at an anti-war demonstration after the P.O.L. strikes (see Sections C, and E, below). In addition, by the end of the summer it had become clear that the strikes had failed to achieve their objectives: the P.O.L. attacks had eliminated 76% of North Vietnam's bulk storage capacity, but sufficient P.O.L. was contained in dispersed sites, supplemented by imports, to meet North Vietnam's requirements; infiltration continued and North Vietnam kept up the fight.

There were other important events in this period in addition to the P.O.L. strikes. On 31 January, after the large-scale and well-publicised Administration peace 'offensive', the bombing of North Vietnam was resumed. As justification the Administration claimed that there had been no response from North Vietnam to this peace initiative, passing over a North Vietnamese statement on 4 January that might have been a faint indication of interest, also brushing aside signs of a drop in North Vietnam's military effort, and focussing instead on North Vietnam's South-bound supply efforts during the period of the bombing pause. Almost immediately after the bombing
resumed the North Vietnamese representative in Rangoon contacted the U.S. Ambassador there to arrange a meeting. The U.S. Ambassador had previously delivered a message secretly to the North Vietnamese representative during the bombing pause. No new proposals came from this meeting, and although North Vietnam initially appeared to want the contact to continue, it ended the contact abruptly soon after.  

On 4 February, the same day that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was due to hold its second open Hearings session on U.S. policy in Vietnam (the first was held on 28 February and McNamara had been asked to attend the second session, but had been forbidden to do so by Johnson), President Johnson announced that a summit meeting between the U.S. and South Vietnam was to be held in Honolulu from 6-8 February. The arrangements were made hurriedly and the meeting concentrated on the non-military side of the U.S. effort: pacification, economic and social reform, and elections. The joint Declaration and Final Communiqué emphasised these aspects.

The strong U.S. support for the Saigon Government manifested at the Honolulu Conference had the unfortunate consequence of helping to spark off the next round of political turmoil in South Vietnam - the worst for some time. For the Conference had been so hastily arranged that the Saigon Government appeared to be there at the U.S. Administration's command, and this, coupled with President Johnson and South Vietnamese Prime Minister Ky's
embrace, which to the South Vietnamese public underlined the client state relationship between the two governments, damaged Ky's prestige in South Vietnam. Briefly, the Saigon Government, bolstered by this recent public U.S. commitment, attempted to remove what it saw as a political rival by dismissing a powerful and popular South Vietnamese Buddhist Army Commander, General Nguyen Chanh Thi, whose area of command, I Corps, included Danang and Hue. U.S. Ambassador Lodge concurred in this move, and he and Westmoreland played a role in the subsequent events, advising and supporting the Saigon Government.

General Thi's dismissal led to popular protests in Danang, Hue, and Saigon, which the Buddhist Struggle Movement then politicised, demanding elections and a civilian government to replace the military junta. Although Thi was returned to his command area, the unrest continued. Ky promised the Buddhist leaders accelerated elections and a civilian government and a week later went back on his promise. Demonstrations erupted in Hue and Saigon against the Saigon Government with a distinct anti-American theme. At Lodge's prompting on 5 April the Saigon Government prepared to try and crush the opposition in Danang, mustering 1,900 troops and various equipment at the U.S. air base, but Ky was out-maneouvred by the new I Corps Commander, General Nguyen Van Chuan, and, faced with the option of fighting numerically superior forces, was forced to withdraw. The Hue commander had also stated that he would fight if the Government troops arrived in Hue.
There followed some weeks of political manoeuvring, with more Saigon Government pledges on elections, eliciting Buddhist action to quieten the unrest, which was then followed by Ky again reneging on these promises. On 21 May a second Saigon Government assault was undertaken against Danang, with U.S. support, and after bitter fighting Ky's troops regained the city. At this point the Buddhists retaliated by sacking and burning the USIS Library and U.S. Consulate in Hue on 26 and 31 May respectively. Hue then came under attack by Ky's troops and was regained by mid-June. Finally, Buddhist opposition in Saigon was completely crushed, the leaders arrested and imprisoned.

Thus, for four months the Saigon Government was busily engaged, with U.S. help, in fighting for its existence against the opposition of its own people. While the Saigon Government was so engaged, the U.S. Administration undertook yet another major review of its objectives and options in Vietnam and South East Asia in a series of meetings which ended around 20 April. On the results of these meetings the New York Times edition of The Pentagon Papers states: "What new decisions these meetings produced is not clear from the record, the Pentagon study says."³⁴

During this period, from January to July, Westmoreland continued to request more troops. As noted in Chapter 5, on 28 January Westmoreland asked for an increase in troops to bring the total for 1966 to 459,000.
In June 1966 McNamara approved a schedule for deployment of 391,000 U.S. soldiers for 1966, with a projected total of 431,000 for 1967. However, McNamara had no sooner approved this schedule than Westmoreland petitioned for another 111,588 troops which would bring the total for 1967 up to 542,588. The new request reached McNamara on 5 August, but for the first time the Defense Secretary requested "a detailed, line-by-line analysis" proving that these new requirements were "truly essential to the carrying out of our war plan," and he further commented: "Excessive deployments weaken our ability to win by undermining the economic structure of the RVN [South Vietnam] and by raising doubts concerning the soundness of our planning." Although further troop requests were authorised later, McNamara refused this request in October. The period of virtually automatic approval of troop increases by McNamara had come to an end.

B. Administration Propaganda Techniques

The combined bombing pause and peace initiative that President Johnson launched at the end of December 1965 was the most intensive and public effort to-date by the Administration to emphasise its peaceful intentions and to actively search for peace. However, the high-profile approach that the President had adopted, and the last-minute nature of the venture, had drawbacks. Firstly, the sheer drama of the spectacle of U.S. envoys touring the globe had already prompted some press correspondents
to ponder whether this peace offensive was really an international and domestic public relations exercise prior to escalation of the war: in other words a propaganda stunt. Secondly, the fact that this was such a strident diplomatic campaign tended to detract from the seriousness of its purpose. And thirdly the haste with which the campaign was begun, and its initial makeshift character, were perceived to be inimical to its success, and thus these features of the campaign were criticised publically even as the campaign was starting. Chester Cooper later assessed the peace offensive and summed up the overall effect:

"...the style and method adopted in December and January were plainly unsuitable. Where finely tooled instruments were required, we used a sledgehammer. Where confidential and careful advance work was necessary, we proceeded with all the subtlety of a Fourth of July parade. Where a dramatic, surprise proposal may have stirred Hanoi's interest, we made a public spectacle of every melodramatic move. Instead of maximizing the effect of our fourteen-point peace package, we buried it in the razzmatazz of sudden, noisy, and florid VIP trips. In short, the President was acting like the ringmaster of a three-ring circus, rather than as the focal point of a carefully worked out exercise in diplomacy."

Thus, according to Cooper, who was a participant in these events, the style of the peace campaign not only contributed to its failure, but also overshadowed another major part of the Administration's propaganda effort - the publication of the fourteen points.

The North Vietnamese denounced the bombing pause, and when President Johnson announced the resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam on 31 January he emphasised the
themes of North Vietnamese aggression and unwillingness to talk. Mentioning that the South Vietnamese, U.S. and Allied troops were "engaged in South Vietnam with increasing strength and increasing success", Johnson explained that the bombing would have to resume because otherwise "the cost in lives, Vietnamese lives, and American and allied lives, will only be greatly increased in the light of the words and actions of the Government in Hanoi for more than 37 days now." Finally Johnson repeated the pattern of previous propaganda moves and in this same announcement stated that UN Ambassador Goldberg would be requesting "an immediate meeting" of the UN Security Council and would be reporting to it and presenting "a resolution which can open the way to the conference table." Once again Johnson had 'balanced' military action with a peace initiative.

The next day the UN Security Council considered the U.S. draft Resolution and North Vietnam promptly rejected this new UN intervention, as it had done in the past. This rejection added credence to the Administration's claims that while the U.S. wanted peace, North Vietnam wanted war.

The beginning of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee open Hearings on U.S. policy in Vietnam posed a considerable problem for the Administration, for the committee had called on several top Administration officials to testify, including McNamara, Rusk and former Ambassador Taylor. On 4 February the President's sudden
announcement of the Honolulu Conference, convening from 6-8 February, coincided with the second of these Hearings at which McNamara had been due to testify until the President vetoed his attendance. Undoubtedly this sudden and unexpected announcement focussed attention on the forthcoming conference rather than the Hearings, but there was a price to be paid: the impression gained and disseminated by the press was that the Conference had been announced primarily to detract attention from the Hearings. The lack of preparations, the short time between announcement and Conference, and the absence of allied heads of state, also added to this impression. Thus the mere fact that the press identified this either partly or wholly as a propaganda ploy diminished its effectiveness. Also the Conference itself came under close scrutiny, as observers endeavoured to determine whether it was justified by its results.

Chester Cooper recalls that in answer to the charge that the conference had been arranged as a type of 'spoiling' operation, President Johnson "insisted that a Honolulu meeting had been planned for several months." As Cooper explained that Johnson "was neither altogether right nor wrong", for Cooper had floated the idea of Johnson attending a meeting in Honolulu in mid-1965, but this was to mark the anniversary of the East-west Center there, the appointment of a new head, and it was thought that Asian leaders could be invited offering the chance for "private talks...particularly with Sukarno who was
being especially troublesome at the time."\textsuperscript{46} Cooper states that Johnson "rejected the idea" but "this was probably the 'conference' he had in mind many months later when he parried reporters about the timing of his meeting with Ky and Thieu."\textsuperscript{47} Nevertheless, whatever Johnson thought, the Honolulu Conference was a very different affair to the original concept, at which Sukarno was intended to be the main quarry in a general conference; whereas Honolulu was a specifically U.S.-South Vietnam meeting - excluding even their fighting allies - and dealing exclusively with South Vietnamese issues.

Another problem concerning this conference surfaced later, when South Vietnam was again in the throes of another political crisis: correspondents were not slow to connect the strong U.S. support for the Saigon Government at the Honolulu Conference with the eruption of this political crisis. In effect this meant that the Administration was forced to answer, and deny, the charge that its own political ineptitude was partly to blame for this latest crisis.

Coming soon after the Honolulu Conference, the lengthy bout of political upheaval centering on South Vietnam's three principal cities, Saigon, Hue and Danang, was a source of yet more problems for the Administration. For while U.S. official propaganda portrayed South Vietnam as a nation striving for democracy, endeavouring to create a new and better society - facets emphasised at the Honolulu Conference - during the period of the crisis the
world witnessed the elevating spectacle of Saigon's military junta attacking its own people with weapons provided by the U.S. to fight the war. And the subsequent attacks by the Buddhist students on the USIS Library and Consulate were quite clearly anti-American actions, both disturbing and embarrassing. Previous U.S. official propaganda thus had a hollow ring to it by comparison with the events in South Vietnam, and the Administration now had the task of reconciling what was fundamentally irreconcilable: its words, and the South Vietnamese Government's actions. The answer was to stress the 'fledgling' state of the South Vietnamese nation, still struggling to achieve democracy in difficult times.49 However, commentators tended to recall the long line of past crises, pointing out that this, and other crises, demonstrated just how little the Americans could influence events in general. But there was another facet to this particular crisis which also surfaced publically - that this time the U.S. Embassy had been heavily involved in the political turmoil, having supported the Saigon Government in its desire to remove General Thi. Thus the Administration was charged both with being inherently unable to prevent these outbursts, but also with having interfered, thereby helping to spark off this specific crisis. Effectively the U.S. Embassy in Saigon helped to make a mockery of its own Government's propaganda on South Vietnam.
During this period, beginning in February with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson's visit to Moscow, there were many attempts by international leaders to initiate peace negotiations. The Administration had to respond to these efforts in such a way that the U.S. could not be accused of rejecting any peace moves. But, on the other hand, neither was the Administration prepared to negotiate on anything but its own terms. This was most strikingly apparent on the issue of bombing, and The Pentagon Papers highlight the Administration judgements which dictated the U.S. propaganda line:

"Concerned that the current spate of international peace moves might entice the Administration in another bombing pause, [William] Bundy reminded the Secretary [Rusk] that, '...during our long pause in January, we pretty much agreed among ourselves that as a practical matter, if Hanoi started to play negotiating games that even seemed to be serious, we would have great difficulty in resuming bombing for some time. This was and is a built-in weakness of the 'pause' approach. It does not apply to informal talks with the DRV, directly or indirectly, on the conditions under which we would stop bombing, nor does it apply to third country suggestions. As to the latter, I myself believe that our past record sufficiently stresses that we could stop the bombing only if the other side did something in response. Thus, I would not at this moment favor any additional public statement by us, which might simply highlight the issue and bring about the very pressures we seek to avoid.'"

Bundy concluded that there "'must in fact be a trade'" to stop the bombing and no bombing pause "'under existing circumstances.'" Bearing these precepts in mind, and considering North Vietnam's diametrically opposed conditions for negotiations, the international
community's efforts were bound to fail. The Pentagon Papers describe how the Administration ended this wave of peace moves: "the State Department closed out this international effort on June 23 (the day after the original POL execute order), stating that neither oral reports nor public statements indicated any change in the basic elements of Hanoi's position." 51

In mid-June, when Westmoreland was putting in another of his unpublicised requests for more troops, the Administration began preparing public opinion for the imminent P.O.L. strikes. Already a special effort had been made to enlist the British Prime Minister's support at the beginning of June, and although this had failed the Administration knew in advance what the British Government's reaction would be, and had been warned of the likely effect of these strikes on British and West European public opinion. 52 This advance knowledge would be useful to the Administration, enabling it to prepare its public defense of these strikes. At a Presidential press conference on 18 June, Johnson made a statement on Vietnam, in which he explained that U.S. "national interest" necessitated continuing the "present policy" in Vietnam, using the necessary "ground, naval and air strength required to achieve our objectives." 53 Johnson continued:

"I must observe that this does not mean that we shall not increase our forces or our operations. It is not good national policy publicly to declare to those conducting aggression that there are particular limits on how we shall act to defeat that aggression." 54
After recapitulating the limited objectives the U.S. was fighting for, Johnson then quoted the latest casualty figures and stated:

"Our attacks on military targets in North Vietnam have imposed a growing burden on those who support the insurgency in the South. We must continue to raise the cost of aggression at its source. And that is the sole purpose of our use of air strength against military targets."  

Undoubtedly these were hints that the Administration considered itself free to use whatever military method it chose - over and above its present operations - to achieve its carefully articulated objectives. When questioned directly by a correspondent about why Hanoi and Haiphong had not been bombed and whether it would not be more understandable to people if they were bombed, Johnson declined to comment "on the tactics or strategy at this point" and stated that he would "have to be guided" by his "best judgement in the matter." What was noticeable however was that he did not rule out such an action.

After the P.O.L. strikes on 29 June the Administration presented them publicly as an action to reduce infiltration from North Vietnam to the South; to persuade Hanoi of U.S. determination to continue the fight, and equally to persuade Hanoi to give up. The Administration also maintained that these attacks were not an escalation of the war because they were against military targets, in line with former U.S. bombing strategy and tactics. And the attacks were assessed as successful.
At the end of June, following an abortive peace attempt by the Canadians, another secret peace initiative was launched involving the Polish representative on the International Control Commission, the Italian Ambassador in Saigon, and U.S. Ambassador Lodge. Code-named 'Marigold', it was a particularly intricate exercise in diplomacy which finally foundered in December 1966, amid angry charges that the U.S. had wrecked the initiative, primarily by bombing Hanoi. So the Administration was once more in the dock over its public and private attitude to negotiations.

Throughout this period the Administration was generally publically optimistic about the course of the war. Naturally, the pessimistic assessments of McNaughton and McNamara, confirmed by Westmoreland's troop requests, were never hinted at in public. Instead the Administration partnered its vague hints of necessary military escalation with news about South Vietnam's economic and social progress. Nobody could have concluded from the Administration's public statements that the war was stalemated and would remain so at ever-higher troop levels. And it would have been difficult to imagine, given the huge amounts of U.S. troops and materiel poured into Vietnam, that the war would eventually end in defeat for America.

C.) Press Reporting and Reaction

Throughout January the dominant theme in press reporting was the bombing pause and the accompanying peace
offensive, which were discussed in minute detail and virtually on a day-to-day basis. The views expressed on these events were by no means uniform, with observers differing over the true purpose of the peace offensive, what the chances were for negotiations, and how long the pause would last. On 1 January it was reported that after his visits to the Pope and President de Gaulle, U.S. Ambassador Goldberg would be stopping off in London to see Prime Minister Wilson. For all that Britain was co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference and America's main ally, in late December when the U.S. peace initiative began there had been little indication that any of the U.S. envoys would be visiting the British Prime Minister. On the surface it could have appeared strange that the U.S. almost failed to involve its main ally in these peace moves, and while press reports did not explicitly discuss this aspect, their treatment of the Goldberg-Wilson talks highlighted two important factors: the actual relationship between Britain and the U.S. concerning information on the war, that is, that Britain was kept informed; and the necessity that at the very least, Britain should not appear to be consulted less than other countries. The Times, focussing mainly on the former aspect, explained that it was an American suggestion that Goldberg should see Wilson, and then pointed out:

"The British Government were fully informed at the outset of the views of the United States Administration, but President Johnson wished the British Government to be given an up-to-date account of the discussions which Mr. Goldberg has had since leaving the United States."
The Daily Telegraph, however, concentrated on appearances and noted one of the reasons why it was important for Britain to be involved in this diplomatic offensive:

"News of the visit brought relief to Government supporters. It was beginning to look as if every national leader had been consulted except the British Prime Minister. Mr. Wilson is known to be anxious to play a role in any real attempt to end the conflict. In addition to his natural desire to help, he has become increasingly aware in recent weeks that the Labour party's Left wing has grown acutely restive on this issue. They have been looking to him for action. In a party political broadcast on radio last night, Mr. Wilson promised that Britain would go on trying to end the war, whatever the consequences."

The Sunday Telegraph on 2 January also commented on similar lines, stating: "An interesting feature of last week's busy scene has been the almost total passivity of the British Government", and the report continued:

"Though Britain is co-chairman, with Russia, of the Geneva Conference, no initiative or even contacts were made on this network, either in Moscow or London. Though not diplomatically significant at the moment, this passivity is optically disturbing. To bring Mr. Wilson 'in from the cold' President Johnson doubtless authorised last night's meeting in London between the Prime Minister and one of his itinerant envoys, Mr. Goldberg."

Other press reports and editorials were more concerned with the peace offensive itself, and some of the doubts expressed about it in December were still current. On 1 January, in a gloomy editorial captioned, "The right response to a peace offensive", The Guardian began:

"It is yet another bitter irony of the Vietnamese war that when at last the United States Government does what its critics have for
months been urging it to do - suspend the bombing of the North, set its diplomatists to work - misgivings about its policies seem more justifiable than ever. For what is now being done fits almost too perfectly into the pattern recently talked about in Washington.\textsuperscript{63}

This editorial then pointed to the pre-Christmas evidence that the Administration was under pressure to escalate the war but that the hawks "conceded to the doves that this new escalation...would look better if it were preceded by another bombing pause, and a fresh proclamation of President's Johnson's willingness to talk peace - just such measures, in fact as are now attracting the world's attention."\textsuperscript{64} The editorial accepted that this was putting matters "too crudely", and that many officials and diplomats and the President himself would want the offer to be taken up.\textsuperscript{65} But The Guardian argued that because the President "shows no signs of understanding what the war means to the Vietcong and many other Vietnamese", and the fact that even if a settlement could be forced on the North Vietnamese and Vietcong this would not spell the end of the war while there were foreign troops in Vietnam, then the war would continue to expand.\textsuperscript{66} And The Guardian further argued that foreign troops would not be able to leave and the "Americans' successive disappointments over the past year are all evidence that the task they have set themselves [in South Vietnam] is impossible".\textsuperscript{67} According to the editorial, until Johnson realised this "the hawks will go on getting their way, and the war will go on expanding, with ever
greater danger to Indo-China, China, the United States, and the world."

The Guardian's Washington correspondent focused on the relaxed attitude in Washington about the length of the pause, remarking that "there is no disposition here to force the pace, or to appear to give Hanoi an unreasonably short period in which to take their decision." The main reason for this attitude became apparent when the report noted that officials were emphasizing that the U.S. "has avoided any appearance of having faced Hanoi with an ultimatum", but although it was "hardly in doubt" that bombing and escalation would follow, the U.S. had not repeated the mistake of the May pause by putting this in writing. For as the report observed, the May message had recently been made public and "With some justice this message was regarded by Hanoi as an ultimatum and was rejected by them." Thus the public's attention was being drawn to both the Administration's past error and the difference in the way the current pause was being handled.

Although the bombing pause was only 8 days old and the peace offensive a mere 6 days old, already there were press articles, based on the U.S. envoys' reports about their peace missions, expressing doubts that the peace offensive would be successful. Indeed the Observer commented: "Hopes for the success of this operation, which were never high, are now dwindling." Hanoi's denunciation of the bombing pause and peace offensive
added to the doubts and also vindicated the pessimism displayed by the U.S. envoys.

As to what was the true purpose of the peace offensive, this topic evoked varying reactions from correspondents. For instance the *Sunday Telegraph*, detailing the dire consequences in the U.S. should the peace offensive fail - a declaration of a state of emergency, reserves mobilisation and price controls - and discussing various aspects of the peace moves, noted the President's conflicting anxieties: to convince China and North Vietnam that "his desire for peace is sincere", but also to convince them that this U.S. desire for peace should not lead them to miscalculate the strength of U.S. commitment to South Vietnam. The article then concluded:

"Shorn of diplomatic subtleties all this means is that so far every party to the Vietnam conflict is standing pat. The inescapable conclusion at this stage therefore is that the perigrinations [sic] of peace envoys are directed more towards persuading bystanders than the enemy of America's desire for peace."

The *Financial Times* also supported this interpretation of the travelling peace envoys, but then added that "the true probe is being conducted now, and in secret - the efforts by the Governments of Europe, of Africa and of Asia to do whatever they can to bring the two sides together."

The *Guardian's* Washington correspondent expressed two very different viewpoints in the space of two days, thereby demonstrating the speed at which opinions on the conflict could change and be disseminated on acquisition of new information. On 3
January a Guardian report on the peace moves, headlined "The Johnson brand of instant peace offensive", analysed the style of the diplomatic offensive and concluded that though this might "seem rather larger than life - perhaps a little flamboyant", there was "no need to doubt the sincerity of his peace offensive." On 5 January The Guardian's report was headlined, "Mr Johnson's Vietnam peace moves over dramatised", and after explaining that the message that the peace envoys were carrying around the world had now been made public, the article continued:

"The publication of this three-page document seems to put this whole so-called peace offensive for the first time in its proper perspective. And it is clear that it has been greatly overplayed. It has been endowed with more drama than substance. The document, indeed, looks suspiciously like that which must have been used by a 'well informed official American source' to brief a group of foreign correspondents here - including me - on the Monday evening after Christmas. It is generally agreed that it was a little later this same evening that the decision seems to have been taken to launch the 'peace offensive' after massive telephoning by the President from his Texas ranch. Indeed, I and my colleagues appear to have been honoured with the first dry run-through of the document which then became the basis of the President's 'peace offensive.'"

The article then continued with a discussion of the Administration's hopes for the peace offensive: that at worst it would convince doubting foreign governments that the U.S. did want unconditional negotiations; and at best that the peace offensive would generate enough pressure of world opinion to persuade Hanoi to negotiate. The report noted that the Administration reckoned that if after the peace offensive Vietcong operations continued at the same
level as previously, then the U.S. image "both at home and abroad, would be considerably improved, and sympathy for Hanoi would be greatly reduced." The article concluded with an analysis, based on Walter Lippmann's column, of an issue of great importance for the Administration's propaganda effort. Citing Lippmann, the report stated:

"He [Lippmann] agrees that there is no need to doubt Mr Johnson's sincerity, but he considers that sincerity is not the crux of the matter. The crux is whether the President is ready to negotiate a truce which confirms to the strategic realities of the military situation. If he is not ready then Mr Lippmann believes that he will find that friends and foes alike will regard 'the whole spectacular business not as the action of a statesman but as the device of a showman.'

Unless the President defines his terms of peace, confidence in his leadership, Mr Lippmann says, will become gravely weakened. And he doubts if the Administration has yet worked out its peace terms."

The Guardian's correspondent then extrapolated from Lippmann and suggested that the Administration might have an "even more acute" problem than Lippmann had outlined, for the Administration had publicly agreed to return to the 1954 Geneva Agreements. However, according to the Guardian correspondent no one in Washington "seriously" believed that the U.S. would permit elections throughout Vietnam if a Communist government looked likely to be elected, and the article then assessed the probable impact of this factor on North Vietnam, particularly in view of past events:

"The North Vietnamese know this as well, if not better, than anyone else. They feel that they were grossly cheated in 1954 when the Saigon Government, aided and abetted by Washington, refused to carry out this provision [all-Vietnam elections] of the 1954 agreement."
Unless and until Washington can convince the North Vietnamese that it will see that a similar provision in a new agreement is scrupulously honoured, Hanoi is most unlikely to see any merit in a new negotiation.81

Thus between them, the Guardian correspondent and Lippmann exposed and publicised the weaknesses in the Administration's propaganda on negotiations: the lack of realistic negotiating terms, the probable lack even of any attempt to define these; and a view of the 1954 Geneva Agreements which was inherently unacceptable to North Vietnam. In fact Lippmann was correct in his surmise that the Administration had not seriously addressed the issue of negotiations, as Chester Cooper made clear:

"More to the point, however, Washington was unprepared for negotiations. Little work had been done in blocking out a negotiating strategy, very few position papers on key negotiations issues had been prepared. For its part, the government in Saigon had hardly spent an hour addressing its own negotiations stance."82

In addition, The Guardian's exposition of North Vietnam's view of the non-existent elections post-1954, amounted to a dose of counter-propaganda. The Administration's version of events after 1954 was being challenged again and its propaganda rallying cry on negotiations - a return to the Geneva Agreements - had a hollow ring in the light of this analysis.

Nevertheless, as The Times demonstrated, it was possible to recognise such factors, but to rationalise them in such a way that the Administration's case was not undermined. On 8 January a Times editorial also deemed the issue of the President's 'sincerity' a "profitless
argument", making the same point as Lippmann that the President was perfectly sincere. But there agreement ended, for where Lippmann argued that the current diplomatic offensive would appear to be mere show if the President had no real negotiating proposals to offer, The Times simply assumed that the President's proposals thus far were adequate and supported the Administration's interpretation of events. Thus, though The Times perceived the peace offensive to be aimed at public opinion, it did not perceive that in the circumstances this might be the only function possible for this peace offensive, for The Times supplied the link between means and what it automatically assumed to be the Administration's reasonable and attainable ends:

"It is perfectly obvious that he [President Johnson] is desperately sincere, that he is sickened by the war, and that he would grasp eagerly at any opportunity for genuine negotiations. It is equally obvious that he will continue the war until he can find an honourable solution.

The peace offensive is an attempt to rally domestic and foreign opinion to the American side and to put some public pressure on North Vietnam. It is an exercise in public relations rather than strict diplomacy. But that does not make it less useful as an adjunct to diplomacy. The question is whether it is enough, and whether it is the best means to entirely honourable ends."

This standpoint enabled The Times to point out the "curious feature" of the conflict whereby both the U.S. and North Vietnam insisted on a return to the Geneva Agreements; to remark that the difference between the U.S. and North Vietnam centred on timing and the type of government in South Vietnam until reunification; to note
that the North Vietnamese "believe that they were tricked after the 1954 agreements, when the Americans were backing a man they knew would refuse elections" and that they feared the same thing would happen again; and then to conclude that:

"The main criticism of President Johnson's efforts so far is that they have not concentrated sufficiently on the issue of the South Vietnamese Government. They have been too rigid in refusing to recognise that the Vietcong represent an indigenous force in South Vietnam as well as an arm of North Vietnam. The basis of any settlement will have to be a South Vietnamese Government that is acceptable to both sides. This will be appallingly difficult to achieve, because any such Government would be extremely vulnerable to pressure from each side to win its allegiance. It would clearly require some sort of interim agreement by outside powers."

Clearly this editorial supported one of the U.S. goals in the war: an independent South Vietnam. Dismissing the confusion engendered in the debate by "too much talk about containing China and proving that national wars of liberation do not pay" - major U.S. propaganda arguments - and noting that Hanoi regarded the conflict as a continuation of the 1946 anti-colonial war, the editorial then revealed the extent of its sympathy for the U.S. case in its conclusion:

"The natural corollary of this is that Hanoi must understand American concerns. The United States has a commitment that it cannot be expected simply to shuffle off. It has an interest in the balance of power in Asia. It also has a wholly admirable determination to prove that force is not the way to settle disputes in the modern world. If its methods can sometimes be criticised, its ends cannot. Until, therefore, the North Vietnamese are willing to put their case at the conference table they
cannot expect the understanding which they might otherwise receive."

This conclusion can only be termed a triumph for U.S. propaganda, if only because 11 months of U.S. escalation, already involving great destruction, was being perceived as a desire not to settle a conflict by force. In addition, U.S. geo-political concerns were also being endorsed and the North Vietnamese attitude was again presented as the sole obstacle to negotiations.

While The Times editorialised in support of the Administration, its Washington correspondent was reporting the "military pessimism" that was apparently now rife in Washington, leading to suggestions that B-52 bombers should be used if Hanoi ignored the U.S. negotiations offer. This was a suggestion that the correspondent took to be indicative of a pessimism "now tinged with despair" - because so far all measures had failed in Vietnam. The correspondent described the horrors of war in Vietnam for the South Vietnamese and linked this to the U.S. pessimism about the current state of the battle:

"No fighting men in history have been better served than American soldiers in Vietnam. Even company actions are invariably supported by air strikes and artillery barrages, and they are dropped into battle by helicopter. A platoon commander can call down napalm, phosphorous bombs, and tear gas on the smallest target. The disciplines that normally apply when fighting in inhabited areas have been withdrawn. Anybody who moves or anything that looks suspicious can be shot at. Such actions are regularly reported in the American press."

Reproducing an account by a Washington Post war correspondent of a "profitless attack which ended with the
useless destruction of a farm" in South Vietnam, the Times correspondent concluded bleakly:

"Multiplied a thousand times, the result of such an action can only bring pessimism and despair. The United States could, of course, obliterate North Vietnam, but the price would be high - the obliteration of its great humanistic traditions.

The war, with or without new measures, will, of course, continue if Hanoi does not respond to the invitations to negotiate. There can be no doubt about that, but it will be a long one."

However, the general atmosphere conveyed through British press reports at this stage was supportive of the U.S. peace offensive, always excepting of course the Communist countries responses. In an effort to be helpful the British Government contacted the Russians in order to testify to the 'sincerity' of the U.S. Administration's appeals for negotiations. The Soviet Union returned the compliment and handed the British Ambassador to Moscow a message concerning the whole situation in South East Asia - apparently unconnected to the British message - which was "described as as 'a diatribe'" from USSR Foreign Minister Gromyko. Such incidents apart, the peace offensive and bombing pause were mostly producing the results the Administration wanted, and this process was further aided when the Administration let it be known that the Vietcong could be accepted as a political party in the South in the event of a cease-fire, thereby removing, according to The Times, "the last political obstacle to peace negotiations if indeed the Vietcong and North Vietnam are willing to accept a peaceful solution." The Times further stated that:
"The clarification amounts in fact to a major shift in American policy. The Administration has long insisted that the conflict in Vietnam is not a civil war but external aggression. Acceptance of the Vietcong or its National Liberation Front as a South Vietnamese political party demonstrates that this fundamental, if contestible [sic], position has been changed."

The Times also noted that the Administration still refused to negotiate with the Vietcong on the grounds that "only Governments can take part in international conferences", but pointed out that the U.S. had no objection to the Vietcong appearing as part of a North Vietnamese delegation. In essence the Administration was publicly recognising what was already a fact of life, in that the Vietcong/NLF was a political party, but this did not necessarily mean, as the Times correspondent assumed, that the Administration would not still insist that the war was primarily a result of external aggression directed by North Vietnam, and therefore not a civil war. And neither did it mean that the Administration had abandoned its goal of an independent South Vietnam.

An Observer editorial took a much more critical look than The Times at the Administration's presentation of its case, and assessed what the peace offensive should mean in terms of negotiations:

"Finally, if the President's peace campaign is to make more impression on America's adversaries and carry more conviction with her friends, the purposes of American policy need to be clarified.

It is a waste of time for President Johnson and Mr Rusk to try to persuade the great majority of non-American opinion that the whole problem is simply a question of Hanoi's aggression as part of a world-wide campaign inspired by China. If negotiation now is to be meaningful, it needs to be related to the
present military and political facts of a complex civil war inside South Vietnam. It has to be narrowed down to specific, practicable objectives. The 'Heart of the Matter' [the title of the message the U.S. peace envoys were carrying], to use the hackneyed White House phrase, is how a conflict between the Vietnamese about their political future is to be settled by negotiation rather than by force. But this is what has to be attempted and it means, inevitably, that the Vietcong have to be a party to the negotiations."\textsuperscript{36}

However, despite this analysis the Observer concluded that a U.S. acceptance of a neutral South Vietnam, an offer of withdrawal of U.S. troops provided South Vietnam's independence could be guaranteed, and U.S. acceptance of the need for free elections, added up to a package which did not conflict "in theory with the four points of Ho Chi Minh."\textsuperscript{37} Thus, though the Observer quarrelled with the Administration's propaganda and echoed Lippmann on the need for negotiations and military and political realities to match, nevertheless a central tenet of the Administration's case - the independence of South Vietnam - appeared to have been digested as an incontrovertible fact. And unless the Observer's concluding reference, to the need to work out how to supervise and guarantee South Vietnam's "neutrality, non-intervention and free elections", was intended to refer to a stage preparatory to the reunification of the country, then anything else would contravene both the original Geneva Agreements as well as Hanoi's Four Points.\textsuperscript{38}

As January slipped by, hopes that the peace offensive and bombing pause would produce negotiations slowly faded.
On 10 January both The Guardian and The Times carried articles from their Washington correspondents on a report on Vietnam that Senator Mansfield had presented to the President, in which the choice now open to the U.S. was either "an unsatisfactory negotiated settlement or to extend the war to the point when general war in Asia becomes a serious possiblity." And The Times, in its article, stated that the publication of the Mansfield report "must be assumed to be connected to the budgetary request and the decisions which now face the President." The budgetary request to which The Times referred was another supplementary defence appropriation to be presented to Congress and the decision facing the President was this possibility of a general war "to bring Hanoi to its knees." The Times decided that the budget request "suggests that President Johnson is ready, no matter how reluctantly, for general war. Most of his advisers can see no other alternative unless the Soviet Union is prepared to use what little influence it has in Hanoi to limit the war."

There were still occasional articles which tentatively raised hopes again, as when the Guardian's Washington correspondent reported on 15 January that President Johnson had remarked that Vietcong incidents had fallen, but he didn't know whether this was connected with the peace offensive. The correspondent pondered whether this reduction came within the terms of the President's State of the Union address alluding to a "reduction in the
use of force", and concluded that this could not be taken as an indicator that Hanoi had scaled down the war. Interestingly this report also stated that aerial reconnaissance over North Vietnam had shown that the North Vietnamese priority during the bombing pause was the repair of its rail links with China; there was no public stress at this stage on increased North Vietnamese infiltration southwards.

By 20 January, 27 days after the bombing was first halted, pressure was beginning to build up for the Administration to continue the bombing pause. The Times noted that the U.S. peace envoys had all brought back this message on extending the pause and that this had created a "cruel predicament" for the U.S., for if Hanoi thought that "international opinion can influence or limit American strategy, it might well be encouraged to believe that American political objectives will also be influenced." The Times summed up the problems the U.S. faced:

"Intransigence can hardly be rewarded by an extended bombing pause, and if the bombing is resumed it will shatter the peaceful atmosphere created as well as much of North Vietnam. What is more, the United States will probably have to bear the odium, and not North Vietnam. Another resentment is also evident. The peace efforts have released a fresh flood of advice from many directions, and this is seen to threaten American control of the situation. The intention was to persuade other Governments to bring pressure upon Hanoi, and not upon the United States."

Towards the end of January press reports reflected the discouraging tone of Administration remarks on Hanoi's
attitude to the peace offensive. On 22/23 January the New York Herald Tribune wrote that Secretary of State Rusk had stated that "there had been no encouraging response from Hanoi", while Secretary of Defense McNamara detailed Hanoi's rebuilding projects during the pause. Furthermore the New York Herald Tribune suggested that Rusk's statement "appeared designed to prepare Americans for more hard fighting in the weeks and months ahead." The Guardian noted that President Johnson had stated that Hanoi was "hostile" to the peace offensive and had continued its infiltration. An interesting comment on the Administration's own attitude to reinforcements during the bombing pause was contained in a Guardian editorial on 24 January which stated that: "The month of the bombing pause has coincided precisely with Operation 'Blue Light,' said by the US Air Force to be the biggest troop air lift in history, from Hawaii to Pleiku." The Guardian then pointed out that the Communists had "also" been using the pause for their own preparations. Thus, as a matter of propaganda tactics, the President and his top advisers publicised the Communists' activities during the pause, but naturally kept a much lower profile on their own huge reinforcements. The U.S. troop reinforcements also added to the overall picture of American involvement in Vietnam, and The Guardian assessed the implications of this and its likely impact on the North Vietnamese and Vietcong:

"But they [North Vietnamese and Vietcong] chose to regard the peace offensive as a trick. One can understand why. For even in this country, let alone Hanoi, it does not much look as though the Americans are going to withdraw in
the foreseeable future, peace or no peace; too much has been invested, politically and even economically. The building of the base at Camrann, for instance, is no short-term project."

Thus, according to The Guardian, the very scale of U.S. involvement in Vietnam undermined the credibility of its public statements about seeking no permanent foothold in South Vietnam and being prepared to withdraw if, and when, South Vietnam's future was guaranteed.

On 26 January the press reported that friendly governments had been informed that Hanoi had not responded to the peace offensive, that the safety of U.S. troops was being jeopardised by the pause, and that Johnson had also met with the Congress party leaders.11 On 27 January the Financial Times Washington correspondent began a report with the firm prediction that this meeting "makes it quite certain that in the absence of some last minute repentance by Hanoi, American bombing of North Vietnam will be resumed shortly."11 On the basis of U.S. war aims, the correspondent also calculated that the war would expand considerably:

"However, everything now points to a renewed effort to get the upper hand in the South. This will naturally entail further massive reinforcements of American forces and the figure of 500,000 in South Vietnam this year no longer seems fantastic. It will also involve more intense bombing of the North than hitherto."11

The correspondent's speculation about 500,000 troops for 1966 was considerably more than the actual total number of 389,000 troops at the end of 1966, but the mere fact that a figure of 500,000 could be perceived as a
possibility was a recognition of the depth of U.S. determination to attain its goals — however many troops might be required. This figure was also a reminder of the speed with which the war had already expanded.

The signs that the bombing would be resumed were even stronger around 29 January and *The Times* described the Administration's tactics:

"The Administration is now preparing the United States for a resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam. With small private briefings and other recognizable devices, President Johnson is passing the word that it is no longer a question of whether the United States should resume bombing, but whether future raids should be heavier than they were in the past."

The Guardian's Washington correspondent, however, preferred to delve deeper into the mechanics and details of the Administration's propaganda run-up to the bombing resumption:

"Other straws which seem to show which way the wind in the White House is blowing are the pains that officials are taking to explain:
1. The agonising character of the decision which President Johnson is facing;
2. The industry with which he is seeking out the widest possible counsel;
3. The fact that the pause has already lasted longer than most foreign Governments had proposed;
4. The great pressure being exerted by those who believe that the pause in endangering American lives;
5. The President's personal responsibilities to the 200,000 young men now fighting in South Vietnam; and
6. The President's concern that Hanoi and Peking might have wrongly interpreted the pause as a sign of American weakness."

As these *Times* and *Guardian* reports and other articles noted, this expected resumption of bombing was not unopposed in the U.S.. Seventy-six Democratic
Representatives and 15 Senators had recently appealed to
Johnson to extend the pause; Rusk was being rigorously
cross-examined by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee;
and one cross-examining Senator was widely reported to
have stated that he was "'scared to death we are on our
way to World War III.'"119 But there seemed little
prospect of the President heeding these appeals and fears,
or anyone else's, particularly as his reply to the 15
Senators consisted of a reminder of the 1964 Tonkin Gulf
Resolution.120

In the wake of the visit to Washington by British
Foreign Secretary Stewart and Defence Minister Healey,
which ended on 28 January, the Times report of 29 January
noted that: "Britain clearly supports the decision to bomb
again, no matter how reluctantly."121 Commenting on the
defence talks between the British and U.S. about the
West's main task of containing China, and about Britain's
troop deployments in South East Asia, the report raised
the nightmare of renewed U.S. pressure on Britain to send
troops to Vietnam:

"All this [defence provisions relating to
Singapore] strikes the Americans as eminently
sensible, but meanwhile they continue to eye
envously the 50,000 British troops in Malaysia.
Should the Indonesian confrontation end soon,
Britain can expect increasing pressure to send
them to Vietnam.
It could prove to be an irresistible
pressure."122

At this point North Vietnam again announced its terms
for peace and negotiations in a letter from Ho Chi Minh to
many Heads of State which was sent on 24 January and made
public on 28 January. The letter demanded U.S. acceptance of Hanoi’s Four Points, proof of this acceptance through a permanent end to the air strikes, and U.S. recognition and preparedness to deal with the NLF. Three days later, on 31 January, against the background of intensive discussions in the Administration on the war, the unease expressed by certain Democratic Senators — most notably Fulbright and Mansfield — and the knowledge, conveyed by the peace envoys, that ending the bombing pause would be ill received by many nations, President Johnson ordered the resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam and proposed UN mediation of the conflict. The blame for this resumption was laid squarely on Hanoi and Peking’s rejection of the peace offensive, Hanoi’s persistent aggression, and the need to limit American and allied casualties.

The President’s announcement was widely reported and brought swift reactions. The British Foreign Office put out a statement on the evening of 31 January, reported in the press on 1 February, noting that the North Vietnamese had refused negotiation offers and therefore “HM Government understand and support the decision of the US Government to resume the bombing which they had suspended in the hope of reaching a peaceful settlement. It is still open to the North Vietnamese to bring hostilities to an end by expressing a genuine wish to negotiate.”

Mentioning a letter which Ho Chi Minh had addressed to The Queen, and which had demanded that the NLF be recognised
as the South Vietnamese people's sole representative, the Government statement said flatly: "This is an impossible condition for negotiations, because it requires the United States to abandon and even to repudiate their South Vietnamese allies before negotiations even begin." The statement concluded with an affirmation of the British Government's "determination to do their utmost" to effect a negotiate settlement. The Administration could have asked for no stronger an expression of sympathy and support than was contained in this statement - which was precisely why it engendered a row in the Labour Party. For while the Government was backing the Administration to the hilt, approximately 94 Labour and Liberal MPs had signed a telegram to Senator Fulbright deploring the resumption of the bombing, asking him to continue his opposition to extending the war, and supporting the proposal for UN mediation.

The British Government's support for the U.S. and the Labour MPs action was much discussed in the press. In a general round-up of first reactions, The New York Times' London correspondent, in a report headlined "Foreign Reaction To U.S. Step Mixed", subtitled, "British Back Raids but India and Canada Regret Action", noted that the British Government's support was "consistent" with its former policy, and then described the Labour MPs action and the Foreign Office statement. Supporting the U.S. decision, a Daily Telegraph editorial termed the resumption of bombing a "matter of moral rather than strategic
necessity", arguing that the U.S. "must continue to impress on the Communists that they cannot win, and on her Southern allies that the war is not going to be restricted to their own scarred territory." Other British press reports fastened quickly on the implications for the Government of the Labour MPs telegram, and also on the extraordinary possibility that the Prime Minister had not been aware that the Foreign Office was going to issue a statement on the bombing. On 2 February The Guardian carried a report headlined, "Labour rebels renew attack over Vietnam", which began:

"Mr Wilson is expected to face a renewal of back-bench criticism of his Vietnam policy when he addresses a full meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party at Westminster this morning. It was already clear last night that the Vietnam 'revolt' in the Labour Party is again in full spate and organised pressure is now being brought to bear on the Government to allow a full day's debate on the war in the Commons."

Discussing the Labour MPs reactions to the Foreign Office statement, The Guardian noted an unsuccessful attempt by a Labour MP to adjourn the House for an immediate debate on this issue, and stated that this attempt "underlined the irritation of many Labour MPs over the statement issued by the Foreign Office in support of US bombing attacks. They regarded the statement as a gratuitously provocative step in view of the large number of MPs who had expressed anxiety over the resumption of bombing." Pondering the effects of all this, The Guardian speculated:

"Some of this atmosphere may have percolated back to Downing Street, for it was made clear in Whitehall yesterday that, although members of
the Prime Minister's staff had been aware of the Foreign Office's intention to issue a statement, the Prime Minister was not.

There was no suggestion in Government circles that Mr Wilson disagreed with the statement in any way - it merely restated well known British Government policy. But it is not difficult to detect the implication that Mr Wilson might not have endorsed the issuance of the statement at so delicate a moment had he been aware of the Foreign Secretary's intention."

The idea that the Prime Minister had not known about this statement was also reinforced by a Guardian editorial on 2 February, captioned "More support from the Foreign Office", which opened with the question:

"Who authorised the Foreign Office statement expressing the British Government's understanding and support of the American resumption of bombing over North Vietnam? Very sternly worded it was too - it did not even allow poor President Ho Chi Minh a 'Mr' to his name. That should teach him. Presumably, Mr Michael Stewart approved the statement, if he did not instigate it."

Discussing Stewart's support for U.S. policy in Vietnam and wondering when the bombing would "become intolerable" to the Government, "as Vietcong methods rightly seem to be already", the editorial returned to the wording of the Foreign Office statement, complaining:

"One can see why the Foreign Office should 'understand' the resumption of bombing; and that ought to have been enough. The additional phrase 'and support,' with the rest of the statement, may be read to mean that by its suspension of the bombing for 37 days, and by its 'peace offensive,' the United States Administration is, in the view of the British Government, absolved from further responsibility for the continuation of the war. Perhaps Mr Stewart does believe that. But it is not only the more Left wing of his party colleagues who disagree. Nor (though he may be tempted to think so) is it only 253 voters of Hull North; many more may still not have wished to see Mr Kevin McNamara defeated. Perhaps Mr Wilson will once again use his
special gifts to overlay the simple Foreign Office view with his own subtler nuances. At any rate he ought to make it clear to the US Government in private that the Foreign Office statement does not mean what it says."

The editorial remark about Hull North referred to a recent by-election there, where the opposition to Labour Party candidate Kevin McNamara included an anti-Vietnam war candidate, Richard Gott, backed by CND and other anti-war groups. The Labour candidate won the seat and increased Labour's majority, but Gott's attempt attracted publicity.

As predicted the Prime Minister's meeting with the Parliamentary Labour Party was dominated by the issue of Vietnam. According to The Guardian, Wilson devoted most of his speech to this issue, complaining that the MPs who had signed the telegram to Fulbright had bypassed the proper channels for party grievances; stating that they "were ignorant of the backstage efforts which had been made by the British Government in the search for peace"; and then reminding back-bench MPs that "he had not yet made up his mind" on the next election date and that "it was vital that he should not have the options narrowed by the actions of his followers". Wilson also stated at this meeting that he had known and approved of the Foreign office statement in advance. However this remark was presumably for public consumption, for, according to Wilson's memoirs, he had not been informed of this statement:

"Then, suddenly, the Labour Party was deep in a new crisis over Vietnam. Hanoi had made no response to the continued American bombing-pause
and on 31st January President Johnson ordered the resumption of air attacks. The Foreign Office, falling over itself to get into line, issued a press statement supporting the President's action. By an error, this was not submitted to me for approval. I would not have agreed to a statement in those terms. The Left was justifiably outraged...."139

The public speculation on this matter brought forth, in addition to Wilson's remarks, a Foreign Office denial that there had been a "clash" over the statement, and a reaffirmation that the Prime Minister's staff had been informed in advance.140 But, despite these denials and affirmations, at the very least the impression given was of a lack of coordination on a very important statement with international implications. And in practical terms the statement had embroiled the Prime Minister in a bitter row within his party's ranks, which simmered for several days and on 7 February culminated in a motion, signed by 35 Labour MPs, condemning the Government's support for the resumption of the bombing.141 Although the House of Commons debate on South East Asia on 8 February did not occasion a left-wing revolt,142 nevertheless it was very obvious, as U.S. Secretary of Defense McNamara had earlier noted,143 that support for U.S. policy was made more difficult for the British Government by the bombing.

While Labour MPs were giving vent to their dissatisfaction over the Government's Vietnam policy, the U.S. Administration had in the meantime convened the Honolulu Conference, with its heartening emphasis on non-military topics. Both the Administration and the Saigon Government now required some sort of boost, for the
resumption of the bombing had naturally focussed attention and criticism on the war itself, U.S. goals and the South Vietnamese regime it was defending. A long Observer editorial assessed U.S. policy after the bombing pause and reached some disturbing conclusions:

"Judging by his reactions, there is a danger that President Johnson has drawn the wrong conclusion from the failure of his 37-day 'peace offensive' to draw a favourable response from Hanoi: that the only way of persuading North Vietnam to negotiate is by a crushing display of American power. Similarly, there is a grave risk that Mr Johnson may ignore the other possible explanation for this failure: that America is setting about ending the war by the wrong methods and with the wrong aims."

Discussing the type of war that the U.S. might be fighting, the editorial evaluated U.S. fighting methods:

"If one is convinced that this is simply a war of conquest by Hanoi, then it might make some sense to bomb North Vietnam - though it is still possible to question the effectiveness of bombing on a non-industrial, predominantly rural community. But if one believes that the conflict is essentially a civil war - with Northern intervention just one element - then America's present policy is self-defeating.

For if this is a civil war then both the means and aims of American policy are wrongly conceived. Large-scale bombing (whether in the North or South) and the use of other weapons of mass destruction like napalm may cow people. But a South Vietnamese Government which cannot count on the loyalty of its own people - and has no proper state apparatus - is not going to be saved by the presence of American troops."

This editorial also disposed of the idea that the conflict could be resolved with a separate South Vietnam:

"Indeed the real question is whether it is realistic to think of a Korean-type solution for Vietnam, with a separate American-backed anti-Communist State in the South. If this is a political and logistic (because of the jungles) impossibility, it is unlikely that Hanoi will agree to negotiate - whether the peace offensive
last 37 days or 37 months, whether the Americans bomb the North or not."  

The remainder of the editorial concentrated on the deleterious effects of the war on the international scene, the problems created for U.S.-Soviet relations, and China's use of the war to stir up anti-American sentiment. The Observer's solution to preventing the conflict from worsening was for Johnson to reduce the intensity and scale of the war, although a peaceful settlement would come "only as the result of a gradual evolution in attitudes" on both sides, and this meant that the U.S. would "have to go through the painful process of re-examining her political aims."  

Unfortunately for the Administration, the Honolulu Conference completely failed to direct attention away from the worrying aspects of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and in fact spotlighted a number of problems. Initially, while the conference was deliberating, on past experience it was thought that the primary topic for discussion was an expansion of the war. The Times stated this on 7 February, in a report headlined, "Extension of War Against Vietcong Predicted", which also mentioned the "commotion" caused by the hasty convening of the conference and the consequent suggestion that it was to "distract attention" from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings - a suggestion denied by the White House. But when the Conference had finished the headlines and reports in the press were scarcely more encouraging.
An Evening Standard report, headlined "This May Be A Trap For Johnson", began discouragingly: "The immediate reaction in Washington to the final stages of the Honolulu 'summit' is that for all its fanfare and panoply, it is long on words and short on detailed agreement." The report noted that the "official ten-point communique becomes unusually fuzzy" on military programmes, "referring grandly to agreement on 'growing military effectiveness'"; that there was a gap between what the U.S. "would compromise in the cause of peace and what concessions the South Vietnamese are prepared to make" - a reference to Prime Minister Ky's public refusal to ever talk with the NLF; and that there was also a gap between the U.S. adherence to its version of the Geneva Agreements entailing free elections, and Ky's reminder that Saigon Government had never signed the agreements and his dismissal of them as "'just a ceasefire agreement'". Furthermore the report stated that "more gloomy observers" reckoned that "President Johnson may conceivably have stepped into a political mantrap by his weekend embrace of Vietnam's leadership," with the result that:

"The U.S. Administration has now committed itself in the most flamboyant and public way with the present political and military leadership in South Vietnam - in particular Prime Minister Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu, the Chief of State...[Ky impressed the Americans; Rusk has high hopes of his future as a statesman] But South Vietnamese politicians are not famous for their stability or endurance. The unfortunate memory of Defence [sic] Secretary McNamara publicly embracing Prime Minister Minh Nguyen Khanh has been revised as a commentary on the events this weekend."
Khanh is now a not very notable ambassador to Madrid."

The Times article headlined, "Cool Reception In U.S. For Honolulu Declaration" (the Declaration emphasised pacification, reconstruction, and democracy in South Vietnam, that is, non-military topics) opened with a brief summary of U.S. press reaction: the Washington Post's remark that "'there was perhaps less to the conference than met the eye'", and The New York Times' "much harsher" reaction which "complained of the impression of impulsive improvisations inspired in part by domestic political considerations. The impression was that the President had no clear strategic policy." The Times exonerated Johnson of the charge of improvising the conference to detract from the Senate Hearings - but on the grounds that Johnson's visit was "necessary" because without a "social revolution" the "only alternatives are withdrawal or utter dependence on military destruction." Thus the Times defence of Johnson dismissed one charge only to highlight a much worse aspect - the grim conditions in South Vietnam. This report too mentioned the "belief here that President Johnson did wrong to lend the prestige of his office to such a man". The Guardian's Washington correspondent concentrated on the implications of Ky's refusal to talk with the NLF, noting that his refusal had "compounded the existing confusion" on this "vital issue", on which the U.S. Administration "has been deliberately vague" and which had occasioned contradictory remarks by
Johnson and his officials. And the Financial Times observed that:

"President Johnson returned to the White House this morning to find that his trip to Hawaii has if anything intensified the prevailing mood of doubt about his Vietnam policy. Neither Congress, nor the diplomatic community here, seems at present able to detect anything in the Honolulu meeting, more than just another hastily put together expedient designed primarily for domestic consumption."

The report noted the Administration's "astonishingly inept handling of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's subpoena of the Defense Secretary, and the President's intemperate attack on his critics as 'blind to experience and dead to hope'" and stated that these two factors "have given a real impression, perhaps for the first time since the war was intensified, that Mr Johnson feels out of his depth." The report termed this a "dangerous situation for a Democratic leader who faces critical decisions and may well have further unpleasant measures to put before the country."

Perhaps the most sombre review of the Honolulu Conference and U.S. policy came in a Times editorial, captioned, "After Honolulu", which summed up the Conference as "another variant on his double-barrelled approach to Vietnam."

The editorial continued:

"Just as an appeal to the Security Council went with the resumption of bombing at the end of last month, so now the renewed determination to fight on is being accompanied by an effort to make South Vietnam a place more worth fighting for. A start on the 'revolutionary transformation' of the country is to be made at once, and MR. HUMPHREY is already on his way to explain to the friendly parts of Asia what it all means."
Stating that the U.S. had "given up hope of immediate peace talks", noting that "they must consolidate if they are not to get out", the editorial assessed their "prospects" in Vietnam for being able to provide what the Vietnamese needed: "food and justice." The answer to this, the editorial concluded, required answers to two other questions:

"First, is the present Government of South Vietnam really interested enough in the proposed reforms to implement them? It has made no secret of its belief that bombs and bullets are the only things that really count. Secondly, will there not have to be strategic changes too, with military as well as social efforts concentrated in enclaves? One thing which is surely obvious is that the South must abandon the use of torture. The fact that the Communists have been as brutal in this ruthless war is all the more reason for the South to give up brutality. Others have found that you cannot win minds when you are at the same time torturing bodies."

The Daily Telegraph's Washington correspondent did find a positive side to the conference, as the article headline proclaimed: "Honolulu Clears the Air". The correspondent maintained that "three things" were now "plainer":

"The United States Government is not the prisoner of the Saigon Government in matters of strategy and negotiations. President Johnson has invested much of his prestige, and with it some of the American popular support for the war, in the stability of the Saigon regime and its success in 'pacifying' the countryside. As long as he sticks to roughly the present level of military action, as he shows every sign of doing, and puts his weight behind the reforms in South Vietnam, his critics in Congress will be as far as ever from finding some alternative policy."
However, the very fact that the article discussed these factors pointed up the problems the Administration faced.

An Observer editorial, using the framework of its 6 February analysis of U.S. policy and South Vietnam, simply remarked that there was no sign that the U.S.-South Vietnam Honolulu conference strategy would improve matters because "it is an illusion to imagine that, however sincere the American effort, the Great Society can be built in South Vietnam - without the framework of a viable political state existing there." While agreeing with the effort to improve life in South Vietnam socially and economically, the Observer pointed out that "this is hard to reconcile with the continued bombing and shelling of South Vietnamese villages and the allegedly widespread use of torture by the Saigon troops." The editorial concluded with the observation that as the facts suggested that it was not possible to create a non-Communist state "able to stand on its own feet", then Johnson's "broad policy is tragically mistaken" for: "American power is certainly able to destroy either half of Vietnam: but it may be genuinely unable to create the South Vietnamese State that it seeks to build up, no matter what methods are adopted."

Thus, the Honolulu Conference had already well and truly boomeranged in propaganda terms, actually adding to existing doubts on U.S. policy; focussing attention on differences between the U.S. and South Vietnam on negotiations; highlighting the poor state of South Vietnam
socially and economically; and engendering speculation as to whether South Vietnam's Government was interested or capable of coping with the tasks.

Towards the end of February Senate opposition to Administration's Vietnam policy acquired another burst of publicity when Senator Robert Kennedy appeared to suggest that the NLF should not only be involved in negotiations but should take part in a post-war coalition government in South Vietnam. These remarks were controversial and the Senator subsequently modified his views, but the administration had in the meantime agreed to free elections in the South and support for the government that emerged. As for when the fighting would stop, this was hard to estimate, for the President's perspective on the war appeared to alter according to the occasion and within a matter of days, and press reports did not always focus on the same aspects. For instance, on 24 February a Times report on a Johnson speech in New York highlighted his remark that "'the high hopes of the aggressor have dimmed and the tide of battle is turning'"; whereas other reports fastened on his remark that there would be no "'mindless escalation'" of the war. On 28 February the President's message at a press conference as reported in the Times was that "'we will have a long and hard road'", whereas the Sunday Telegraph's correspondent emphasised that the President "is confident that he has Congress and the Country behind him over America's involvement in Vietnam."
March began with another apparent about-turn on Vietnam by the Administration. The Guardian reported that in a speech on 1 March at the anniversary of the Peace Corps, President Johnson "implied that he would agree to the holding of free elections throughout North and South Vietnam, leading to the reunification of the country, if this was the will of the people." As The Guardian noted, it was the Diem regime's refusal "to agree to all-Vietnam elections in 1956, which...was largely responsible for the present conflict." The Guardian concluded cautiously that "today's statement appears to suggest a greater US flexibility on the question of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam to match the small step forward which the Administration has recently taken on the question of including the Vietcong in peace negotiations." James Cameron, writing in the Evening Standard, was much more forthright in demonstrating the implications of this latest Johnson statement, as the headline to his article asked: "Well, now - what in hell is the Vietnam war all about, anyway?" Cameron stated that it was the "absolute refusal of the U.S." to consider free elections that "started this war in the first place and has kept it going all these bloody years", and then he highlighted the pivotal nature of Johnson's statement and the manner of the announcement:

"This is the whole of the Hanoi case - and here we have President Johnson conceding it, as a throwaway line in a minor speech, without anyone visibly batting an eye. I am in an endless state of wonder at the capacity of a democracy not only to accept these extraordinary
things, but apparently hardly to notice them."

Cameron moved on to a discussion of U.S. policy at the time of the Geneva agreements, suggested that the war was about "self-perpetuation" since Johnson now agreed with the solution sought by North Vietnam, and recommended that it was time for Hanoi to speak out.\textsuperscript{176}

Despite the implication of Johnson's speech, The Pentagon Papers make it clear that the Administration's goal was not simply free elections in South Vietnam but defeat of the Vietcong and North Vietnam. For in the background (as noted in Section A above), the President's top advisers were now recommending the P.O.L. strikes on Hanoi and Haiphong, the aims of which were to cripple North Vietnam's war-making capacity and to keep South Vietnam independent. Thus the concession in the President's speech was only apparent, and any free elections would be held after the Administration had achieved its primary objectives. But, as the press had noted, the Administration appeared to be demonstrating flexibility.

It was in March also that General Maxwell Taylor, former Ambassador to South Vietnam, suggested in his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings that Haiphong harbour should be mined. Soon afterwards it was reported that the Joint Chiefs of staff were pressing for air raids on Haiphong.\textsuperscript{177} Both Taylor and the Joint Chiefs were publicly censured by Presidential aide Bill Moyers for making public their
views that the war should be expanded. Moyers then denied that there had been any unanimous recommendation from the Joint Chiefs to bomb Haiphong "although he indicated that such a move formed a part of the Administration's contingency planning." However, according to The Pentagon Papers the Joint Chiefs had been pressing since autumn 1965 for the P.O.L. storage tanks in Hanoi and Haiphong to be bombed.

As March ended and April began, the political unrest in South Vietnam started to surface in the press. A Guardian editorial stated that as with the "agitation that ended in the death of President Ngo Dinh Diem", the current unrest began in South Vietnam's northern provinces with "militant Buddhists and spread outwards to other communities". Noting that the disorders had a "more overtly anti-American tone than has been usual hitherto", the editorial observed:

"Whether or not they culminate in the overthrow of the Prime Minister, Air Vice-Marshals Nguyen Cao Ky and his colleagues, they have already demonstrated that in spite of the euphoria induced by nine whole months without a coup d'état, the Americans have not begun to master the political aspect of the task they have set themselves in Vietnam; and that helps to explain why their military efforts, notwithstanding the gigantic scale, have not brought them success either."

Pondering further on the political instability in South Vietnam and the fact that the U.S. "simply could not afford any more coup d'états" - hence Johnson's public embrace of Ky - the editorial stated that Johnson had now "put himself in the position of demonstrating, if there
should be another, that events are outside his control."

A Daily Telegraph editorial captioned, "Split In Vietnam", remarked that "a situation that would be unmistakeable civil war does seem to be threatening to develop...The kernel is straightforward personal rivalry." The editorial stated that the Americans were "rightly holding aloof" from the "rivalries", "although they are reported to be helping with an airlift of Government troops to Danang". Depicting the U.S. dilemma, and anxious that this unrest was an obstacle to fighting the real war, the editorial advised the Americans that their commitment to Ky should not prevent them from dropping him in favour of a better alternative:

"No one has striven more earnestly than they [the Americans] to establish civilian government in South Vietnam; but the overriding essential, while the war lasts, is that the country should have a strong Government. It is because the armed forces constitute the most solid organised power that President JOHNSON backed Marshal KY and his council of generals. If a viable alternative emerged, American commitment to Marshal KY should not stand in its way. But what is happening now seems less likely to produce such an authority than to weaken the basis of political authority itself."

While editorials and articles were commenting on the implications of the unrest in South Vietnam and the population's "genuine disgust and the growing hostility to the war", The New York Times reported that the U.S. was busy reassuring the West about its policy on Vietnam, using a relatively sophisticated version of its war objectives propaganda - buying time for South Vietnam:
"The United States has been giving an uneasy Western Europe an earnest but basically optimistic account of its prospects in the war in Vietnam. The forecast is more confident about military operations than about the political picture in Saigon, but it counts upon gradual success in the war to gain time for building a viable South Vietnamese society."

This long report noted that "the war itself is essentially remote from the consciousness of Europeans", but then detailed the areas where it did in fact impinge on European interests:

"But the war does touch indirectly on some of the vital issues in the diplomacy of the Atlantic Alliance and even the internal politics of Europe. For that reason, American officials passing through Europe, such as Under Secretary of State George W. Ball this week, make it a point to reinforce the more frequent reports given to the allies through ambassadors in Europe and in Washington and in the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Paris."

Analysing European attitudes on a national basis, the report stated that:

"In Britain there is a stout defense of the American war effort, dictated in part by conviction and in part by the wish to maintain good relations with Washington. The British blame the Communists in Moscow and Hanoi as well as Peking for not contributing to a peace conference, but they also question Washington's willingness to compromise if the opportunity ever presented itself."

Detailing the U.S. arguments on Vietnam and that Europe was "being asked...to accept as realistic the American hope that the military situation will gradually improve and even without negotiations produce what could be called a 'military solution'" through "disintegration of the Vietcong forces" or by a North Vietnamese decision
"to let the conflict wane", the report noted the
Europeans' deep-seated doubts:

"No time schedule is given the Europeans for such a solution. And the Europeans express doubt in turn not only about the underlying justification for the war but about Washington's capacity to measure its own chances any better today than in other recent periods of optimism." 190

Such a composite analysis of its allies' attitudes should have been useful to the Administration, particularly as a decision on the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong was now under consideration, and this action would be regarded as a major escalation by the rest of the world - as the Administration knew. Indeed, by 7 April press articles were already beginning to appear stating that Johnson was studying plans to bomb Hanoi and Haiphong's P.O.L. storage facilities. 191 A Times report also linked this proposal to the intention to regularly use B-52s for bombing raids in an effort to "redress the balance of strength painfully acquired after months of fighting, and now threatened by the recent civil disorders in the south and the reported communist reinforcements from the north." 192

In fact, the "recent civil disorders" to which The Times referred were soon to erupt again, for South Vietnam was now merely enjoying an interim phase of quiet before Ky reneged on his pledges to the Buddhists and demonstrators and plunged the country into even greater chaos and much bloodshed. As for the U.S. role during the March disturbances, which had earlier been construed as
that of bystander, at the end of April the Observer
Foreign News Service carried an article on the part played
by the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The article stated that
Ambassador Lodge was due in Washington for another
"reappraisal of the Vietnam situation", a review which
might be "the most agonising one yet, because Lodge
carries with him the somewhat tattered remains of the
glossy blueprint President Johnson sketched at February's
Honolulu conference for a Vietnamese 'Great Society'." The article noted the events in South Vietnam since
Honolulu and remarked that "the U.S. Embassy looks guilty
of tactical blunders." Describing the Embassy
speculation that Lodge and other Embassy staff might
resign the article continued:

"In fact it is the Thi affair that has sullied the Embassy's reputation. For publication but
not for attribution, Embassy officials claim that the United States neither encouraged nor
discouraged the ruling Directory to fire Thi. They claim that American advice was confined to
saying 'Do it if you think you can get away with it.'

In fact, it seems that Lodge strongly urged
the generals to fire Thi from the ten-general
directory on the grounds that Thi's
insubordination was weakening the fragile
framework of the central government."

Thus the U.S. Embassy, in view of its role in the
disturbances - the second act of which was soon to begin -
must also be held responsible for the subsequent shambles
and its effects on U.S. policy, as described by William
Bundy:

"Just at that moment of time [when Johnson might
have tried to set the country more on a war
footing] the South Vietnamese loused it up well
and proper, through Ky's dismissal of General
Thi and the sympathy Thi had and all that went
into the Buddhist and so-called 'Struggle Movement' that took over Da Nang and Hue and hung fire until early June. You had four months of having your hands tied, of having the whole cause made uncertain, by ineptitude and division within the ranks of those who were supposedly fighting Hanoi and the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. And that seems to have been one of the great setbacks. In the end it all worked out..."  

But as Bundy makes clear, although it "worked out" in the end, it was an episode the Administration could well have done without. For all the weaknesses of the Saigon regime - America's protege and reason for fighting the war - had been exposed. And in British political life, the unrest in South Vietnam and the rumours of intensification of the war prompted the Left-wing of the labour party to put forward another motion censuring the British Government for not referring to the intensification of the war in The Queen's Speech, following the General Election on 31 March in which the Labour government had increased its overall majority from 4 seats to 97. The Labour left-wing were also concerned with the periodic reports that the U.S. would ask for, and possibly receive, British troops, warning that this would affect the Government's majority.  

The Administration policy review at the beginning of May occasioned more press reports about the possible bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. On 10 May The Times, in a report headlined, "President faces a solemn choice on Vietnam" stated that Johnson now had to choose between intensifying the air war "to a level where the United
States will lose much of the reluctant support of its friends, and perhaps their respect", or "massive redeployment of American forces throughout the world" with "widespread repercussions at home." Analysing the reasons for this drastic choice, the report stated:

"In spite of all the costly ground action and increased bombing and gassing, the games theory approach has again failed. The pacification programme is almost at a standstill, and the infiltration of North Vietnam troops has continued to increase from a previous estimated total of 4,500 a month to perhaps 7,000. If the games theory approach has failed, it has not been discarded by the President's advisers. This is evident by their response - a choice of alternatives, both of which are further steps up the escalation ladder." The report also noted that South Vietnamese Prime Minister Ky had made remarks which "have cast some doubt on the possibility of early elections", now reportedly causing "Buddhist dissatisfaction" and though Rusk explained Ky's remarks, the overall effect constituted "another reminder that the President is being urged to intensify a war in defence of a democracy that still does not exist." The New York Herald Tribune carried two reports on this issue on the same day, the first report, headlined "Johnson seen Near Decision on Bombing Hanoi Oil Depots", and the second with a headline, "Bombing Decision Imminent". And on 15 May the Sunday Times carried a short report by Henry Brandon: "Johnson pressed to step up air war in Vietnam".

In mid-May South Vietnam erupted into political turmoil again, as Ky moved against opposition elements in Danang, Hue and Saigon. The Daily Telegraph assailed Ky
once more, recalling the past instability in South Vietnam in its disappointment with the current events:

"Each successive Government in South Vietnam has embarrassed its American allies either by being too authoritarian or by being too weak to rule. Marshal KY, it seems, has contrived to indict himself on both counts."204

A Guardian editorial depicted the uncertainty in South Vietnamese political life and the effects of the war:

"Whatever the outcome of the civil war within the civil war in Vietnam, it is hardly likely to be elections in August or September. But they looked phantasmagorical even when they were first promised last month; who can ever forecast what will happen in Vietnam one week ahead - let alone 'three to five months'? Like rural pacification - winning the hearts and minds of peasants by giving them a better life - the holding of elections is an admirable aspiration. One might even say that the war cannot be won without these things. The trouble is that in practice they have not unexpectedly proved to be quite incompatible with the other methods used to win the war; and, as those methods have increased in intensity and pervasiveness (a process roughly corresponding with the growth of the United States forces to a quarter of a million men), so the political aspects of the struggle have seemed more and more to exist in a dream world."205

The Guardian also pointed out the irrelevance of Rusk's recent statement that Ky's remarks "about hanging on to power" had been "misreported", whereupon Ky "said the same thing again louder and clearer."206 A Times editorial, captioned "War Within A War", focussed on the South Vietnamese opposition accusation that the U.S. was responsible for the current strife, dismissing the accusation as "absurd" and stating that "AIR VICE-MARSHAL KY had gone behind their backs in trying to crush the
rebels by force." In view of what was known about past U.S. conduct in South Vietnamese affairs, such as the overthrow of Diem, this assertion displayed considerable faith in U.S. integrity, although the impression given was that the Americans had not the least idea of what was going on in the country. The Observer, as often in the past, placed the Vietnam war in a global context, stating:

"The deepening chaos in Vietnam and the threatened disintegration of Nato in Europe now face the United States, and, willy nilly, their allies, with decisions of the utmost gravity. America is teetering between desperate choices. In Vietnam she is being pushed towards an ever more catastrophic involvement in war or towards an equally catastrophic sudden abandonment. [In Europe the U.S. is being urged toward more military reliance on West Germany, or gradual withdrawal into neo-isolationism...]"

In Vietnam, President Johnson's policy of trying to bring the North Vietnamese to negotiate by means of heavy bombing (now heavier than that in World War II) has plainly failed. It is not North Vietnam or the Vietcong who have cracked under the weight of increased American intervention, but the rather fragile political structure of South Vietnam."...

The Observer noted that Ky's forceful extinction of the rebellion "is obviously not the last word in the struggle within the South. It has only made even clearer the narrow military and sectarian basis of the Saigon regime on which the U.S now relies for lack of anything else." In the light of the worsening situation in Vietnam a Guardian editorial returned to the issue of Prime Minister Wilson's support for U.S. policy, explaining first the basis for British support:

"Hitherto the unspoken premise of Mr Wilson's foreign policy had been that Atlantic unity comes first. He has muffled his feelings about Vietnam because, for Britain, it was a secondary issue. American backing of NATO, the nuclear
guarantee to Europe, American support for
sterling, American cooperation over Rhodesia -
these have ranked higher in British priorities.
Therefore Mr Wilson has spoken softly on
Vietnam. Can he go on doing so? Ought he to do
so any longer?\textsuperscript{210}

The editorial then catalogued the mistakes and
consequences of U.S. policy:

"If uninhibited, the Prime Minister would
probably say that American policy on Vietnam has
been wrong on almost every count. The events at
Da Nang - with Marshal Ky's men shooting down
people whom the Americans are supposed to be
protecting - is the latest proof that the
Americans are building on sand. They went into
Vietnam with honest and idealistic motives. They
saw intervention there as part of a world-wide
responsibility to contain communism. But in
practice the hope of stability in South Vietnam
has long disappeared. Today, America's
involvement has only hurtful consequences. It
has trapped the US in one of the most barbarous
wars of this century. It is destroying life in
the country that it was meant to defend. So long
as it lasts, it poisons the prospect of better
relations with the Soviet Union. And it diverts
American attention from urgent tasks
elsewhere."\textsuperscript{211}

Dwelling on the cruelty of the war, the tonnage of bombs
dropped and the increasing numbers of casualties, the
editorial concluded with a query about the effects of
Wilson speaking "plainly", pondering whether this would
endanger Anglo-American relations, and whether President
Johnson's "might be vindictive."\textsuperscript{212} Despite this
possibility, the editorial recommended that "Mr Wilson
ought to take the risk of speaking plainly", in private to
begin with, although "a change of Britain's public stand
will have to come soon", for:

"Even if President Johnson turns against us,
others in the United States will see the force
of our argument. Common humanity cannot longer
tolerate the degree of violence now accepted in Vietnam."^{213}

It is possible that the anxiety displayed in many British press organs over events in Vietnam was sharpened by the occasional rumours that British troops might be dispatched to help the U.S. The latest rumours in early and late May were occasioned by a relaxing of tension in the Indonesia confrontation, with the suggestion that British troops not needed in Malaysia would be sent to Vietnam. Again the British Government had to publicly scotch these persistent rumours.\textsuperscript{214}

In South Vietnam, Ky's crushing of opposition in Danang created yet more resistance, including the self-immolation of several Buddhists protesting against Ky's actions and U.S. support for the Saigon junta. On 30 May President Johnson deplored the suicides and reiterated U.S. determination to continue the war.\textsuperscript{215} President Johnson's declaration prompted another \textit{Guardian} editorial stating that the Prime Minister should "speak out" against U.S. policy, out of his "loyalty to the alliance, and his concern for the wellbeing of its leading member".\textsuperscript{216} The \textit{Guardian} concluded: "There is no virtue in cheering on a friend marching blindly into a swamp."\textsuperscript{217} In fact, at this very moment Johnson was privately endeavouring to persuade Wilson to support him in a giant step into the swamp - the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong.

Johnson's grim public message was matched by North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh's declaration in English, during an interview for an Independent Television
programme, that North Vietnam would "'fight to the end'"
and would not surrender to U.S. bombing. As these
events unfolded the unease in the Labour Party was growing
stronger, as the Guardian recorded on 5 June:

"Left-wing activity, both inside and outside
Parliament, designed to change the Government's
East of Suez policy and to dissociate Britain
from American action in Vietnam, reached a new
peak at the weekend, with renewed calls from MPs
for a curb to defence spending, and the setting
up in London of a Vietnam Solidarity
Campaign." "

Discussing the actions under consideration by left-wing
MPs to force a debate on Vietnam, the report explained the
reasons:

"MPs are being forced to consider this drastic
action partly because they have become very
conscious of the growing gap between opinion in
Parliament and that in the country, which is
rapidly polarising between apathy and extremism.
Some groups outside are so filled with dismay by
the Labour Government's continued support for
American bombing that they have been reduced to
inaction. Others are moving towards outright
support for the Vietnamese National Liberation
Front and total rejection of American
policy." 

However, dissatisfaction with the Government's policy
reached higher than backbench MPs, for the Sunday Times
reported on 19 June that three left-wing Labour ministers
were preparing to "warn" the Prime Minister and "other
Labour Party leaders" that "a major showdown over Vietnam
must be expected when the Government reports to this
year's Labour Party conference." The report stated that
the Ministers' "concern over Vietnam will be strengthened
by the flood of resolutions...for debate at the 1966
labour conference...Vietnam is mentioned more than any
other topic by the local parties and trade unions which have already submitted resolutions."

Considering Wilson's reaction, the report stated: "What is uncertain, however, is how willing Mr Wilson will be to alter his present stand over Vietnam to accommodate party pressures." Thus at this stage it appears that Wilson was still assumed to be capable of following his own policy, if he so chose, despite party pressure.

At the same time that Wilson was being warned of major political storms ahead, hints of new peace moves on Vietnam were made public, accurately citing Canadian diplomat Chester Ronning's visit to Hanoi, and mentioning Averell Harriman's trip to Ottawa. The State Department's reaction "to a flurry of activity in world capitals" was reported to be "extremely cautious."

This was the last of the international peace probes before the Administration bombed Hanoi and Haiphong. As The Pentagon Papers relate, the date set for these strikes was postponed because of Ronning's mission, in order that the Administration should not be accused of wrecking it and thereby incur more international censure.

On 26 June there were signs that the Administration was about to escalate the conflict. Also the Administration's true aim of an independent South Vietnam was being made public, with the consequent implication for both the conduct and duration of the war - unless North Vietnam surrendered. The publication of this stance indicated a hardening of the Administration's attitude,
rejecting former public signs of 'flexibility'; and it also publicly undercut any basis for negotiations, for it was widely known that North Vietnam would not agree to negotiations in which the sole purpose was to achieve a permanently independent South Vietnam, and thereby awarding the U.S. at the peace table what it could not achieve on the battlefield. In the Observer it was reported that the Administration had "taken a momentous policy decision about Vietnam":

"In a marked toughening of policy, President Johnson has ruled out all ideas of a political settlement based on a neutralised Vietnam. He has decided to settle for nothing less than a Korean-type partition solution which would maintain South Vietnam, like South Korea, as a separate non-Communist State under American military protection."226

Pointing out that this "policy shift" appeared to "reverse the acceptance of a neutral Vietnam in President Johnson's earlier 14-point peace plan", the article stated that this aim had not been "made explicit" to the U.S. public because of the forthcoming mid-term elections.227 Almost in passing, the article mentioned reports "circulating today" that the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong was "imminent", and then stated that the "most hopeful official estimates" for this expected war of attrition were "12 to 18 months."228 The article concluded with a short paragraph explaining that where Britain was concerned "at the highest level in the State Department there is an unconcealed conviction that the United Kingdom is welshing on its obligations."229 Thus, the President's public stance that Britain was excused from sending troops
because of its role as Geneva Conference co-chairman, was clearly not the view taken by his own top officials. On the same day the *Sunday Times* carried a report from Washington by Henry Brandon that: "There has been an anguished exchange of communications between President Johnson and Mr Harold Wilson over the next step in the escalation of the air war in Vietnam." Brandon then evaluated Wilson's support for Johnson's policy, implicitly assessing the impact of any withdrawal:

"To President Johnson, the backing Mr Wilson has afforded him so far has been extremely important and he has not failed to show his appreciation. But now some sort of cross-road seems to have been reached in the risk-taking of escalation. The President hinted at this at his press conference a week ago when he said 'We must continue to raise the cost of aggression at its source.'"

Brandon then went on to discuss the arguments put forward to support the bombing of the Hanoi and Haiphong oil storage facilities, stating that President Johnson would have used these arguments to attempt to enlist Wilson's support, but "To the President's considerable disappointment, however, Mr Wilson has explained that he would not be able to put his stamp of approval on the broadening of these air attacks." The day before the air strikes on Hanoi and Haiphong the *Daily Express* joined the chorus of press articles on escalation with a report that Johnson planned to increase U.S. troops by another 100,000 in order to try and end the war sooner - "in months instead of years". Ever supportive, the *Daily Express* also reported that "American troops have already
seized the initiative" and that due to U.S. "superior fire power they are taking an ever-heavier toll of the Vietcong and their North Vietnamese allies." The current U.S. military strategy was reported to be "attack and punish", for "military advisers" were "convinced that the Communists can be ground down in the test of stamina." The indications were unmistakeable now that the Administration intended to carry on fighting for as long as necessary to achieve an aim - a permanently independent South Vietnam - that North Vietnam was equally dedicated to frustrating.

On 29 June the major P.O.L. storage depots at Hanoi, Haiphong and a smaller storage depot at Do Son estimated to contain 60% of North Vietnam's storage capacity, were bombed and reported to be 80% destroyed. Conforming to past practice, the Administration insisted publicly that this action was not a new escalation of the war, but was a response to Hanoi's escalation, and fielded McNamara to defend the Administration's case with his statistics. The announcement unleashed a flood of mingled comment and criticism.

Reacting swiftly, the British Prime Minister issued a statement which firmly dissociated the Government from these attacks, expressed general support for the U.S. assistance for South Vietnam and U.S. proposals for unconditional negotiations, and blamed North Vietnam for the lack of negotiations and the continued fighting. Many of the British press reports' headlines focussed on
Wilson's dissociation, thus emphasising the event, while also discussing the Administration's justifications for the air strikes. The Times' headline stated: "Mr. Wilson deplores Vietnam bombing"; The Guardian headlined its report, "US on defensive over Hanoi raids", with the subtitle, "Grieved by British 'dissociation'"; the Daily Telegraph headline stated: "Wilson Disowns U.S. Bombing", while its subtitles revealed the party differences, "Tory 'double cross' charge resented", and "Left Wing Signing Critical Motion". And The New York Times too headlined a report, "Wilson Deplores Latest Attacks", although its subtitle noted, "Backs General U.S. Policy - Thant Scores Raids on 'Populated Areas'".

Despite the reiteration of British official support for U.S. aims in South Vietnam, The Guardian remarked the "deep chagrin" in the Administration over the dissociation and the Financial Times observed that President Johnson's reaction to the British dissociation was unlikely to be anything less than intense irritation. This observation in turn generated speculation as to the effects this would have on Anglo-American relations in the future, including a forthcoming visit by Wilson to Washington in mid-July. But on the subject of the visit Whitehall reportedly "brusquely discounted the theory" that Johnson might want Wilson's visit postponed.

Other reports recounted the domestic effects of Wilson's statement, as in the Financial Times article headlined, "Wilson stand on Hanoi bombing mollifies the
However the Left was not so mollified as to refrain from tabling a Motion calling on the Government to withdraw all support for the U.S. policy in Vietnam, a course of action which Wilson refused to follow. The Daily Telegraph pointed out that Wilson's "apparently contradictory statement" had left him open to charges from the Conservatives that he was "'going to double cross'" the President, and questions from his party's Left-wing about how he could dissociate from the bombings, the "major strategy" for fighting the war, but continue to support U.S. general policy. Wilson's statement was in fact another attempt to steer a middle course and keep both his U.S. allies and his domestic critics happy. At this delicate and problematic juncture, Wilson decided to launch another peace initiative involving an approach to Moscow. As the Daily Express stated so succinctly in its headline, "Wilson's Dilemma", with the supertitle, "Bombs: Peace bid next as Left wing revolts". The New York Times also noted this planned initiative: "Well-placed sources said that the shock effect of the United States bombing of oil storage installations near Hanoi and Haiphong made it urgent, internationally and domestically, for the British Government to make a move."

Concerning the Administration's ultimate reasons for bombing the storage depots, that is to reduce North Vietnam capacity to continue the war and infiltration southwards, a Times editorial stated that if the bombings shortened the war then the Americans would be "fully
justified". But the editorial questioned whether the bombings would have this effect:

"Bombing alone has never yet won a war. The North Vietnamese have shown great endurance and ingenuity in coping with the most intensive air bombardment that has ever been launched. They have had good time to make preparations for meeting a new threat."

The editorial ended on a sombre note, remarking that:

"President Johnson believes that bombing the supply dumps will shorten the war. He may well be wrong. If he is wrong, his next decision could be even more ominous than this one."

International reaction to the bombings was summed up in a New York Herald Tribune report on 1 July, headlined "Bombing Protests Spread", which began: "Critics throughout the world today were louder than supporters of the U.S. bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong." Despite the international reaction, President Johnson declared that the intensified air strikes would continue. Meanwhile the Administration publicly endeavoured to minimise the effects of the British dissociation by stressing the general support still offered in Wilson's statement, and dismissing fears of heavy civilian casualties.

Nevertheless, The Guardian still predicted that the Prime Minister's statement would lead, in the words of its headline, to a "Cool US reception now for Mr Wilson", noting that the bombing had "cast a cloud over Anglo-American relations." And The Guardian surmised that Britain's dissociation would lead to the very result that Wilson had tried so hard to avoid - even in his statement:
"Britain's first public opposition to an American action in Vietnam is going to mean that President Johnson will be even less prepared than in the past to listen to any advice or proposals for a Vietnam settlement that Mr Wilson may wish to discuss with him."[281]

Henry Brandon's article in the *Sunday Times* on 3 July tended to confirm the suspicions that relations between the two allies would be more difficult after the British dissociation. He noted the Administration's surprise at the speed of Wilson's dissociation, and concern over his mention of "'targets touching on the populated areas of Hanoi and Haiphong' when even the Russians, it is pointed out with slight irritation, referred only to targets on the 'outskirts.'"[282] Brandon also recorded the White House's dominant reaction to the dissociation, which ungraciously suggested that Wilson had given the President an inflated view of his own political abilities:

"Nevertheless, most of the comments made around the White House are more in sadness that Mr Wilson did not feel strong enough to take a more muted line, that he does not seem to be as much in charge of his party as he privately likes to reassure the President he is."[283]

Although Brandon observed that compared with the Senate opposition which was truly "damaging and annoying", Wilson's dissociation was "viewed with a certain amount of charitable equanimity", he still judged that it was "as well that Mr Wilson is not visiting Washington this week (as had been suggested earlier before the arrangements for late July were made)...".

A week after the bombings the *Financial Times* carried a remarkably jaundiced report from its Washington
correspondent on the Administration's public efforts to rally support, and on the air strikes themselves:

"The campaign to steady American opinion behind the war effort in Vietnam is now going full blast. Yesterday there was President Johnson's statement that diplomatic reports indicate that Hanoi no longer expects a military victory. Today Mr. George Ball, Acting Secretary of State in Mr. Dean Rusk's absence, called a press conference apparently designed to amplify the point."

Paradoxically, the article stated that the Administration's "performance", stressing North Vietnam's "greater war-weariness", "confirms the general impression, which Government officials scarcely bother to deny, that the main object of the decision to bomb the oil depots was psychological." The article mentioned that the raids had "considerable military value" but the main purpose was to ward off a "feeling at home ... that the Administration was 'playing at war,'" and also to persuade North Vietnam "that its hopes of a collapse of American will were groundless." Evaluating the Administration's public statements, the report observed harshly:

"The present spate of calculated optimism is part of the same pattern. It, like the bombing itself and like the President's tough speeches in the mid-West last week, may make negotiation more difficult. But never mind. It will demonstrate to the country that the President is not only not playing but is actually getting somewhere.

All this may sound unnecessarily cynical, but it is hard to find any observer in Washington who does not agree that the Government's line has now reached heights of special pleading far beyond the mundane.

The fact is that it is many months since any responsible official here has really believed that the Vietcong or the North Vietnamese Government thought they could gain a complete victory by military means."
The report then analysed the "actual foundation" of the Administration's optimism and concluded that it was "equally suspect", for Hanoi's determination to continue the war was obvious and "it is hard to find any sign - outside the public utterances of high American officials - that it is weakening." The paradox lay in the fact that the Joint Chiefs had actually proposed these air strikes to the Administration on the grounds that they would effectively cripple the North Vietnamese war effort. But observers perceived the strikes to be psychological because of the Administration's persistent stress on its commitment to South Vietnam and the generally held belief that as the North Vietnamese no longer believed they could gain a military victory there was no overriding military reason to bomb the oil depots. What the Financial Times' correspondent and other observers apparently overlooked was the possibility that the Administration was trying for an outright military victory. But even without this suggestion appearing publicly this Financial Times report was a searing indictment of the Administration, not just the air strikes and the public statements on them.

Throughout July the effects of these air strikes continued to reverberate in Britain and around the world.

The Labour Government was forced to agree to a Parliamentary debate on Vietnam and though an Opposition Motion was defeated and the Government's own Motion, "which followed the Labour manifesto's policy on Vietnam"
was supported, it was with a considerably reduced majority due to left-wing Labour MP abstentions.260

There were demonstrations in Britain which resulted in casualties for the first time - five policemen were injured on 3 July after a march by 4,000 to the U.S. Embassy in Grosvenor Square in London, and 31 demonstrators were arrested.261 This was also the day that a *Sunday Times* report suggested that casualties in Hanoi "had been relatively heavy."262 On 18 July there were 15,000, demonstrators at a Trafalgar Square rally organised by CND.263

The Prime Minister's visit to Moscow, from 16-19 July, was preceded by student protests at Sussex University where he collected an honorary degree, and by a visit by 2 Labour MPs to the U.S. Congress to discuss Vietnam.264 Wilson's Moscow talks produced no solutions to the Vietnam problem, although according to Wilson's memoirs it may have helped to prevent Hanoi from putting captured U.S. pilots on trial.265 In any case, the Administration had again run true to form, and had been reported as publicly welcoming the peace moves by Britain and India, while being privately sceptical.266

The Russians protested that the raids endangered their merchant ships in the port of Haiphong, cancelled an athletics meeting with the U.S., and, in concert with the Warsaw Pact, issued a statement offering volunteers for the war if Hanoi wanted them.267 Rusk's reply was a blunt warning to "Stay Out".268
As if further proof were needed, on 24 July, President Johnson again reiterated the U.S. commitment, this time in a spirit of battle, as The Guardian reported: "He has decided to abandon his defensive stance on the war and embrace Vietnam before the people as a holy war..."\textsuperscript{269} It was, however, to be a holy war within strict boundaries, for when Prime Minister Ky suggested that North Vietnam should be invaded the State Department quickly reaffirmed the U.S. desire not to widen the war. This U.S. denial prompted The Guardian both to remember Ky's previous request, and to sketch a frightening scenario for the future:

"Almost two years ago to the day he was urging that North Vietnam should be bombed. That too was not part of public US policy at the time, yet within a fortnight the first Northern oil installations had been bombed, and within eight months US aircraft were hard at it day after day.

If the war continues, Air Vice-Marshal Ky will no doubt once again be getting his wish; and then, when that, too, had failed to produce the results he hopes for, his further desire may be gratified - to see the Americans take on the Chinese. In this sense, if in no other, time is on his side."\textsuperscript{270}

Finally, Wilson's visit to Washington on 29 July appeared to contradict the predictions that the Prime Minister's reception would be less than warm. According to Wilson's memoirs the visit passed off with no difficulties - although the President had once more just been refused the token British force that he had long desired - and in fact the President toasted Wilson in hugely flattering terms.\textsuperscript{271} Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the British dissociation did affect the relationship between
the two allies' leaders, and that it could be expected to further affect the reception accorded by the Administration to British peace initiatives - a reception which had been erratic at the best of times, and was often unenthusiastic. 272

It was now clear to most observers, and abhorrent to many, that the war in Vietnam was set firmly and irrevocably on a course involving ever-greater escalation and carnage, and that the Johnson Administration's statements on a 'limited war' referred to geographical limits, not to the scale of the destruction. Furthermore, the bombing of the P.O.L. depots was perceived as a new step in the escalation of the war. And it was this U.S. willingness to continue escalating the conflict, at the risk of inflicting civilian casualties on North Vietnam, that had caused Britain, its closest ally and staunchest supporter, to publicly regret this action and to reaffirm its support for U.S. policy with a pointed reference to the aim of a negotiated settlement, thus effectively defining the type of military conduct of the war that Britain would, and would not, condone.

D.) British Government Reaction and Opinion

In the months from January to July 1966 the British Government encountered two major difficulties in pursuing its policy of support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The greatest difficulty was caused by the U.S. escalation of the war when it bombed North Vietnam's P.O.L. storage facilities, which outraged the Government's Left-wing
back-benchers. The second major difficulty occurred earlier, when the U.S. resumed the bombing of North Vietnam at the end of January, which infuriated the left-wing. However, as a Labour Prime Minister attempting to balance the demands of the Labour Left-wing against his own policy requirements and the needs of his U.S. ally, Wilson also ran into another problem: Whitehall's propensity to support U.S. policy more strongly than the Prime Minister and most of the Government. This phenomenon manifested itself publicly in the summaries of 'Whitehall's views' which appeared from time to time in the press, and in Foreign Office statements. In the case of the latter, this also tended to place the Foreign Secretary publicly on one side of a fence which the Prime Minister was clearly trying to straddle in the interests of domestic political harmony.

A clear example of this type of problem occurred at the end of January when the U.S. resumed the bombing of North Vietnam after a 37-day pause and the Foreign Office put out a supportive and sympathetic statement, which was subsequently criticised by Labour MPs and led to the tabling of a Motion to censure the Government. As Wilson makes clear in his memoirs, and as press reports suggested at the time, he was consulted in advance neither about the intention to issue a statement nor about the wording. Nevertheless, as Prime Minister, it was Wilson who was the prime target for criticism over the Government's policy of support for the U.S. and who was called upon to defend
this statement in concert with the Foreign Secretary. Probably any Government statement on the resumption of the bombing which did not deplore this action would have antagonised the labour Left-wing, but the wording of the Foreign Office statement was virtually certain to enrage it. Thus, this statement involved the Government in a quite unnecessary row with its back-benchers.

Although the Administration knew its terms for negotiations were unacceptable to Hanoi, amounting to surrender, it is evident that on occasions the Administration used the British to undertake diplomatic probes on negotiations. In February 1966, just after the resumption of the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, Rusk sent a message to British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart about indications from the Russians "within the last 24 hours" that Hanoi "wishes to maintain contacts with us" and might be interested in a reconvened Geneva Conference. Rusk suggested that the British approach the Russians:

"While we cannot yet guage the validity of these indicators, we remain eager, as HMG knows, to explore every opening and exhaust all possibilities of getting negotiations started. Therefore, it seems to us that another probe by UK of Soviet willingness to join them as co-chairman in convening a new Geneva Conference is worthwhile. Goldberg took up this matter with Caradon this morning. [Caradon was a Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in the British Foreign Office]

As UK knows, UN SC [United Nations Security Council] has adjourned subject to call of President while consultations are undertaken. We are quite content to let adjournment continue while private efforts to get talks going are in train and have no desire to let formal SC debate cut across such efforts. We would hope that soundings of this kind could be undertaken
expeditiously so we can get clearer picture among other things, of how to play SC adjournment. 275

This message from Rusk helps to explain the British Government's insistence, despite evidence to the contrary on occasions, that the Administration was really interested in negotiations. This effort to reconvene the Geneva Conference sank without trace, as did all the others. However, in February 1967, the British launched an attempt to get negotiations started with the help of Soviet Premier Kosygin who was visiting Britain. The attempt was an embarrassing, and embittering, failure, due in part, it seems, to British over-eagerness and U.S. distrust. 276 But, it did enable the British Government to gain first-hand experience of the difficulties encountered by other would-be mediators when dealing with the U.S. on the subject of negotiations.

In June 1966, Wilson dissociated from the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam's P.O.L. depots around Hanoi and Haiphong. Although Wilson had previously informed Johnson in December 1965 that he could not support this action, President Johnson still made considerable efforts in May and June 1966 to persuade Wilson to change his mind. Wilson again refused, in strong terms, and the President then sent a special envoy to brief U.S. Ambassador Bruce in London, and if Bruce judged it wise, also to brief Wilson on the proposed bombings in the hope of changing his mind. 277 After this briefing Wilson sent a letter to the President thanking him and explaining why he would still be forced to dissociate:
"However,...I am bound to say that, as seen from here, the possible military benefits that may result from this bombing do not appear to outweigh the political disadvantages that would seem the inevitable consequence. If you and the South Vietnamese Government were conducting a declared war on the conventional pattern...this operation would clearly be necessary and right. But since you have made it abundantly clear - and you know how much we have welcomed and supported this - that your purpose is to achieve a negotiated settlement, and that you are not striving for total military victory in the field, I remain convinced that the bombing of these targets, without producing decisive military advantage, may only increase the difficulty of reaching an eventual settlement...."

Thus, the Administration's decision to fight an undeclared war had not only facilitated Senate criticism and opposition, but, in conjunction with its rhetoric stressing its desire for negotiations, formed the primary reason why its major ally would now have to denounce a U.S. military action and specify the terms of its continued support. For while the U.S. military saw no reason to limit either weapons or types of operation to fight and win the war, and had persuaded the Administration to agree to this, the British Prime Minister clearly perceived the disparity between the declared limited ends of U.S. policy - a negotiated settlement - and the unlimited means used to achieve this, when the U.S. and North Vietnam were not officially at war. Furthermore, as the Prime Minister also perceived, the means used by the U.S. would put the desired goal even further out of reach.

In his letter Wilson reiterated that despite "our reservations about this operation", Britain would continue
to support U.S. policy as defined in President Johnson's Baltimore speech, and he then predicted the consequences of the bombings for the British Government:

"But, while this will remain the Government's position [support for U.S. Baltimore aims], I know the effect on public opinion in this country - and I believe throughout Western Europe - is likely to be such as to reinforce the existing disquiet and criticism that we have to deal with." 27a

In the light of the earlier episode in January, it is noteworthy that when Wilson dissociated from the U.S. bombing of the oil depots in Hanoi and Haiphong, the statement was issued first from 10 Downing Street, and then repeated in Parliament. And as Wilson's memoirs make clear, the Foreign Office would have preferred him to issue a much 'softer' statement:

"On the night of 28th-29th June the bombs fell...I decided that I would not wait for the inevitable private notice question. My office gave notice to the Speaker that I would make a statement. But before that I had prepared a statement to issue from No. 10, for the world's press were demanding answers from Downing Street and the Foreign Office to their questions. The Foreign Office were warned that there should be no private enterprise comments - even on non-attributable terms - such as had occurred the previous January over the end of the bombing pause.

The Foreign Office sought to water down my draft. At the very last they were hoping for a less forthright statement. Hopefully, they prepared a counter-draft of the controversial passages. Politely, but firmly, I indicated to them into which part of their filing system they were free to put it." 280

The Foreign Office's efforts to "water down" Wilson's draft presumably indicated not only its desire to support U.S. policy through issuing a not too-strenuous dissociation statement, but also some anxiety as to U.S.
reaction to this statement. Although Wilson states in his memoirs that there was absolutely no indication during his visit to Washington after the P.O.L. bombings and his dissociation, that relations between him and President Johnson - and thus to some extent between the U.S. and Britain - had changed on the Vietnam issue, William Bundy thought otherwise when considering the P.O.L. raids and the aftermath:

"...of course, that was the break point in the President's relationship with Wilson too. And the files will show that we told Wilson well and truly what we were going to do and why we were going to do it, and he said, 'Well, I don't like it, I may have to dissociate myself from it,' and in the event he did dissociate. And there's no doubt that in the President's mind this established Wilson, as far as I know unchangingly, as a man not to go to the well with."281

According to Bundy the President's perception of Wilson after the dissociation also added to his distrust of Wilson's attempts at peace-making. Discussing the British-Soviet attempt in February 1967 involving Wilson and Soviet Premier Kosygin, Bundy explained the President's attitude on an important message on the U.S. negotiating position that he had just sent to North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh:

"So we had, in effect, to have Wilson give the same message to Kosygin that the President had sent in the letter to Ho, but without telling Wilson or Kosygin, but Wilson particularly, about the letter because the President just didn't trust Wilson, particularly since the Haiphong P.O.L. disassociation. He thought he was trying to make time politically, and I have no doubt that was as far as it went a correct judgement."282
Thus, the Administration perceived Wilson's dissociation almost as a form of betrayal, despite receiving ample prior notice of his intention, and despite the fact that the U.S. Embassy in London had kept the Administration fully informed of the political difficulties that the British Government faced on this issue. The Embassy's analysis was reinforced in a U.S. Department of State Intelligence Note of 15 July, evaluating Wilson's forthcoming visit to Moscow, in which it was stated that:

"From the moment that the United States bombed POL facilities near Hanoi and Haiphong, Wilson faced a serious left-wing revolt within his own party. Many Laborite MP's were already disturbed by Mr. Wilson's incomes policy, his 'east of Suez' defense policy, and his slide toward favoring UK entry into the EEC. Although the Prime Minister immediately dissociated the UK from the US bombing action, the left-wingers called for a complete disavowal of the US policy in Vietnam --a step which Wilson resolutely refused to take."

Nevertheless, even though Wilson's difficulties were acknowledged in Washington, Henry Brandon's comment in the Sunday Times after the dissociation seems an apt summary:

"The difficulty with President Johnson is that he is full of understanding of the domestic political problems of other statesmen as long as they do not conflict with his own. The British Government's dissociation from this new stage in the war has given Mr Johnson's critics new ammunition and anything that tends to weaken the President's hand at this stage rankles."

It seems that Wilson's dissociation marked a more important turning point for Johnson in some respects than it did for the British Government. For the Government still endeavoured to support U.S. policy on Vietnam within
the limits defined in the dissociation statement, whereas Johnson's distrust admitted of no ameliorating factors.

E.) British Public opinion

In January 1966 Gallup Poll put its standard question to respondents on approval or disapproval of recent American armed action in Vietnam and compared the figures with the November 1965 poll. The January poll recorded a plurality of 45% who disapproved - a 12% increase; 31% who approved - a 4% decrease; and 24% who didn't know - a 12% decrease. Thus the decrease in the number of don't knows roughly corresponded to the rise in disapproval, indicating that the majority of the public was now taking a stance on the war and tilting the balance against the U.S. This decline in either apathy or ignorance was reinforced in Gallup's next question on whether the U.S. should continue its present efforts in Vietnam or pull out its forces with 39% in favour of the U.S. pulling out - a 6% increase over the June 1965 figure; 35% in favour of continuing present efforts - a 2% increase over June; and 26% who didn't know - an 8% decrease from June. And again the percentage opposing U.S. efforts in Vietnam had grown.

In February Gallup posed the question of whether respondents would approve or disapprove if the British Government were to send troops to fight alongside the South Vietnamese in Vietnam, registering 78% disapproval, compared with the figure of 69% in August 1965. The desire to keep British troops out of the war was clearly
strengthening. Gallup Poll also conducted a Top Gallup of "610 names...selected at random from the 1965 edition of Who's Who" and discovered that a large majority - 71% - of these respondents, unlike the national poll cross section, favoured the U.S. continuing its present military efforts in Vietnam. However, in answer to a question on which side was winning 64% judged that neither side was winning, suggesting that the U.S. Administration's optimism and military build-up had been discounted. This was further reinforced in the figures for those favouring one side or another, for 14% thought the Communists were winning, while 10% thought the South Vietnamese were winning - which was the exact inverse of the national poll's result in November 1965. A vast majority of Top Gallup respondents - 94% - thought that the U.S. would not be justified in using nuclear weapons in the war. And on the lack of negotiations, 44% reckoned that the Chinese were responsible; 31% the North Vietnamese; 24% the Vietcong; 13% the Americans; 8% the Russians; 3% the South Vietnamese; and 18% didn't know. Thus the Chinese were seen as the main culprits, followed by the other Communist countries, with the U.S. being blamed by a small percentage.

In May Gallup polled public opinion on the topic of British support for U.S. policy in Vietnam. The public was almost evenly split, with 34% stating that Britain was right to continue its support; 32% stating Britain was wrong; and 34% who didn't know. There were no previous
figures for a comparison, but considering that America was regarded as Britain's closest ally, these percentages suggest unease about British support for U.S. policy.

In June Gallup again asked whether the U.S. should continue its present efforts or pull out. The figures differed only marginally from figures published in January. The same percentage - 39% - still thought the U.S. should pull out; but those who favoured the U.S. continuing its present efforts had dropped 2% to 33%; while the don't knows had increased by 2% to 28%. By contrast with this set of figures, 40% now thought that Britain was right to continue supporting U.S. policy in Vietnam - a 6% increase over the previous month; the same total of 32% reckoned Britain was wrong; and the percentage of don't knows had decreased proportionately, by 6% to 28%. This small fluctuation in favour of supporting the U.S., co-existing with the growing number who actually wanted the U.S. to pull out of Vietnam, could have been indicative of a type of 'rally round the ally' syndrome, provided, of course, that supporting the ally did not involve British troops, a course which drew its customary large percentage - 75% - of disapproval.

Gallup also produced a survey of company directors in June and recorded 70% of respondents in favour of continued British support for U.S. policy in Vietnam. This result contrasted strongly with the general public's attitude in June, which only marginally favoured continued support over non-support, with a relatively high
proportion of don't knows. It seems that it was the issue of Vietnam which attracted specific support from the company directors, for on questions of general foreign policy there was no strong demand to work more closely with the U.S.. Possibly this was because Vietnam was a concrete problem involving an ally and was thus felt to demand a specific response, or possibly it was the anti-communist framework that the U.S. set the conflict in that drew this reaction. However, as the survey noted, this question was put to company directors before the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam's P.O.L. depots and the British dissociation.

In June National Opinion Polls covered the topic of Vietnam, but only in passing, as one of a number of "issues on which Labour has been less than united." Despite the problems that the Labour Government had had with its Left-wing on the issue of Vietnam, it seems that NOP had not thought the issue even worth mentioning until June and still did not bother to conduct a poll.

July's Gallup Poll registered another fluctuation on the question of British support for U.S. policy in Vietnam, this time a 6% swing towards disapproval, now totalling 38%; with a 7% drop in approval, to a level of 33%; and a 1% rise in don't knows, standing at 29%. As the fieldwork for this survey was completed before the U.S. P.O.L. bombings, this fluctuation could have been related to the political turmoil in South Vietnam, the latest, and most violent, phase of which had begun in mid-May and had
just ended during the week that this report was compiled. However, when respondents were asked whether it was most
important for Britain to support the U.S. in Vietnam or to attempt to get peace talks started, an overwhelming
majority - 81% - deemed the latter option the most important for Britain. The remainder were almost evenly
split between support for the U.S. - 9% - and don't knows -10%. Thus the vast majority of the general public thought
it far more important to settle the conflict than to support Britain's ally.

On the issue of support for the U.S. continuing its efforts in Vietnam or pulling out, there was still a plurality in July favouring a U.S. withdrawal, up 1% from June to 40%; however the number of don't knows had declined by 5% to 23%, while the number of respondents who favoured the U.S. continuing its present efforts had risen to 37% from 33% in June. Again these figures were recorded before the P.O.L. bombings, but undoubtedly public opinion appeared to be polarising over Vietnam, with a lesser degree of apathy or ignorance.

Gallup Poll's next question was put during the week of the P.O.L. bombings (30 June-5 July), and registered a majority of respondents, 72%, who thought that the U.S. should agree to peace talks even if there was a risk that South Vietnam would be taken over by the communists. Only 13% of respondents thought that the U.S. should not agree to talks, while 15% didn't know. This again demonstrated the public's overriding concern with ending the conflict,
whatever the outcome in South Vietnam. And the public disapproval of sending British troops to South Vietnam had now increased by 6% from June's published figures, to 81%; with only 8% in favour of sending troops, a decrease of 5%; and 11% with no opinion, a decrease of 1%.

In July National Opinion Polls did conduct a survey of public opinion on Vietnam, compiled after the Government's dissociation from the P.O.L. air strikes. NOP compared its July figures on whether or not "Britain should support the Americans in Vietnam" with those recorded in December 1965, in answer to a slightly different question on whether respondents approved of "British support for American policy in Vietnam." This comparison showed that disapproval had increased by 12% to reach 45% in July; approval had also increased, by 7%, to total 43%; and the number of don't knows had dropped by 19% to a figure of 12%. These figures, registering a sharper polarisation on the issue of support for the U.S., led NOP to conclude that: "It seems that public opinion has moved against the United States." However, these figures differed considerably from Gallup Poll's July and August findings on its own question of British support for U.S. policy in Vietnam, which still showed the public to be more evenly divided three ways. This discrepancy poses the question as to whether NOP's surveys were polling more politically involved respondents, for their findings were always broken down on a party political basis, whereas Gallup Poll's surveys did not show any political party
affiliation. Thus, it is theoretically possible that Gallup Poll's answers came from respondents with less interest in or knowledge of politics — although as Gallup Poll's respondents were quite clear on the issues of peace, the U.S. pulling out, and no British troops for Vietnam, this theory seems unlikely to account for this discrepancy. The other possibility is that the precise question asked had something to do with the answer, for NOP's question in December about support for U.S. policy in Vietnam had elicited a result that bore more resemblance to Gallup Poll's findings asking the same question in July and August — principally a three-way division with a slowly declining proportion of don't knows. In any case, NOP's July question on support for the U.S. did show a marginally greater percentage opposing British support for the effort in Vietnam.

On the issue of bombing military targets in North Vietnam, a majority thought that the Americans were right to do so—58%—as against 30% who thought they were wrong, and 12% with no opinion. However NOP also polled respondents on whether the Americans would be justified in bombing civilian targets in North Vietnam, and recorded a huge majority opposed to this course: 87% thought they would be wrong; 6% thought they would be right; and 7% had no opinion. As NOP pertinently remarked: "In the context of Vietnam the difference between a military and a civilian target may often be small, but it seems reasonable to infer that if the bombing causes heavy
casualties Britain [sic] opinion will harden still further against the Americans."

Asked whether Britain should send troops to Vietnam if the Americans requested them, 65% thought troops should not be sent; 23% thought they should be sent; and 12% had no opinion. Compared with Gallup Poll's findings for July, NOP's figures registered 16% less disapproval of this proposal, and 15% more approval, with roughly the same percentage of don't knows. The difference in the figures could once again be due to the difference in the questions which were asked, for where NOP asked its respondents to consider the dispatch of British troops at American request, Gallup Poll asked its respondents about the dispatch of troops to fight alongside the South Vietnamese - and whereas America was Britain's ally, South Vietnam was not.

Gallup Poll's August survey incorporated more data recorded after the P.O.L. bombings. Asking its standard question on U.S. armed action in Vietnam, this poll registered a clear trend towards opposing U.S. action - 49% now, which was a 4% increase over the last time this question was asked in December 1965 (appearing in the January 1966 survey). Approval had remained static at 31%, so it was the don't knows which were decreasing, now totalling 20%. Now, almost half of the British public disapproved of U.S. action in Vietnam.

The percentage of respondents favouring a U.S. withdrawal was also rising - 41% in August, compared with
40% in July's poll; those in favour of the U.S. continuing its present efforts had dropped 2% to 35%; while the don't knows increased by 1% to 24%.

Curiously, the percentage of respondents approving of British support for U.S. policy in Vietnam had risen 9% since the figures published in July (based on June fieldwork) and now stood at 42%; with a 1% decline in those opposing British support, now 37%; and an 8% drop in the number of don't knows to 21%. Thus, although the British public favoured a U.S. withdrawal and disapproved of armed action, there was still a tendency to want to support Britain's ally in general terms. Nevertheless, Wilson's public disapproval of the "recent American bombing in North Vietnam" was approved by 64% of respondents; disapproved by 23%; while 13% had no opinion.

Public opinion had not greatly changed on the issue of British troops fighting with the South Vietnamese: 75% still opposed the idea, a marginal decrease of 6% since the immediate impact of the P.O.L. bombings; 14% approved - a 6% increase; and the same 11% percent didn't know.

The large majority which judged it more important for Britain to get peace talks started than to support the Americans had increased 6% since the P.O.L. bombings to 87%; with a 1% decline to 8% in those favouring support for the U.S over peace talks; and a drop from 10% to 5% in those with no opinion.

Posing a much simpler question than that published in the September 1965 poll, Gallup ascertained that the North
Vietnamese and Vietcong were blamed by a majority of 31% for the lack of negotiations; with 11% blaming the South Vietnamese Government and Americans; 12% blaming unnamed "others"; and 46% being unable to vouch an opinion. Thus U.S. Administration propaganda blaming the North Vietnamese and Vietcong exclusively for the lack of negotiations was believed by only a third of the public, disbelieved by a tenth, and a source of confusion or indifference to almost half.

Finally, on the question of which side was winning the war there was a clear trend to believing that there was a military stalemate. Compared with the figures published in December 1965 (based on late November fieldwork), 56% now judged that neither side was winning - a 20% rise. Of those who opted for one or the other side, 16% thought the South Vietnamese Government and Vietcong were winning - a 2% increase; while only 4% thought the North Vietnamese and Vietcong were winning - a 6% decrease. The number of don't knows had declined by 16% to 24%. Thus, it seems that the U.S. military build-up and public optimism on the war had not persuaded the majority of the British public that the U.S. was winning - more of the public were venturing an opinion and this was increasing the overall percentage of the public perceiving a military stalemate. However, among the minority of respondents who did not believe there was a stalemate, the U.S. and South Vietnamese were believed to be gradually gaining ground and, as might have been the case in
December, this could have been a reflection of the increased amounts of U.S. weaponry and troops, which were perhaps perceived as validating the U.S. official optimism.

Thus, by July and August 1966 a majority of the general public no longer approved of U.S. armed action in Vietnam; thought that the U.S. should withdraw; believed that Britain's main task was to get negotiations started rather than to support an ally; preferred the U.S. to start peace talks on Vietnam even if a communist government were the outcome; and approved wholeheartedly of Britain staying out of the war. In fact, the general public was beginning to part company with the British Government over the issue of Vietnam.9

That section of the British public which had manifested its concern and disapproval about the war more vociferously and tangibly, grew more vigorous in its opposition. From the time that the Americans resumed the bombing of North Vietnam after the 27-day pause, the demonstrations of opposition outside and inside Parliament multiplied. There was a demonstration on 6 February organised by the British Council for Peace in Vietnam which drew hundreds to Trafalgar Square, after which there was a march to the U.S. Embassy to hand in a petition, and then a rally in Hyde Park.2e Labour MPs censured the Government's Vietnam policy and Stewart and Wilson were heckled at a party meeting. On 13 February there was
another protest against the war outside Parliament, during which 21 people were arrested.299

When Wilson went to a private dinner party in Oxford, on 22 March, he was heckled by a crowd complaining of his failure to keep his election promises and his support over Vietnam, and 150 policemen had to be sent to Oxford in the very early morning to control the crowd.290 The next day Wilson was heckled about Vietnam at a Labour Party rally in Ayr.291

On 17 April it was reported that the Stars and Stripes had been torn down from Westminster Abbey, where the Washington Cathedral choir was due to sing during the 900th Abbey anniversary.292 On 18 April a BBC "Panorama" programme was shown on television on the training of U.S. soldiers for Vietnam. The programme occasioned horrified letters to The Times and The Guardian, protesting that Americans were being trained to use torture in Vietnam.293 The U.S. Embassy then had to issue a denial, stating that the American troops were being trained to withstand torture, not inflict it.294 On 25 April a number of well-known figures - academics, arts figures and trade unionists - published a full-page advertisement in The Times entitled "Labour Voters and Vietnam", which expressed opposition to U.S. policies in Vietnam and the British Government's "endorsement of those policies."295 On 26 April it was reported that Labour MPs had tabled a Motion regretting the lack of reference to Vietnam in The Queen's Speech.296
In early May 13 people were arrested at a ceremony at Leeds University, where the British Foreign secretary was accepting an honorary degree and received a rough reception over Vietnam.

On 6 June there were more reports of Labour Left-wing unrest on Vietnam. The Communist Party announced a major campaign to stop U.S. aggression in Vietnam, involving a series of meetings, with Communist Party activity in every major city in Britain from 12 June to 3 July, culminating in a rally on 3 July in Trafalgar Square. Thirty-five major meetings were planned and 400,000 leaflets had been produced for the campaign. The Guardian reported that 54 Labour MPs were going to join a Vietnam Declaration which was to be sent to all constituency Labour parties, which was intended to force the Government to end its support for the U.S. in Vietnam.

After the U.S. bombing of the P.O.L. depots near Hanoi and Haiphong, the pace and scale of protest quickened still further. On 30 June an advertisement appeared in The Times signed by 80 senior members of Southampton University deploiring the Government’s support for America. Also on the same day 250 supporters of the Committee of 100 gathered in Trafalgar Square and then marched to the U.S. Embassy; there were some arrests. Senior members of Oxford University sent a telegram to Wilson urging the Government to prevent further U.S. escalation. Over 100 Labour MPs signed a motion
denouncing the bombings and calling on the Government to
dissociate completely from U.S. policy in Vietnam, and
then pressured the Government to hold a debate on Vietnam.
In the light of the uproar, the Government conceded and
the debate took place on 7 July. Though the Opposition
amendment was defeated and the Government's motion passed,
the abstentions by 32 Labour MPs indicated the depth of
dissatisfaction among the Labour left-wing with the
Government's Vietnam policy, and held the promise of more
trouble in the future. The Communist Party rally in
London on 3 July took place as planned, attended by
between 4,000 and 5,000 demonstrators. Violence erupted
outside the U.S. Embassy; 5 policemen were injured and 31
people were arrested. The Times carried letters of
protest on 4 and 5 July from academics at Cambridge
University and Liverpool University. On 5 July The
Guardian reported an anti-bombing march by 1,000
demonstrators. Also on 5 July, The Times and The New York
Times reported that the American Independence Day
celebrations in London were gatecrashed by 2
demonstrators, one of whom toasted the "dead and dying in
Vietnam" before being escorted out. The Sunday Telegraph
reported that there were 50 or more organisations
concerned with Vietnam, the majority of which the
newspaper classed as "pro-Hanoi and violently
anti-American", and some of which supplied aid to the
Vietcong. On 17 July CND organised another protest
rally in Trafalgar Square with 15,000 participants and a
Labour MP as a speaker on the platform; letters were delivered to the three political party headquarters after the rally, calling for dissociation from U.S. policy in Vietnam. At the end of July, on the eve of the Prime Minister's visit to Washington there was a lobby of MPs at Westminster, urging them to reverse the Government's policy of support for the U.S. over Vietnam.

Thus, by the end of July opposition to the war had grown both in scope and intensity. Many well-known and respected figures had articulated their anxiety and revulsion over U.S. policy in Vietnam, a principal focus of which was U.S. war methods, particularly the bombing. The size and frequency of demonstrations was increasing, as was the attendant rowdiness. U.S. escalation of the war could always be relied on to provoke a series of demonstrations, but in the meantime the fact of the war itself, and the Government's support - even though 'qualified' - provided the reason for the demonstrations to continue and escalate.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 6


3. Ibid, P491; Memorandum by Assistant Secretary of Defence McNaughton: "Some Paragraphs On Vietnam", third draft, 19 January 1966. (Square brackets added.)

4. Ibid, loc cit. (Bold type and italics in original.)


7. Ibid, loc cit.

8. Ibid, loc cit.


10. Ibid, loc cit.

11. Ibid, loc cit.


15. Ibid, PP475 - 476.


17. Ibid, loc cit.

18. Ibid, P475. (Square brackets added.)


22. Ibid.
23. Ibid, P102. See Section D for a more comprehensive discussion of this episode and message.
24. Ibid, P104.
25. Ibid, loc cit. (Square brackets added.)
27. Ibid, loc cit.
28. Ibid, P107
29. Ibid, P137
31. Ibid, PP121 - 158.
35. Ibid, P481.
36. Ibid, P482.
37. Ibid, loc cit. (Square brackets added.)
38. Ibid, loc cit.
39. See Chapter 5, Section C.
40. Ibid.
42. U.S.I.S., American Embassy, London: "President Johnson Speaks To The Nation On Vietnam. (Text of a nation-wide radio and television address by President Johnson at 1500 gmt Monday, 31 January 1966 as received live via VOA)."
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, P301.
46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.


50. Ibid, loc cit.

51. Ibid, P95.

52. See Note 23, Section A and also Section D.


54. Ibid, loc cit.

55. Ibid, loc cit.

56. Ibid, PP481 - 482.


60. *The Times*, 1 January 1966: "Mr. Goldberg To See Mr. Wilson Today".


64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

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68. Ibid.
69. The Guardian, 1 January 1966: "Bombing Pause Not An Ultimatum".

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73. Sunday Telegraph, 2 January 1966: "Emergency In U.S. If Peace Moves Fail".

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75. See Note 72, Financial Times, 5 January 1966.


77. The Guardian, 5 January 1966: "Mr. Johnson's Vietnam Peace Moves Over Dramatised".

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Cooper, The Lost Crusade, P296.

83. The Times, 8 January 1966: "Peace Offensive".

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. The Times, 6 January 1966: "Pentagon Threat To Resume Bombing".

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. The Times, 5 January 1966: "Mr. Wilson Sends Private Appeal To Mr. Kosygin; Faith In America's Sincerity On Vietnam Affirmed".


94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. *Observer*, 9 January 1966: "Terms For Talking".

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.


100. *The Times*, 10 January 1966: "U.S. Faces Possibility Of Wider Asian War".

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.


104. Ibid.


107. Ibid.


109. Ibid.


112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.


116. Ibid.

117. The Times, 29 January 1966: "Britain Backs U.S. Decision To Bomb N. Vietnam".

118. The Guardian, 29 January 1966: "LBJ Expected To Resume Bombing Soon".


120. See Observer, 30 January 1966: "Bomb Pause May End Soon".


122. Ibid.

123. The Times, 29 January 1966: "Hanoi's Terms For Peace".


128. The Times, 1 February 1966: "Protest By Labour And Liberal MPs". The number of MPs varied in report; The Guardian reported 93 on 1 February and 96 on 2 February.


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135. Ibid.


137. The Guardian, 3 February 1966: "Labour Rebels Given Reminder That Date Of Election Is Open".

138. Ibid.


140. The Guardian, 3 February 1966: "Clash Over Statement Denied".

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142. For an account of this debate see The Times, 9 February 1966: "Mr. Wilson Fights A Battle On Two Fronts".

143. See Chapter 5, Note 28.

144. The Observer, 6 February 1966: "Escalating Down".

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152. The Times, 10 February 1966: "Cool Reception In U.S. For Honolulu Declaration".

153. Ibid.

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167. Ibid.


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173. Ibid.


175. Ibid. (Italics in original.)

176. Ibid.


179. See Section A.

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182. Ibid.

183. Daily Telegraph, 5 April 1966: "Split In Vietnam".

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223. Ibid.


225. See Sections A and B.


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229. Ibid.


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251. Ibid.


253. Ibid.

254. Ibid.


256. Ibid.

257. Ibid.

258. Ibid.

259. Ibid.

260. See *The Times*, 8 July 1966: "Labour MPs Abstain In Vietnam Vote".


262. *Sunday Times*, 3 July 1966: "Raids On Hanoi Freeze Hopes Of Peace; Casualties Believed High In Capital".


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272. See Section D.

273. See Section C; Wilson memoirs quoted in Note 139.


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281. William Bundy, Oral History Interview, (Tape 3), P36.


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CONCLUSION

This thesis examines the Administration's propaganda campaign on the Vietnam War between January 1965 and July 1966 and its impact on its British audiences, both governmental and public. When the Administration began escalating the war in February 1965, it was supported by both the British Government and a majority of British public opinion. But by July 1966, the British Government had been forced to dissociate from the P.O.L. bombings, thus publicly defining those U.S. policy objectives in Vietnam, and the military methods used to attain them, that the Government felt it could still subscribe to and introducing a more public element of judgement and restriction on its future support for U.S. efforts in Vietnam. And British public opinion now opposed the U.S. venture and fluctuated on the British Government's policy of even defined and limited support for the Americans. The British Government's dissociation was a blow to the Administration and thus, ultimately, the U.S. official propaganda campaign failed to retain the degree of British Government support that the Administration wanted.¹

The failure of the U.S. campaign was not due to a lack of effort or awareness on the Administration's part, for The Pentagon Papers show clearly that the Administration assigned an important place to propaganda in its war policy, was aware of the difficulties faced by its ally in supporting U.S. policy, and made considerable
efforts to keep this ally - and others - 'on board'. The Administration was initially aided in this task by much of the British press, which performed a dual role, in that it relayed Administration statements to the British public, but also formed part of the British audience for U.S. propaganda and analysed Administration statements on the war, drawing and presenting its own conclusions to the British public. The press also constituted a valuable source of feedback for the Administration on other government's and public's reactions (including its own) to U.S. official statements and actions during the conflict.

When the conflict began to escalate, the main sections of the British press were not unsympathetic to U.S. policy in Vietnam - in fact the Daily Telegraph and Daily Express were strong sympathisers - and accepted the use of U.S. military might as legitimate in pursuit of the Administration's goals of a South Vietnam free of its neighbour's 'aggression', which would then result in 'peace'. Most of the British press thus began by relaying the Administration's interpretation of events in South Vietnam, blaming the North Vietnamese and Vietcong for the conflict and the unrest in South Vietnam, and accepting thereby the U.S. interpretation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements. In addition the effects of this sympathy, combined with an assumption that the Administration possessed integrity and credibility, also showed in press reports that for some considerable length of time gave the Administration the benefit of the doubt on the many
occasions when its public rhetoric was directly contradicted by its actions - for instance on escalation of the war - or was contradicted by later revelations - for example its public attitude to peace negotiations compared with the Rangoon revelations. Other early propaganda errors, for example the gas warfare episode and the secrecy over the Marines' role from March to June 1965, generated much agitated press comment but sympathy for the U.S. cause still survived, despite the uncoordinated, contradictory, and at best, confused reactions that the Administration invariably displayed in response to press and public questioning and criticism. Most press criticism of Administration actions or statements during this early period was offered in a spirit of sorrow, or exasperation, not anger or rejection. The Guardian's editorials were an exception to this initial general climate of sympathy, for The Guardian's leader writer early advocated a return to the Geneva Conference to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict, disseminated a different and more accurate interpretation of the Geneva Agreements, and disagreed with the Administration's presentation of the war as a case of North Vietnamese aggression and invasion, stating instead that it was a civil war. The Guardian's editorials therefore constituted an alternative viewpoint to set against the Administration's views on the conflict.

However, the devastation caused by U.S. methods of fighting the war was an aspect of the conflict which
disturbed most of the British press - including outright supporters of the U.S. war effort - from the beginning of the escalation, a feeling that grew into horror as time passed and the war expanded, bringing with it mounting pressure for negotiations. As the pressure grew for negotiations, so did the strain on the Administration's negotiating posture - the Administration's propaganda demanded that the blame for the lack of negotiations should rest on the North Vietnamese and Communists. The issue of negotiations was also important for the British Government, for it was expected by press and public to actively seek a peaceful settlement of the conflict. As the war continued, and expanded, British press opinion - as expressed in editorials - divided on what the British Government's role should be. For the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express*, the Government's primary duty was to support the U.S. in its fight against communist aggression, with the lack of negotiations blamed upon the communists. Other newspapers such as *The Guardian* and the *Observer* were less concerned with blaming one or the other side for the absence of negotiations, but as time passed without negotiations, while the war continued to expand, and there were reports about the occasional clash of uninvited British Government peace initiatives, or talk of them, with the Administration's policy - all this helped to erode the early faint hope that by not criticising the Administration openly the British Government could influence and moderate U.S. policy. When this hope had
been extinguished by spring 1966, coupled with ever more war devastation, these newspapers were more interested then in urging the British Government to openly voice its concern over the conflict.

The passage of time also worked against the Administration in more direct ways, because many of its propaganda techniques and propaganda lines, such as silence, secrecy, a one-sided interpretation of the Geneva Agreements and an insistence that it sought no wider war, were suitable only for the short-term. Some of these techniques were exposed and contradicted by events - such as the admission about the changed Marine role in summer 1965 and the general expansion and intensification of the war. Other propaganda lines were contradicted by press analysis - such as the interpretation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, the Administration's historical analogies with Munich before World war II, the long line of attempted communist take-overs after the war and the Korean War - for as the conflict lengthened it inevitably generated more press comment and analysis. And as the press untangled the web of emotive analogies, with most newspapers deciding that the roots of the Vietnam conflict lay in a civil war (the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Express editorials were the exceptions), the Administration's argument that the Vietnam conflict was part of the communist 'bloc's' expansionist conspiracy also began to unravel. This resulted in even more attention being concentrated on the regime in South
Vietnam, on which so much U.S. money was being expended and to whose aid so many troops and weapons had been dispatched. Naturally U.S. propaganda on South Vietnam also came under closer scrutiny, and was again contradicted by events. Its claims for South Vietnamese democracy and the peoples' freedom to choose their own way of life free from coercion, were all nullified by both the political turmoil in South Vietnam, with a series of short-lived governments, and by the repression practised by the South Vietnamese military junta.

Paradoxically however, while the Administration's claim that the conflict was inspired by communist expansionism was disbelieved by much of the press, there was nevertheless considerable anxiety about the conflict's effect on international relations in general, because of the involvement of the U.S. and the USSR - and China - in backing their respective client states. The worst fears focussed on the possibility of Vietnam igniting a third world war, but instead of producing solid support for U.S. policy in Vietnam - as the Administration had hoped when harping on the importance of the war for the rest of the world - these fears led to increased pressure on the Administration to begin negotiations and so lower the level of tension and ward off a potential flashpoint. British fears on this score were sharpened by the occasional rumours that British troops might be dispatched to Vietnam, giving the British press even more reason to
be concerned about the outcome of the Administration's policy in Vietnam.

Concern about U.S. policy on Vietnam also focused on the manner in which the Administration executed this policy - and other policies - for by the end of 1965 the Administration, particularly the President, was being criticized for being too secretive in general. This charge was levied not only by critics, but also by supporters of U.S. policy in Vietnam, who time and again complained that America's allies needed more information to support the Administration effectively. The Administration's secrecy about its policy-making, long-term planning and ultimate goals in Vietnam was one of the biggest obstacles to an effective, long-term propaganda campaign, but this secrecy was a deliberate choice from the beginning and became a virtual necessity. For the Administration neither declared war openly on North Vietnam - preferring to rely instead on the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution as authority for its policy - nor publicly admitted the extent of its involvement and contingency planning when the war escalated in February 1965. Thus, while the Administration had retained a free hand in constructing and implementing its Vietnam policy away from any possible public pressures and criticism, it had placed itself in the awkward position of having to enlist the support of its own public, and other allied governments and publics, for what it privately knew would be a long and hard war which was already escalating, but which it had not publicly
acknowledged. Even when the war had expanded far beyond the March 1965 bombing and troop levels, the Administration still tended to obscure these aspects of the war, mentioning them only occasionally in 1966. And there were other reasons for this intention to divulge as little real information as possible, such as the President's desire to protect his Great Society legislation from possible pressures, and, it seems, his personal preference for secrecy. Moreover, the intention to present this Administration's policies as a continuation of past Administrations' policies reinforced the desire to minimise information on the escalation of the conflict, and thus also information about the Administration's entire war planning. This last injunction naturally covered such aspects as the gloomy evaluations of the bombing programme which then generated more intensive bombing, and the equally gloomy estimations of the ground war which involved voracious demands for more U.S. troops, simply in order to maintain the status quo at an ever-higher level of troops and intensity of combat.

Nevertheless, even under these conditions, initially the Administration still managed to enlist the support of its own public and, publicly, its main ally Britain. But there was no firm foundation for this support, for as the President had been warned in July 1965 the U.S. public supported him on Vietnam because he was the President, not because South Vietnam was of great interest or concern - and in effect the 'rally-round-the-President' syndrome was
being expected to generate sufficient support to fight a major, vicious, war with rapidly increasing casualties. And the British Government supported the Administration because a good relationship with the U.S. was perceived as necessary by Prime Minister Wilson to carry out his own policies. However, not even the desire for good relations could persuade Wilson to dispatch British troops to Vietnam and thereby incur the wrath of his own party and public. And eventually Wilson decided that U.S. war methods were overstepping the bounds of what was permissible in an undeclared war.

Although some of the President's advisers wished to warn the U.S. public about the length and expected difficulties of this war, this recommendation was ignored and the U.S. public was not informed that the U.S. was now entering a major war in Asia. The U.S. public gleaned its information on the war from what the press could prise out of the Administration. So the Administration made and implemented its crucial decisions in secret, invariably suppressed as much information on these decisions for as long as it could and on occasions deliberately misled the press and public in its vague statements or its abrupt denials of rumoured actions. Thus, when subsequent events inevitably contradicted U.S. official 'information' - particularly on negotiations and the steady escalation of the war - the Administration was open to a wide range of press and public criticism: a pitfall that the Administration had dug for itself! Effectively the
Administration helped to erode its own credibility. Just as important for the Administration's propaganda effort was the fact that this mode of handling 'information' became the recognised norm, and therefore when the Administration wished to depart from this pattern in order to emphasise publicly some current aspect of its policy or actions, the press focussed upon the very fact that this was a departure from the norm, highlighting this and scrupulously dissecting the reasons for the Administration's unusual bursts of public eloquence. It was only a short step for the press to label these particular Administration statements as propaganda, thereby immediately diminishing their effectiveness. Thus on the one hand the Administration stood accused of being too secretive, and on the other hand of providing information purely for public effect in order to calm public fears or disarm criticism.

Finally, the Administration's propaganda campaign had an additional burden to cope with during the Vietnam War, for there was rarely a time when the war went well for the Americans, notwithstanding Administration statements to the contrary. Both the U.S. and British press were aware that the constant escalation of the war, in numbers of troops and the tonnage of bombs dropped on North and South Vietnam, was designed to stave off defeat. And as the war lengthened and this cycle continued, it became ever more apparent that the Vietcong and North Vietnam were not going to give up the struggle, despite the terrible
devastation in both halves of the country. Yet it was equally plain that the Administration intended to continue the policy which entailed such destruction. The picture of devastation was hauntingly described by Martha Gellhorn in her series of articles in September 1966 about the effects of war on South Vietnam:

"We are not maniacs or monsters; but our planes range the sky all day and all night and our artillery is lavish and we have much more deadly stuff to kill with. The people are there on the ground, sometimes destroyed by accident, sometimes destroyed because the Vietcong are reported to be among them. This is indeed a new kind of war, as the [U.S.] indoctrination lecture stated, and we had better find a new way to fight it. Hearts and minds, after all, live in bodies."

When the Administration's more 'concrete' reasons for fighting the conflict, such as South Vietnamese democracy and freedom, were undermined by events, this left only the more intangible reasons for the U.S. commitment - the fear of communist expansion, that is, the domino theory, and the Administration's rhetoric about the need to protect its reputation as a guarantor of, effectively, world peace. The Administration had no intention of testing the accuracy of its predictions, and thus busily engaged in destroying another country. The paradox was that while observers did not initially subscribe to the Administration's dire predictions of the consequences of 'losing' South Vietnam, they subsequently recognised that U.S. intervention had so raised the stakes in the battle that the Administration's statements were likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hence the fears that the U.S.
might be risking a general conflagration with its commitment to the war in Vietnam. And by overstating the importance of the loss of South Vietnam, the Administration paved the way to damaging its own reputation as a guarantor when it finally pulled out - having also in the meantime severely shaken its allies confidence in its political judgement in investing such resources in this particular war. In many ways therefore, U.S. official propaganda was eventually called upon to justify what to many observers was already inherently unjustifiable.
NOTES TO CONCLUSIONS

1. See Chapter 6, Section D.

2. For instance early Administration planning on the escalation of the war in February/March 1965 in Chapter 3; and the periodic briefing of other heads of State.

3. The international effects of the conflict were of particular interest to the Observer which constantly lamented the deterioration in international relations caused by the war; however one of the most startling expressions of fears about Vietnam War came during the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings in February 1966. See Chapter 6 Section C.

4. For instance the Daily Telegraph's editorials took the Administration to task on this issue.

5. See Kahin, Intervention, P321.


7. See Chapter 1, Chapter 3 Section D.

8. See for instance Chapter 3 Section A; McGeorge Bundy's suggestion that it should be made clear to the U.S. public that the struggle would be a long one.

9. The Administration's statements about peace initiatives at the end of the bombing pause in January 1966 were classic examples. See Chapters 5 and 6.

10. See the press comment in the aftermath of President Johnson's Baltimore Speech in April 1965.


12. The period from March to June 1966 in South Vietnam constituted the prime example of such events.
APPENDIX

The following graphs showing British public opinion on the Vietnam War during the years 1965-1966, are based exclusively on Gallup Poll surveys, as National Opinion Polls did not conduct a sufficiently systematic survey of public opinion on this issue to enable useful graphs to be drawn up. The Gallup Poll data chosen for the graphs show opinion on the questions most regularly and frequently put by Gallup, and even so, with some questions there are long gaps between the relevant figures, when the public was not polled on a question for several months. However, it is possible using Gallup Poll data to gain some idea of the trends in British public opinion on the war during this period. Note that the figures used in the graphs are those published in Gallup Poll's monthly surveys: the graphs do not take account of interim figures compiled by Gallup for comparison.
Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the recent American armed action in Vietnam?

Figure 1.
Question: If the U.S. Government asks Britain to help in the war in S. Vietnam what should we do, send troops, send war materials or take no part at all?
Question: Do you think the U.S. should continue its present efforts in South Vietnam, or should it pull out its forces?

Figure 3.
Question: What do you think is most important for Britain, to support the Americans in Vietnam or to try to get peace talks going in Vietnam?
Question: Is Britain right or wrong to continue its support of U.S. policy in Vietnam? (Variant of the question from Fig. 4a)

Figure 4b.
Question: Which side do you think is winning the war in Vietnam, the South Vietnamese Government (and supporters) or the Communists (the Viet-Cong)?

Figure 5.
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