

In both capitals, the peace overtures carried to the principal capitals of the world by America's envoys have been apparently rejected in advance by the men who would rule the destinies of Asia's millions and carry their brand of revolutionary Communism beyond the limits of that continent.

Nevertheless, the pursuit goes on, quietly, patiently and thoughtfully.

It is apparent that, while there remains the slightest chance of bringing the Vietnam crisis to the conference table, Washington and its allies will use every corridor that gives promise of leading to that goal.

The course is tortuous. It is hazardous.

But President Johnson is clearly determined that, if the war in Vietnam should increase in intensity and scope, it will not be because of any lack of vigor on the part of his government.

Twofold Risk

The risks taken by the U.S. in its peace offensive are twofold:

1. While it reins back its bombers from the supply channels and centres in North Vietnam, nourishing the battalions supporting the Viet Cong, the chances of a strong Viet Cong buildup increase.

2. The longer the U.S. limits its operations in that theatre, the more inclined Hanoi and Peking may be to interpret the restraint as a symptom of weakness. If the Communists should calculate that the peace moves by the U.S. stem from substantial opposition to its policy at home and in allied nations, the less inclined they will be to go to the conference room.

This ordeal of patience, while borne by the American leaders, is borne even more agonizingly by the men and their commanders in the field. Fighting a messy war-- a war virtually without rules--is difficult enough. To do so knowing that the enemy supply lines are not being interdicted is a cruel exercise in endurance.