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honolulu 1 (normass/deepe)

(This is the first of a three-part review of developments from the 1966 Honolulu Conference to the second one held this week).

SAIGON, JULY 19--From the first Honolulu Conference gushed the Allied optimism of victory in the Vietnam war. Now, 881 days later, during the second Honolulu Conference, victory is a forgotten, although not a lost, dream. and Vietnam is sjs suspended decisively between the brinks of more war or peace.

For Vietnam, reliable sources predict the current Honolulu conference is more likely to surface a radical shift in American foreign policy towards the magic label of peace and the beginning of the end of this bitter war.

For America, however, Allied sources here voice the fear this Honolulu conference may spin the United States into a rigid pattern of withdrawal, not simply from Vietnam, but from the rest of the world, until the end of this century.

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honolulu 2 (normass/deepe)

"Honolulu will ~~proga~~ probably give shape to the Vietnam peace settlement that will evolve within the next year," one American officer explained. ^{THAT MEANS} "And ~~it is~~ is the beginning of Fortress America. All of our Allies will know that, they will all make various noises about it. ~~And~~ And in due course, all will make ~~their~~ up their separate adjustments with Communism--Soviet Communism in Europe and Chinese Communism in Asia."

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honolulu 3 (normass/deepe)

The present Honolulu Conference—far more historic than the first—is regarded here as significant, not as a meeting of the two Allied Presidents, but for revealing the ~~decisions~~ ^{decisions} of one of them—President Lyndon Johnson.

"President Johnson has only two choices," one American source explained. "He can ~~act~~ ^{act} as a lame-duck President, stall for time at Paris and keep open as many options as possible for his successor *with them* to decide ~~what~~ whether to soldier on or to withdraw. Or, he can be the absolute President and do as he ~~w~~^{he} wants, for he has freed himself from the political dictates of the voters.

"A month ago, I thought it was impossible for LBJ to limit the options of his successor, that to do so would be a new low in political morality.—the immorality of making a decision binding on the new President. But, now I see significant evidence Johnson has ~~taken this decision~~ ^{made} this decision, that ~~and~~ actions have been planned, although we do not yet see any substantial steps taken for the implementation.

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honolulu 4 (normass/deepe)

He continued:

"What do we need a Honolulu Conference for? It is either a propaganda gesture for the Vietnamese and the world, or else it portents a radical change of policy, and President Johnson is getting the boys all lined up to carry it out.

"If it is a radical change of policy, it could be only one thing-- out. The conference could be only to work out the methods, speeds, decencies and mechanics of ^{us} pulling out.

"There was one significant indication of this--when ^{Cal} Clark Clifford (Secretary of Defense, who just visited Vietnam) said we are going flat out to re-equip the Vietnamese Army--even at the expense of American troops. That is acceptable only if the Americans are withdrawing. That statement was an indication of a state of mind designed to make it easier to withdraw with a less guilty conscious."

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honolulu 5 (normass/deepe)

The American and Vietnamese delegations sent to the two Honolulu Conferences show a marked contrast. Some of the ~~gpc~~ faces are the same, but the men are different. President Johnson is again the host, but he is no longer ~~seek-~~ seeking re-election, ~~which was~~ as it was commonly in 1966 assumed he would, ~~in 1966~~ Nguyen Van Thieu again heads the Vietnamese delegation. Last time he was a ceremonial and largely obscure chief of state; this time an elected President whose position has been legalized on paper but is shaken by speculation of a "coalition" government with the Communists.

And many important faces are missing. Robert McNamara, considered in 1966 as one of the more powerful men in the world, now "in the limbo of forgotten things," as one observer here ~~note~~ said. Lt. Gen. Nguyen Huu Co, then McNamara's counterpart in Vietnam, since exiled from Vietnam for his corruption and now living in luxury in Hong Kong. General William C. Westmoreland, in 1966 a national hero leading the fight for freedom from his Pentagon East command in Saigon, now transferred to Pentagon-on-the ~~Paton-Pat-Potomac~~ Potomac where he has become "an invisible general." Henry Cabot Lodge, the American ~~mandarin~~ "mandarin" from Boston, now replaced as Ambassador by Ellsworth Bunker, the American "mandarin" from Vermont. ~~Pres~~ Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky, the star of 1966 conference, now an elected Vice President who is distrusted by the Americans for his anti-negotiation ^{views} ~~needs~~ and mistrusted by his own President for his "young turk" capriciousness.

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honolulu 6 (normass/deepe)

In some ways, the Honolulu delegations are significant for their absentees. In 1966, a thorough military review was made at Honolulu; this time the new American commander here, General Creighton Abrams, was dropped from the invitation list because "he would have been a fifty fifth wheel. They are discussing ~~poli~~ political matters."

In 1966, the battlecry of the ~~1~~ was the rural development of Vietnamese villages. This time, American Ambassador Robert Komer, in charge of the program, remained in Saigon and the Vietnamese "pacifier" ^{the CIA} delegation was represented only by a lieutenant colonel. In this conference, the focus seemed to shift to ~~foreg~~ foreign affairs and economic matters—the post-war economic development plans. ^{Dr. V. T. N. A.}

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honolulu 7 (normass/deepe)

From this vantage point, the second most important member of the American delegation—and the American delegation is calling the shots—is considered to be Clark Clifford, who had just completed a five-day on² whirlwind inspection tour of Vietnam. He had spent only 25 minutes being briefed on the pacification ~~progr~~ program. Unlike McNamara, who asked ~~point~~ pinpoint questions of captains and majors, and took voluminous notes only he could read, ~~Clifford~~ Clifford met in closed-door executive sessions with generals and left the note-taking to an aide. American generals, who in the past had prepared charts, graphs and reams of statistics for McNamara ordered 8 x 10 photos printed to illustrate ~~for~~ if the Secretary Clifford desired to know the surrounding terrain and helicopter operations. Unlike Ma McNamara, who was articulate in with his staccato, machinegun sentences, Clifford was ~~equally~~ equally articulate in ~~his~~ with his limp/buttery drawl. "Clifford is very smooth," one observer commented while watching Clifford tour Danang. "Or more accurately—he's slick."

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honolulu 8 (normass/deepe)

The net impression of Mr. Clifford's tour here--and a ^{potential} weathervane for Honolulu: He was not a Secretary of Defense ~~appointed~~ appointed to prosecute a war, or to ^{justify} manage the mechanisms to prosecute it. He was appointed to rationalize and verbalize its ending.

The first Honolulu Conference, held in February, 1966, opened the "second front" of the whole Vietnam war, or ~~sometimes called~~ ^{economic} "the other war"--for Vietnam's political and social development betterment. Now, the "second front" or the "other war" is ~~half~~ half-a-world away in Paris. The first "light at the end of the tunnel" sparked in Honolulu '66 has now been transmuted into "straws in the wind in Paris." McNamara's statistical measures for amber and green roads, pacified, half-pacified and contested villages, have now disappeared in the simple ~~arithmetic~~ arithmetic of timing the teacup-talks and coffee-breaks in Paris.

Tomorrow: 1966--Honolulu or Hollow-lulu

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