

The Hanoi Myth of an Indigenous Rebellion

By George W. Ball

The following is a speech by the Under Secretary of State delivered last week before the Northwestern University Alumni Association at Evanston, Ill.

THE BEGINNING of wisdom with regard to Vietnam is to recognize that what Americans are fighting in the jungles and rice paddies of that unhappy land is not a local conflict—an isolated war that has meaning only for one part of the world.

We can properly understand the struggle in Vietnam only if we recognize it for what it is: part of a vast and continuing struggle in which we have been engaged for more than two decades.

Like most of the conflicts that have plagued the world in recent years, the conflict in Vietnam is a product of the great shifts and changes triggered by the Second World War. Out of the war, two continentwide powers emerged: the United States and the Soviet Union. The colonial systems through which the nations of Western Europe had governed more than a third of the people of the world were, one by one, dismantled. The Soviet Union under Stalin embarked on a reckless course of seeking to extend Communist power. An Iron Curtain was erected to enclose large areas of the globe. At the same time, man was learning to harness the power of the exploding sun, and technology made mockery of time and distance.

The result of these vast changes—compressed within the breathless span of two decades—was to bring about a drastic rearrangement of the power structure of the world.

A Western Dam

THIS REARRANGEMENT of power

has resulted in a very uneasy equilibrium of forces. For even while the new national boundaries were still being marked on the map, the Soviet Union under Stalin exploited the confusion to push out the perimeter of its power and influence in an effort to extend the outer limits of Communist domination by force or the threat of force. WHERE? U.S. DIDN'T?

This process threatened the freedom of the world. It had to be checked and checked quickly. By launching the Marshall Plan to restore economic vitality to the nations of Western Europe and by forming NATO—a powerful Western alliance reinforced by United States resources and military power—America and the free nations of Europe built a dam to hold back the further encroachment of Communist ambitions.

This decisive action succeeded brilliantly. NATO, created in 1949, stopped the spread of communism over Western Europe and the northern Mediterranean. But the world was given no time to relax. The victory of the Chinese Communists in that same year posed a new threat of Communist expansion against an Asia in ferment. Just as the Western world had mobilized its resistance against Communist force in Europe, we had to create an effective counterforce in the Far East if Communist domination were not to spread like a lava flow over the whole area. WITHOUT A SINGLE CHINESE SOLDIER IN ANY OTHER LANDS
Balance Maintained

THE FIRST TEST came quickly in Korea. There the United Nations forces — predominantly American — stopped the drive of Communist North Korea, supported by materiel from the Soviet Union. They stopped a vast Chinese army that followed. They brought to a halt the Communist drive to push out the line that had been drawn and to establish Communist control over the whole Korean peninsula.

The Korean War was fought from a central conviction: that the best hope for freedom and security in the world depended on maintaining the integrity of the ~~the~~ war arrangements. Stability could be achieved only by making sure that the Communist world did not expand by destroying those arrangements by force and threat and thus upsetting the precarious power balance between the two sides of the Iron Curtain.

It was this conviction that led to our firm stand in Korea. It was this conviction that led America in the years immediately after Korea to build a barrier around the whole periphery of the

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THESEY - CHOS. IN FORMING PLAN, ETC.

US SUPPLIED, GAO, HELZBEA
CHINESE TROOPS HASTENING DEPART

NOT NEAR
SOLB MINDS



Associated Press

Ho Chi Minh with a group of young people at a Hanoi picture exhibition last summer. It is "Uncle Ho's" name that the Vietcong soldier carries into battle, not that of a South Vietnamese hero.



Associated Press

Greek guerrillas captured by government forces near Salonika in 1948. George W. Ball considers the Communists' "war of national liberation" in Greece 20 years ago analagous to the Vietcong's tactics today.

This "line" was not "not absorbed" on a "line of demarcation" between
 significant in permanent, to SEATTLE they silly guaranteed, and not because
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 AND THE WAR WAS SETTLED BY GENEVA IN 1954. IF ONLY
 IS DOING ANYTHING BESIDES DOCTORS HISTORY HERE HE
 IS SAYING SEATO WAS DESIGNED TO PRESERVE PRE-WAR STATUS
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The Nation

WHETHER THESE LIES & DISTORTIONS WERE TRUE, THE DISORDERLY PLEDGE OF 1954
 IMPLICATION DID NOT UNDO THE AGREEMENT OF COMMUNICATION. THE US PUT THE PLEDGE
 MENTS & TREATIES - NOTICE NOT SPECIFIED - ARE UNLAWFUL, WITHOUT ANY
 STANDING AND NO MORE LEGAL THAN AN AGREEMENT OF THE WASHINGTON POST
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Communist world by encouraging the
 creation of a series of alliances and
 commitments from the eastern edge of
 the NATO area to the Pacific.

The SEATO treaty that was signed
 in 1954 was part of that barrier, that
 structure of alliances. It was ratified
 by the Senate by a vote of 82-1.

Under that treaty and its protocol,
 the United States and other treaty
 partners gave their joint and several
 pledges to guarantee existing bound-
 aries—including the line of demarca-
 tion between North and South Vietnam
 established when the French relin-
 quished their control over Indochina.
 Since then, three Presidents have rein-
 forced that guarantee by further com-
 mitments given directly to the Repub-
 lic of Vietnam. And on Aug. 10, 1964,
 the Senate, by a vote of 88-2, and the
 House, by a vote of 416-0, adopted a
 joint resolution declaring their support
 for these commitments.

A Greek Analogy

TODAY WE ARE living up to those
 commitments by helping South
 Vietnam defend itself from the on-
 slaught of Communist force—just as we
 helped Iran in 1946, Greece and Turkey
 in 1947, Formosa and Korea in 1950 and
 Berlin since 1948.

The bloody encounters in the high-
 lands around Pleiku and the rice pad-
 des of the Mekong Delta are thus in a
 real sense battles and skirmishes in a
 continuing war to prevent one Com-
 munist power after another from vio-
 lating internationally recognized bound-
 ary lines fixing the outer limits of
 Communist dominion.

When we think of Vietnam, we think
 of Korea. In Vietnam, as in Korea, the
 Communists in one part of a divided
 country lying on the periphery of
 China have sought by force to gain do-
 minion over the whole. But in terms of

tactics on the ground, Greece is a
 closer analogy. For there, 20 years
 ago, as in South Vietnam today, the
 Communists sought to achieve their
 purpose by what is known in their lex-
 icon as a "war of national liberation."

They chose this method of aggres-
 sion both in Greece and Vietnam be-
 cause tactics of terror and sabotage, of
 stealth and subversion, give a great
 advantage to a disciplined and ruthless
 minority, particularly where—as in
 those two countries—the physical ter-
 rain made concealment easy and im-
 peded the use of heavy weapons.

But the Communists also have a
 more subtle reason for favoring this
 type of aggression. It creates in any
 situation an element of confusion, a
 sense of ambiguity that can, they hope,
 so disturb and divide free men as to
 prevent them from making common
 cause against it.

This ambiguity is the central point
 of debate in the discussions that
 have surrounded the South Vietnam
 problem.

Subversion Since 1954

IS THE WAR in South Vietnam an
 external aggression from the North,
 or is it an indigenous revolt? This is a
 question that Americans quite properly
 ask—and one to which they deserve a
 satisfactory answer. It is a question
 which we who have official responsibil-

ities have necessarily probed in great
 depth. For if the Vietnam war were
 merely what the Communists say it is
 —an indigenous rebellion—then the
 United States would have no business
 taking sides in the conflict and helping
 one side to defeat the other by force of
 arms.

The evidence on the character of
 the Vietnam war is voluminous. Its
 meaning seems clear enough: The
 North Vietnamese regime in Hanoi
 systematically created the Vietcong
 forces; it provides their equipment; it
 mounted the guerrilla war—and it
 controls that war from Hanoi on a
 day-to-day basis.

The evidence shows clearly enough
 that—at the time of French withdrawal
 —when Vietnam was divided in the
 settlement of 1954, the Communist
 regime in Hanoi never intended that
 South Vietnam should develop in free-
 dom. Many Communists fighting with
 the Viet Minh army were directed to
 stay in the South, to cache away their
 arms and to do everything possible to
 undermine the South Vietnamese
 government. Others—80,000 in all—were
 ordered to the North for training in
 the North Vietnamese army.

VIET MINH IS ENTIRE COUNTRY

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS NEUTRALITY INTERVENTIONS

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The evidence is clear enough also that the Communist rulers of the North resorted to guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam only when the success of the South Vietnam government persuaded them that they could not achieve their designs by subversion alone.

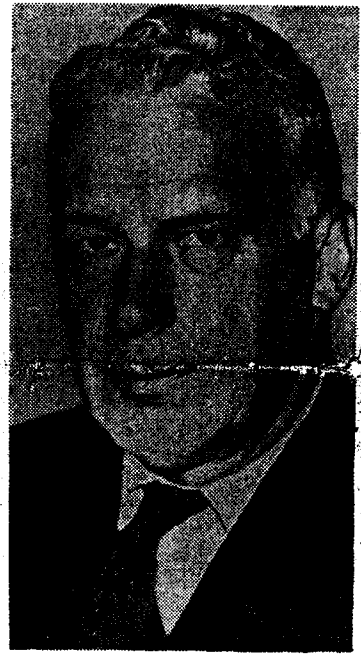
In September, 1960, the Lao Dong Party—the Communist Party in North Vietnam—held its Third Party Congress in Hanoi. That Congress called for the creation of a front organization to undertake the subversion of South Vietnam. Within two or three months thereafter, the National Liberation Front was established to provide a political facade for the conduct of an active guerrilla war.

Nine Regular Regiments

BEGINNING early that year, the Hanoi regime began to infiltrate across the demarcation line the disciplined Communists whom the Party had ordered North at the time of the settlement. In the intervening period since 1954, those men had been trained in the arts of proselytizing, sabotage and subversion. Now they were ordered to conscript young men from the villages by force or persuasion and to form cadres around which guerrilla units could be built.

Beginning over a year ago, the Communists apparently exhausted their reservoir of Southerners who had gone North. Since then, the greater number of men infiltrated into the South have been native-born North Vietnamese. Most recently, Hanoi has begun to infiltrate elements of the North Vietnamese army in increasingly larger numbers. Today, there is evidence that nine regiments of regular North Vietnamese forces are fighting in organized units in the South.

I mention these facts — which are familiar enough to most of you—because they are fundamental to our policy with regard to Vietnam. These facts, it seems to us, make it clear beyond question that the war in South Vietnam has few of the attributes of an



Under Secretary George W. Ball: "... it is not the American purpose simply to preserve the status quo."

indigenous revolt. It is a cynical and systematic aggression by the North Vietnamese regime against the people of South Vietnam. It is one further chapter in the long and brutal chronicle of Communist efforts to extend the periphery of Communist power by force and terror.

Unacceptable Condition

THIS POINT is at the heart of our determination to stay the course in the bloody contest now under way in South Vietnam. It also necessarily shapes our position with regard to negotiations.

The President, Secretary Rusk and all spokesmen for the Administration have stated again and again that the United States is prepared to join in unconditional discussions of the Vietnamese problem in an effort to bring about a satisfactory political solution. But so far, the regime in Hanoi has refused to come to the bargaining table except on the basis of quite unacceptable conditions. One among several such conditions—but one that has been widely debated in the United States—is that we must recognize the National Liberation Front as the representative—indeed, as the sole representative—of the South Vietnamese people.

Yet to recognize the National Libera-

HE PICKS UP THE STRAW MEN (ARGUMENTS) WITH CARE

the West should not undertake to defend the integrity of all lines of demarcation even though they may be underwritten in formal treaties. They contend that many of these lines are unnatural since they do not conform to the geopolitical realities as they see them. They contend in particular that since the passing of colonialism—the Western powers have no business mixing in the affairs of the Asian mainland. They imply that—regardless of our commitments—we should not try to prevent Red China from establishing its hegemony over the East Asian land mass south of the Soviet Union.

Inaccurate Premise

PROFONENTS of this view advance two principal arguments to support their thesis.

● They contend that the very weight of Chinese power, its vast population and its consequent ability to mobilize immense mass armies entitles it to recognition as the controlling force of Southeast Asia.

● As a second reason for acknowledging the Chinese hegemony, they contend that for centuries China has maintained a dominant cultural and political influence throughout the area.

They claim, therefore, that Southeast Asia lies within the Chinese sphere of influence and that we should let the Chinese redraw the lines of demarcation to suit themselves without regard to the wishes of the Southeast Asian people.

This argument, it seems to me, does not provide an acceptable basis for United States policy.

The assertion that China through hundreds of years of history has held sway over Southeast Asia is simply not accurate. Successive Chinese empires sought by force to establish such sway, but they never succeeded in doing so, except in certain sectors for limited periods. For the people of Southeast Asia have, over the centuries, shown an obstinate insistence on shaping their own destiny which the Chinese have not been able to overcome.

To adopt the sphere-of-influence approach now advocated would, therefore, not mean allowing history to re-

peat itself. It would mean according to China a status it had never been able to achieve by its own efforts throughout the ages. It would mean sentencing the peoples of Southeast Asia against their will to indefinite servitude behind the Bamboo Curtain. And it would mean turning our back on the principles that have formed the basis of Western policy in the whole post-war era.

Nor can one seriously insist that geographical propinquity establishes the Chinese right to dominate. At a time when man can circle the earth in 90 minutes, there is little to support such a literal commitment to 19th century geopolitics. It is a dubious policy that would permit the accidents of geography to deprive peoples of their right to determine their own future free from external force. The logic of that policy has dark implications. It would rationalize the greed of great powers. It would imperil the prospects for developing and maintaining an equilibrium of power in the world.

The principles of the United Nations Charter are doctrinally more in tune with the aspirations of 20th century man.

Unfinished Business

THIS DOES NOT mean, however, that the political shape of the world should be regarded as frozen in an intractable pattern; that the boundaries established by the postwar arrangements are necessarily sacrosanct and immutable. Indeed, some of the lines of demarcation drawn after the Second World War were explicitly provisional and were to be finally determined in political settlements yet to

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come. This was true in Germany, in Korea and South Vietnam as well.

But those settlements have not yet been achieved, and we cannot permit their resolution to be pre-empted by force. This is the issue in Vietnam. This is what we are fighting for. This is why we are there.

We have no ambition to stay there any longer than is necessary. We have made repeatedly clear that the United States seeks no territory in Southeast Asia. We wish no military bases. We do not desire to destroy the regime in Hanoi or to remake it in a Western pattern. The United States will not retain American forces in South Vietnam once peace is assured.

The countries of Southeast Asia can be nonaligned or neutral, depending on the will of the people. We support free

elections in South Vietnam as soon as violence has been eliminated and the South Vietnamese people can vote without intimidation. We look forward to free elections—and we will accept the result as a democratic people is accustomed to do. Yet we have little doubt about the outcome, for we are confident that the South Vietnamese who have fought hard for their freedom will not be the first people to give up that freedom to communism in a free exercise of self-determination.

Whether the peoples of the two parts of Vietnam will wish to unite is again for them to decide as soon as they are in a position to do so freely. Like other options, that of reunification must be reserved.

A Shared Interest

IN THE LONG run, our hopes for the people of South Vietnam reflect our hopes for people everywhere. What we seek is a world living in peace and freedom—a world in which the Cold War, with its tensions and conflicts, can recede into history. We are seeking to build a world in which men and nations will recognize and act upon a strongly shared interest in peace and international cooperation for the common good.

We should not despair of these objectives even though at the moment they may seem rather unreal and idealistic. For we would make a mistake to regard the Cold War as a permanent phenomenon. After all, it was less than two decades ago that Winston Churchill first announced in Fulton, Mo., that "From Stettin in the Baltic to

Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." And two decades are only a moment in the long sweep of history.

During the intervening years, major changes have taken place on both sides of the Iron Curtain. A schism has developed within the Communist world. The Soviet Union has become the second greatest industrial power. The Soviet people have begun to acquire a stake in the status quo, and after the missile crisis of 1962 the Soviet Union has come face to face with the realities of power and destruction in the nuclear age and has recognized the awesome fact that in the 20th century a war between great powers is a war without victory for anyone.

The changes taking place within the Soviet Union and among the nations of Eastern Europe are at once a reality and a promise.

Over time—and in a world of rapid and pervasive change the measurement of time is difficult indeed—we may look forward to a comparable development within Communist China—a maturing process that will deflect the policies of Peking from bellicose actions to a peaceful relation with the rest of the world.

After all, it is not the American purpose simply to preserve the status quo. That was not our history and that is not our destiny. What we want to preserve is the freedom of choice for the peoples of the world. We will take our chances on that.