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*The Issue
in
Viet-Nam*

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Sooner or later the time will come when each of you will experience my sense of shock when your generous invitation led me to count up the years since I first became an alumnus of Northwestern University. I took my degree from the undergraduate school in 1930. More than a third of a century has passed since that time.

That period of more than one-third of a century has been a fortunate time in which to live, an exciting time of change and ferment—particularly for an American. For during that third of a century our country ceased to be a voice offstage and moved to the center of world affairs.

When I received my first degree from Northwestern University, many Americans pretended that the rest of the world did not exist. We were still bemused by isolationism as we had been ever since we rejected the League of Nations in the early twenties. We were self-centered and self-deluding—so much so that when we faced the spectacle of the Western World in flames from Hitler's lunatic ambitions, many Americans quite solemnly contended that this was none of our affair.

But history has forced us to grow up. We have faced the harsh realities of danger and responsibility—and acquitted ourselves with honor and courage, as befits a great power.

For we are indubitably a great power today—a very different country from what we were in 1930—a wiser, more mature, and more responsible country. Our economy is

four times as large—our role in world affairs many times as great.

Most of the Western European nations—which in the thirties controlled vast areas of the globe—are today largely preoccupied with their own affairs. Today we garrison the distant outposts of the world—not in support of colonial interests but in fulfillment of world responsibilities. Six hundred thousand of our countrymen are in uniform overseas. We are providing some form of economic assistance to more than 95 countries. And an America once determined to keep out of entangling alliances now has more than 40 allies on 5 continents.

Today also we are fighting a shooting war in a country that until recently for most Americans was only an exotic place-name on the map of a distant continent.

WHY WE ARE THERE

Our engagement in Viet-Nam is but one aspect of the world role we are playing. But because we are spending both lives and resources in that faraway land and because the issue being decided profoundly affects our fortunes and our future, I should like to

talk with you today about how we got there and why we must stay.

The beginning of wisdom with regard to Viet-Nam 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 merely for one part of the world. We can properly understand the struggle in Viet-Nam 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 Viet-Nam is a product of the great shifts and changes triggered by the Second World War. Out of the war, two continent-wide 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.

HALTING THE COMMUNIST DRIVE

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.

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.

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. It stopped a vast Chinese army that followed. It 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 postwar 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 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 boundaries, including the line of demarcation between North and South Vietnam established when the French relinquished their control over Indochina. Since then three Presidents have reinforced that guarantee by further commitments given directly to the Republic of Viet-Nam. And on August 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.

Today we are living up to those commitments by helping South Viet-Nam defend itself from the onslaught 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 highlands around Pleiku and the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta are thus in a real sense battles and skirmishes in a continuing war to prevent one Communist power after another from violating internationally recognized boundary lines fixing the outer limits of Communist dominion.

When we think of Viet-Nam, we think of Korea. In Viet-Nam, as in Korea, the Communists in one part of a divided country lying on the periphery of China have sought by force to gain dominion over the whole. But in terms of tactics on the ground, Greece is a closer analogy. For there, 20 years ago, as in South Viet-Nam today, the Communists sought to achieve their purpose by what is known in their lexicon as a "war of national liberation."

They chose this method of aggression both in Greece and Viet-Nam because 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 terrain makes concealment easy and impedes 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.

AGGRESSION OR REVOLT?

This ambiguity is the central point of debate in the discussions that have surrounded the South Viet-Nam problem. Is the war in South Viet-Nam 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 responsibilities have necessarily probed in great depth. For if the Viet-Nam war were merely what the Communists say it is—an indigenous rebellion—then the United States would have no busi-

ness taking sides in the conflict and helping one side to defeat the other by force of arms.

EVIDENCE ON CHARACTER OF WAR

The evidence on the character of the Viet-Nam war is voluminous. Its meaning seems clear enough: The North Vietnamese regime in Hanoi systematically created the Viet Cong 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 Viet-Nam was divided in the settlement of 1954, the Communist regime in Hanoi never intended that South Viet-Nam should develop in freedom. 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.

The evidence is clear enough also that the Communist rulers of the North resorted to guerrilla warfare in South Viet-Nam only when the success of the South Viet-Nam

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 Viet-Nam—held its Third Party Congress in Hanoi. That Congress called for the creation of a front organization to undertake the subversion of South Viet-Nam. Within 2 or 3 months thereafter, the National Liberation Front was established to provide a political facade for the conduct of an active guerrilla war. 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 Viet-Nam. These facts, it seems to us, make it clear beyond question that the war in South Viet-Nam has few of the attributes of an indigenous revolt. It is a cynical and systematic aggression by the North Vietnamese regime against the people of South Viet-Nam. 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.

This point is at the heart of our determination to stay the course in the bloody contest now under way in South Viet-Nam. 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.

THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

Yet to recognize the National Liberation Front in such a capacity would do violence to the truth and betray the very people whose liberty we are fighting to secure. The National Liberation Front is not a political entity expressing the will of the people of South Viet-Nam—or any substantial element of the South Vietnamese population. It is a facade fabricated by the Hanoi regime to confuse the issue and elaborate the myth of an indigenous revolt.

History is not obscure on this matter. As I noted earlier, the creation of the Front was announced by the North Viet-Nam Communist Party—the Lao Dong Party—in 1960, soon after the North Viet-Nam mili-

tary leader, General [Vo Nguyen] Giap, announced that: "The North is the revolutionary base for the whole country." But the Hanoi regime, while applauding its creation, has taken little pains to give the Front even the appearance of authenticity.

The individuals proclaimed as the leaders of the Front are not personalities widely known to the South Vietnamese people—or, indeed, to many members of the Viet Cong. They are not revolutionary heroes or national figures. They have little meaning to the ordinary Viet Cong soldier who fights and dies in the jungles and rice paddies.

Instead, the names he carries into battle are those of "Uncle Ho"—Ho Chi Minh, the President of the North Vietnamese regime—and General Giap, its military hero. When Viet Cong prisoners are asked during interrogation whether they are members of the National Liberation Front, they customarily reply that they owe allegiance to the Lao Dong—the Communist Party of North Vietnam—which is the equivalent of the Hanoi Communist regime.

The Front, then, is unmistakably what its name implies—a Communist front organization created to mask the activities of Hanoi

and to further the illusion of an indigenous revolt.

The name of the organization was carefully chosen. It bears the same name as the National Liberation Front of Algeria. But there the resemblance ends, for the Algerian Front did, in fact, represent a substantial part of the Algerian population. It played a major role in an insurgency that was clearly an indigenous movement and not an aggression imposed from outside.

The Algerian Front, moreover, commanded the respect and, indeed, the obedience of the people. When it called a strike, the city of Algiers virtually closed down. By contrast, the Front in Viet-Nam has shown its fictional character by revealing its own impotence. On two occasions it has called for a general strike. These calls have been totally ignored by the people of South Viet-Nam.

The Algerian Front was a vital force in the Algerian community. It secured the overt allegiance of the old, established Moslem groups and leaders. As the revolt progressed, Moslems serving in the Algerian Assembly and even in the French Parliament announced their support for the Front.

But the Front in Viet-Nam has utterly failed in its efforts to attract the adherence of any established group within the society, whether Buddhist, Christian, or any of the sects that form substantial elements in Vietnamese life. Quite clearly, the people of South Viet-Nam, if they are aware of the Front at all, know it for what it is: the political cover for a North Vietnamese effort to take over the South—in practical effect, the southern arm of the North Vietnamese Communist Party.

To be sure, the Viet Cong military forces include a number of indigenous Southerners under Northern control. Neither the United States nor the South Vietnamese Government has ever questioned that fact. But the composition of the Viet Cong military forces is not the issue when one discusses the role of the Front. The issue is whether the Front has any color of claim as a political entity to represent these indigenous elements.

The evidence makes clear that it does not. It is purely and simply a factitious organization created by Hanoi to reinforce a fiction. To recognize it as the representative of the South Vietnamese population would be to give legitimacy to that fiction.

NEGOTIATIONS FRUSTRATED BY HANOI

The true party in interest on the enemy side—the entity that has launched the attack on the South Vietnamese Government for its own purposes, the entity that has created, controlled, and supplied the fighting forces of the Viet Cong from the beginning—is the North Vietnamese regime in Hanoi. And it is the failure of that regime to come to the bargaining table that has so far frustrated every effort to move the problem of South Viet-Nam from a military to a political solution.

In spite of these clear realities, we have not taken, nor do we take, an obdurate or unreasoning attitude with regard to the Front. The President said in his state of the Union message, "We will meet at any conference table, we will discuss any proposals—4 points or 14 or 40—and we will consider the views of any group"—and that, of course, includes the Front along with other groups.

As the President has also said, this false issue of the Front would never prove "an insurmountable problem" if Hanoi were prepared for serious negotiations. But we cannot, to advance the political objectives of the Communist regime in Hanoi, give legiti-

macy to a spurious organization as though it spoke for the people of South Viet-Nam.

A European friend once critically observed that Americans have "a sense of mission but no sense of history." That accusation is, I think, without warrant.

We do have a sense of history, and it is that which enables us to view the war in South Viet-Nam for what it is. We Americans know that it is not, as I have said earlier, a local conflict; it is part of a continuing struggle to prevent the Communists from upsetting the fragile balance of power through force or the threat of force.

To succeed in that struggle we must resist every Communist effort to destroy by aggression the boundaries and demarcation lines established by the postwar arrangements. We cannot pick and choose among those boundaries. We cannot defend Berlin and yield Korea. We cannot recognize one commitment and repudiate another without bearing and weakening the entire structure on which the world's security depends.

ARGUMENT AGAINST U.S. POLICY

Some thoughtful critics of our Vietnamese policy both in Europe and America challenge this. They maintain that 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 landmass south of the Soviet Union.

Proponents 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 them-

selves 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 repeat 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 people 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 postwar era.

Nor can one seriously insist that geo-

graphical 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.

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 come. This was true in Germany, in Korea, and in South Viet-Nam as well.

But those settlements have not yet been

achieved, and we cannot permit their resolution to be preempted by force. This is the issue in Viet-Nam. This is what we are fighting for. This is why we are there.

PRESERVING FREEDOM OF CHOICE

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 Viet-Nam 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 Viet-Nam 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 are 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 Viet-Nam 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 preserved.

In the long run our hopes for the people of South Viet-Nam 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 in 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, Missouri, 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 stability, 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 Peiping 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.

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