

In the streets of Saigon - in the ancient imperial capital of Hue - in at least three other major provincial cities - the battle rages on tonight in Vietnam. The enemy's biggest and boldest strike of the war - now teetering on the brink of oblivion; but still - a tough time dying.

In Saigon, at least - the end perhaps in sight. U.S. tanks and infantrymen - fast searching out the last remaining pockets of Viet Cong resistance. At Hue though - about eight hundred North Vietnamese are holed up - in an old walled section of the city. Today hurling back a combined assault - by U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese Rangers.

SEA OF JAPAN

Far to the North - another close call in the Sea of Japan, a U.S. destroyer ramming a Russian freighter in pre-dawn darkness - about a hundred miles off the coast of South Korea.

Luckily, no one hurt. Not much damage either - the Soviet vessel signaling - "no assistance required." As to cause of the crash - the Pentagon later saying it was a "cross situation;" the U.S. S. Rowan supposedly having the right of way - when it plowed into the Russian ship, although Moscow - has since filed a protest.

British foreign Secretary George Brown tonight sent an appeal to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko - urging that they join at once in an appeal for an end to the fighting in Vietnam. Brown called - a matter of the most agonizing urgency.

...telling more than ten thousand killed - more than 400,000 wounded and captured - against Allied losses of about eight hundred men. From a military standpoint - the Communist attacks have been a "complete failure," and psychologically - he said - not much better. Adding that "Communist leaders counted on popular support for their effort" - but "they found little or none."

As for the Pueblo - the President reporting a second meeting at Panmunjom - aimed at freezing the ship and her crew. As yet though - no progress. The President further suggesting it may be some time - before we get our men back; the ship - maybe never.

WHITE HOUSE

Vietnam and the Pueblo - in that order - again the chief topics today at a White House news conference.

On Vietnam - President Johnson firmly refuting enemy claims of tremendous victory - in that continuing Red rampage. In support of his stand - the President citing Viet Cong losses totaling more than ten thousand killed - more than two thousand captured; as against Allied losses - set at about eight hundred men. From a military standpoint - the Communist attacks have been a "complete failure;" and psychologically - he said - not much better. Adding that "Communist leaders counted on popular support for their effort" - but "they found little or none."

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PUEBLO

North Korean radio today broadcast an alleged

confession by the first officer of the Pueblo - Lt. Stephen

Harris - the voice saying that he had engaged in collecting

Military intelligence.

SUGGESTED LEAD-IN TO THOMAS TAPE

As you may have guessed by now - Lowell Thomas is currently flying the Atlantic; en route to Grenoble, France, to cover the Winter Olympics - in his own inimitable fashion - starting next week.

In the meantime - a special taped report he left us just before departure. Remembrances of early transAtlantic flyers - flooding back across the years: Lowell....

FLYING THE ATLANTIC

Hello Dallas. Good Evening Everybody - from JFK.

Today I'm making, I hope, one more flight across the Atlantic. Some of us still remember when men first decided to try to fly the Atlantic. The year Nineteen Nineteen - right after the First World War, when there were so many airmen looking for something to do; new worlds to conquer. It turned into a thrilling international race. Forty-nine years ago.

What a contrast between the planes then, and this modern Pan Am clipper here on the runway.

In September, Nineteen Thirty-One a dozen of us took part in a dinner in honor of Dr. James Kimball, the white-haired gentle meteorologist who told the early Trans-Atlantic fliers when it might be all right for them to take the big chance. In the picture on my studio wall Dr. Kimball is flanked by Amelia Earhart, and Ruth Elder, then Clarence Chamberlain next to Amelia, with James Fitzmaurice

and myself on the other side. In the row behind us witty Lon Yancy who made the first flight to Rome, Charles Lindbergh, Frank Courtney from England, Armand Lotti, the Italian, Harry O'Connor and Bernt Balchen, first to pilot a plane over both poles, also an early trans-Atlantic flier.

Only three of that group are still around. The other two, Lindbergh and Balchen.

By the way, today is the thirty-third anniversary of Amelia Earhart's flight from Honolulu to California - 1935.

How surprised Amelia would be to hear what has happened to over-ocean flying since she flew the Atlantic solo in 1932. Over two million last year. A million made it with Pan Am, Dallas.

SUGGESTED FOLLOW TO THOMAS TAPE

Thank you, Lowell. Back to the news....

MANCHESTER

The new Richard Nixon - front and center today in New Hampshire. Launching his bid for the Republican nomination - an official candidate in New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation Presidential primary.

First question: What of Nixon's reaction to that challenge from Michigan's Governor Romney - to debate the issues. No dice - said Nixon. It would not "serve the interest of the Republican Party." Adding: "The only winner of a debate between Republicans - would be President Johnson."

Or as one observer summed it up: Once burned - twice wary.

Now - a word from Warren Moran.

From the Justice Department in Washington - comes word of a proposed new banking bill. One that would force the nation's banks to install protective devices - hidden cameras, alarm systems and so on; in order to continue to qualify - for Federal Deposit Insurance coverage. This - at the urging of the FBI; in the face of skyrocketing bank robberies - up some sixty per cent last year. Federal agents noting that hidden cameras, in particular - can prove an extremely effective deterrent to crime.

Case in point - that of a bandit who handed a note to a bank teller - the note saying: "This is a stickup, - put the money in a bag and hand it over." Instantly, a secret button activating cameras - also alerting guards; as the teller handed back his written reply - saying: "Straighten your tie, stupid - they're taking your picture."

Good Night.