MR. REYNOLDS: Senator Dirksen, you gave President Johnson consistent support on Vietnam all during last year but that was in a time of military escalation of the war. Now, we are in the midst of a peace offensive. Do you support the peace offensive and would you go to the conference table now if the Communists make the appropriate response?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, when you mention that there has been a break-up in the Johnson-Dirksen alliance, first I never knew there was such an alliance and, secondly, I am afraid you have been reading the New York Times. I read that headline and I got a little snicker out of it, and I know the reporter, of course, quite well. So let's dispose of that once and for all by saying that there has been no break-up between the President and myself with respect to our views
on what is taking place in Vietnam.

   Way back when we had the first conferences when we dis-
cussed the matter -- and we assured him of our support, after
we had an opportunity to offer our suggestion, any sub-
stitutes, any proposals that we had, but when the decision
was made, we felt it was our duty to go along with the
Commander-in-Chief and we have consistently supported him.

MR. REYNOLDS: Are you willing to go to the conference
table now, or for the country to go?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I put it on this ground -- and
I am afraid this is the reason why there may have been some
misapprehension about what I said: I can't imagine any
human being who isn't interested in stopping blood-letting,
and I can't imagine any American, and particularly in
public office who is not anxious to save every possible young
American life.

   Now, that is the golden goal that we all pursue.
The question is, how do you achieve it finally, and then do
you achieve it honorably and successfully, and do you redeem
your pledges to the Vietnamese people at the same time?

Now, you can offer that in any language you desire, but
I always think of the practical terms and the practical frame
in which you have got to work, and those have to be considera-
tions when you stop and think about negotiation and, finally,
can you have, or can we rather, have any successful negotiation
if we negotiate from weakness rather than from strength. If
the North Vietnamese believe that we are ready to throw in
the sponge or that we are getting tired, what a propaganda
weapon that is. It suggests "hold on a little longer and pretty
soon we will have them on their knees at the bargaining table."

MR. CLARK: Well, Senator, we certainly couldn't negotiate
from a position of strength at the moment. What you are saying
would seem to rule out negotiations at this stage.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I went back to refresh myself
a little on all the discussion there was about a peace feeler,
over a year ago, that went to the late Adlai Stevenson when
he was in London. Now then, that is a feeler that came along
when the Viet Cong thought they were winning.

Now, at the present time they have no reason to believe,
on the basis of the reports we get, that they are not at
least even, if not winning.

Now, perhaps you read the report of the Majority Leader.
I only got a copy of it yesterday because it was prematurely
released in Paris, but I examined it pretty carefully and it
is anything but an encouraging report. So, when you read it,
you conclude that we have got a lot of work cut out for us
and there would be no disposition and no tendency on the part
of the enemy to be anxious to negotiate with us at the present
time. If that is the case, then how do you get a successful
negotiation? How do we retrieve the pledges we made in 1954
MR. REYNOLDS: Well then, Senator, are you in favor of escalating the war still further?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I will do whatever is necessary because I believe in what MacArthur said: "There is no substitute for victory."

MR. CLARK: You were quoted this last week as saying that we should seek military victory before going to the peace table. Does this put you now among the Republican advocates of total victory before we go to a confrontation —

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well now, you are injecting a word that I did not put in when you say "total" victory."

"Victory" can mean many things. You see, I go all the way back to the Armistice in the first war in which I served. When they came with alternative suggestion, Marshall Foch said no. When Lee sent overtures to Grant in the Civil War, and Grant was almost ready to do anything to stop it, that dispatch went to Stanton, the Secretary of War. He talked to Lincoln. He said, "Mr. President, under no circumstances do you go along with this kind of an undertaking."

Now, you see, you have got to be pretty sure that you are in a position of strength, and how can you tell at this stage exactly what the situation will be when at long last it appears that they are ready to sit around the table? And, along with it, who is going to sit at the table?
The fellow who has no chips in the pot hasn't got any business sitting at the international poker table.

MR. CLARK: Would you agree, Senator, that the sense of what you are saying is that there is going to have to be some further expansion of the war before the time is right to go to the conference table.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

Now, I rather think that General Westmoreland has that idea. At least I got that from the Mansfield Report. And on that, committee, as you know, you had a number of very capable Senators who are good observers, and they came back with a report that was anything but encouraging, and you couldn't do other than believe that they felt that this war had to escalate before you got to a point where you could successfully negotiate.

MR. REYNOLDS: Well, Senator, your position as leader of the opposition is what prompted us to pursue this question. Is it going to be politically feasible, or politically damaging to the President to undertake negotiations now before we reach this position of strength which you believe apparently we are not yet at?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, I can't comment on that particularly because that is somewhat in line with questions that have been asked all over the country while I was touring; was the war going to be an issue?
I said a political party doesn't make war an issue. People make it an issue because their youngsters are out there.

I had that experience in 1950. I can make public confession here now, 15 years later, that I wasn't making too much progress talking about taxes and agriculture and a lot of other things, but when the troops went in in June of 1950, that was it. They didn't want to hear about anything else. "What about Korea?"

I remember when I was campaigning all through the west for Dewey; "Mr. Dirksen, will he have a new cabinet?"

"Will he have new commanders?"

Well, I said, it is within not only the power or the prerogative, but it is traditional that the President picks his own family. These mothers of sons that they were thinking about as possible cannon fodder for Korea just walked away without any comment. We didn't make it an issue; people made it an issue.

MR. REYNOLDS: The question is, are you going to exploit that issue as the Republican leader?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, you don't exploit it as such. You don't as a leader. I never exploited Korea. There was one thing about it I did exploit and that was this: That decision was made and put into effect, as I recall, on a Sunday afternoon. No Congressional leader either in the House
or in the Senate, not even Uncle Tom Connally of Texas was consulted about it. That -- who made the decision, who advised it, I don't know to this day, but at least that wasn't done.

I am confident from all of the discussions we have had with the President that before a very aggravated move might be made, that he would consult with his Congressional leaders. He has always done so. He has been a part of that body and he knows them.

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MR. CLARK: Senator, you have said that the people are going to make an issue of Vietnam, an issue in the elections. How does the voter who may be concerned over Vietnam to the point where he would like to vote against some politician, know who to blame when we have many Republicans in Congress giving total support to the Administration's policy, including, of course, yourself?

SENATOR DURKSEN: Well, don't forget the American public, and particularly the American voter, is probably the most literate, the best informed voter on earth. Look at what is available. The broadcasts, TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, fresh copy every day. He needs no instruction, and he will do what is in his heart.

MR. CLARK: Well, I would think it would be up to you to help inform him as to what should be in his heart, Senator, as a Republican leader in the Senate.

SENATOR DURKSEN: Well, obviously you present the facts in the case. From then on it is his judgment.

MR. REYNOLDS: Senator, there is probably going to be mounting pressure on the President to escalate or to aggravate the situation, as you indicated a moment ago, if there is no satisfactory response from Hanoi. How far should we go? Should we start bombing Haiphong, should we blockade North Vietnam?

SENATOR DURKSEN: Those are all military decisions, but I
think this is an appropriate place at least to make one
observation. We have the ships of our allies going in there
with supplies. That to me is an astounding thing, because
we are all members of NATO, and we have pledged ourselves
to help them. But we tried to keep them from doing business
with Castro and couldn't get any cooperation. Now that is
either a two-way street or it is no street at all, and
yet that is what we are confronted with out there in Vietnam
at the present time. These ships supplying North Vietnam.

All right, there are two types of blockade. We mentioned
in our coordinating policy report a Kennedy-type quarantine
blockade. That is where you warn them and say "Look,
you go in and you go in at your peril." That is not an act
of war.

Now when you get to the point where they are willing to
run the blockade notwithstanding, then, of course, you are
in troubled waters. But you are going to have to cut off
these supplies. That is the reason we made that recomenda-
tion. So I think people ought to always keep in mind two
types of blockade, and the one particularly that we are
thinking of is not an act of war.

MR. REYNOLDS: You are dissatisfied with the help our
allies are giving us in Vietnam?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I definitely am. When I stop to
consider, perhaps I had better not make mention of countries,
But what we have done through foreign aid and elsewhere, there is a lot that they owe us for what we have done and yet we haven't gotten that cooperation, not even from the top echelon of countries. Now that gives me a chance to say the time has come to make clear, unequivocally clear to them "This is a two-way street. If you don't play, then of course we will have to consider that, foreign aid being a mutual operation, we are going to simply have to take advantage and say 'No more. If you are not going to help, that is the end of it as far as we are concerned.'"

MR. CLARK: Senator, I think you are talking about France and Britain among other countries.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I didn't mention those countries.

MR. CLARK: I am sure you would be including two of our major Western allies who are engaging in commerce with North Vietnam, but they are both allies to whom we are giving no foreign aid. There is nothing we can cut off from France or Britain.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, let me say I include everybody. Because when they come to us with a tin cup as mendicants and say "Oh, please, sir, now, Uncle Sam, we need a little assistance," but when the time comes for us -- didn't we try to stop the shipment of an order of motor trucks to Castro, and what kind of an answer did we get? We were just waved aside. Now is that mutual or isn't it?
MR. CLARK: Of course that was by Britain again not receiving any foreign aid. What form of pressure would you apply on France and Britain?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I would simply say "Look, we could draw the line. Now you are in difficulty at home" -- and when I say "in difficulty," you know very well that Britain is in domestic difficulty. Who knows what will happen to the pound? And who knows what will happen to the franc? Brocher deGaulle can't raid our dollar supply or our gold supply forever. There is going to come a time when we are going to say "Thus far and no more." But don't you forget that we put up the money for the most part, and the troops, and the weapons in order to keep NATO alive. It probably would have foundered before now only for the United States and its assistance.

Now, if they can't call on us, then what?

MR. CLARK: Well, now are you saying again you might consider withdrawing some of our support from NATO unless France and Britain stop selling to the Communists in Vietnam?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: When you talk about NATO, NATO is only an aggregation of countries, and their ships fly their flags. And when a ship shows up at Haiphong Harbor carrying a flag of one of our allies, what do we say about it? If in the next breath they come and say "Look, make us a loan," or "Let's get a loan through the International Bank for Development," or whatever it might be -- and we have a score
of such agencies -- are we going to be so faint-hearted and so soft-hearted forever? I think we have gotten to a point where we are going to have to put our foot down, and if the President asks me about it, that is what I shall say to him.

MR. REYNOLDS: Well, Senator, Congress comes back now tomorrow, and the fun begins -- or does it? Is this to be a year of consolidation, retrenchment? What sort of work is Congress going to undertake?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, it is the old guns and butter argument, isn't it? Can you have a Great Society with all these authorized expenditures and push up that administrative budget, and run a war at the same time? And believe me a war is a costly business. We are not going to get out of this so lightly. You can estimate what you like, but I have an idea that deficit will be infinitely larger this year and next year than we anticipate.

Now what are you going to do? Put up your taxes? You don't put up taxes in an election year, if you could possibly avoid it. Well, where else do you get the money? You borrow from your people. Give them pieces of paper that you call "Victory Bonds" or "Liberty Bonds," and then you add it to the public debt. Up goes the debt. Up goes the interest on the debt.

The interest on that public debt every 30 days is $1 billion.