

February 16, 1968  
Dallas Townsend

*Good evening, everybody.*

*A late afternoon news conference at the White House*

*- President Johnson starting it off with the announcement of a change in his cabinet - Alexander Trowbridge - long in poor health - resigning as Secretary of Commerce. Trowbridge to be succeeded by C.R. Smith, board chairman of American airlines.*

*That out of the way, the President going on to important other matters. Coming up with a strong, even emotional defense of General Westmoreland. In the past couple of days, there have been rumors that the General might be on the way out as Commander of American Forces in Vietnam. But President Johnson says - not a word of truth to it. The General has his complete confidence, the President told the reporters - he has no intention of having Westmoreland leave his present assignment. Adding - if I had to select a man to lead me into battle in Vietnam - I would want General Westmoreland.*

Mr. Johnson also took issue with another rumor - that the Military wanted nuclear weapons in Vietnam for tactical purposes. So far as I am aware, he said, "at no time have they ever considered or made a recommendation with respect to deployment of nuclear weapons."

Finally - regarding the possibility of peace talks - Mr. Johnson said he doesn't think Hanoi is any more ready to negotiate today than it was one, two or three years ago.

## **HUE**

*Step by terrible step - block by block - the battle for Hue draws to a thundering climax. U.S. and South Vietnamese gunners pouring a murderous crossfire - into the last remaining Red stronghold in that ancient, walled Citadel. Steadily chipping away - at a suicide force of Viet Cong; a force that once numbered about three thousand - that now numbers just a few hundred.*

*At the head of the Allied advance - South Vietnam's famed Black Panther Company. Its members vowing to lead the last charge - to crush the last vestige of Red resistance; so that they personally can have the honor of ripping down the Communist flag - that has flown over Hue for the past eighteen days; of replacing it - with a South Vietnamese banner,*

*Or as one American officer put it: "Looks like they're going to have their own - Iwo Jima."*

## **BANGKOK**

**Three U.S. flyers - were released today by North Vietnam. These - bomber pilots all. More than that - the first American airmen freed by Hanoi - since the start of the war.**

**The trio identified as Air Force Major Norris Overly of Oscoda, Michigan - Air Force Captain Jon Black of Laredo, Texas and also Navy Ensign David Matheny from Bakersfield, California.**

**By arrangement with the International Control Commission - the three men flown from Hanoi to Bangkok. From there - American officials taking over; quickly transferring the flyers to that big American air base - at Udorn, Thailand.**

## **LOWELL lead-in**

**In the Winter Olympic at Grenoble - another silver medal for the US. Tim Wood of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan finishing second in the men's figure-skating competition.**

**First place went to Wolfgang Schwartz of Austria. Tim is a Nineteen-year-old pre-law student. His silver medal is the fifth for the American team - plus one gold, and one bronze.**

**Lowell Thomas is now on his way back from Grenoble - and tonight he has a special report from the shores of the Mediterranean. Lowell...**

## MALTA

*Hello again Dallas, and good evening everybody.*

*I'm just back from a side jaunt.*

*Out here on the shores of the Mediterranean you are reminded, I am at any rate, of one of the dramatic events of my lifetime, a small island has become an independent nation. The famous island of Malta. Where the inhabitants are rushing to put up luxurious hotels and high-rise apartments, even over-looking the spot where St. Paul was shipwrecked. During World War One I happened to be on a British naval vessel that was chased into Malta by German submarines. Even with the ultra modern tall buildings that are going up it remains one of the most picturesque spots on earth, and it's an island that includes less than a hundred square miles of territory, mostly rock. The National Geographic tells us that pre-historic Malta was inhabited by an unknown people who built huge megalithic temples and carved catabombs from the stone.*

*In the years that followed it was controlled by the Phoenicians, then by the Carthaginians and then Romans, and the Arabs when they conquered so much of this part of the world, then the Normans, and the Spanish. During the Crusades it was held by the Knights of St. John, the Knights of Malta, an ancient order that is still in existence. In Fifteen Sixty-Five that oriental potentate Suleiman the Magnificent tried to storm Malta and lost twenty nine thousand men.*

*Today, Malta, independent, waiting to welcome you, if you are a tourist. Dramatic Malta once called "Britain's unsinkable aircraft carrier." Solong.*

**DRAFT**

*Turning to the domestic front - a long-expected revision of draft guidelines was finally put into effect today. On advice of the National Security Council - the Selective Service System immediately ending all occupational deferments; except in individual cases - involving community need. Also limiting deferments for graduate students, henceforth - to those studying for the medical professions; exempting only those students - now in their second year or more of graduate study.*

*Reason - said the National Security Council: Because of "inherent inequity" in previous draft deferments - which have become, in effect, "permanent exemptions;" at a time when others are being "called upon - to risk their lives for the nation."*

*Warren Moran...*



## WARSAW

*A report from Warsaw - on the oldest car still in continuous use in Poland.*

*It's a Nineteen-Sixteen Marmon convertible. In many ways - a Polish counterpart of that famed "Yellow Rolls-Royce."*

*The car first arriving in Poland in Nineteen-Nineteen - with an American charity mission. Two years later - falling into the hands of Silesian insurgents; who used it as an ammunition carrier - in an uprising against Germany.*

*The car finally sold at auction in Nineteen-Thirty - ending up in the possession of one Wladyslaw Basista; who has driven it ever since - through war and peace. At age fifty-two - the Marmon still chugging along.*

*Well, that about the best you can say for this reporter also - and we're glad to say that Lowell Thomas will be back here on Monday. Dallas Townsend saying Goodnight.*