

# The Washi

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

## The Truman Doctrine

Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on Administration policies in South Vietnam ought to clarify opposing views and might even help in reconciling some differences on foreign policy. It is to be hoped that the Committee's witnesses will grapple with the fundamentals in a way that the Congress did in 1947 when the country embarked upon the policies we have followed ever since.

The "Truman Doctrine" was recognized in 1947 as an historic declaration. The President in his March 12 message to Congress said bluntly: "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." The Congress and the country agreed with him and American aid was sent to Greece to back up the British in resisting the first of the wars of "national liberation" that have been a unique military and diplomatic phenomenon of our times. That resistance proved to be brilliantly successful and Greece and the Mediterranean were saved for the West. Since 1947 the pursuit of the policy then enunciated has led us into diplomatic and military confrontations around the globe—notably in Lebanon, the Congo, the Philippines, in Latin American countries, in Vietnam and in the Suez crisis. If there is any constant thread in our foreign relations it is the resistance to "subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." It has not been universally directed against "Communists" as such—it has been applied, with pain and reluctance, against the policies of even our best friends as it was at Suez.

We can see the wars and diplomatic confrontations the Truman Doctrine has involved us in; but we cannot see the aggressions that we have not had to check because of knowledge in the world of the existence of the Truman Doctrine. In the current debate on that "Doctrine"—and that is what any meaningful debate will be about—the wars that have not happened ought to be remembered, as well as the trials that have afflicted us.

At the time the "Doctrine" was embraced, it did not go unchallenged. Many Senators pointed out then that it might eventually involve us around the world—even in China as the late Senator Arthur Capper, for one, pointed out. And Walter Lippmann attacked the policy both in its application to Greece and in its world-wide implications.

He described it as "a vague global policy which sounds like a tocsin of an ideological crusade that has no limits." And he deplored "entangling ourselves as partisans in a Greek Civil War." The criticism was useful, for it resulted in a cautious and restrained application of the "Doctrine" generally. And the critics were prophetic in seeing the far-reaching consequences of this policy.

The truth is that the "Truman Doctrine," like so many of the spunky President's utterances, came close to putting the national impulse into a single sentence. It reflected what Walter Lippmann had said in 1944 about the continuing and profound interest of Americans in conditions everywhere in the world. Lippmann called it "this persistent evangel of Americanism." And he thought it reflected "the fact that no nation, and certainly not this Nation, can endure in a politically alien and morally hostile environment; and the profound and abiding truth that a people which does not advance its faith has already begun to abandon it." President Truman's March speech and Mr. Lippmann's global eloquence faithfully mirror the impulses of our countrymen. But at the same time, on alternate occasions and off days, this expansive inclination has been matched by caution and restraint and a sense of our limitations. Lippmann, in discussing *U.S. War Aims* in 1944, expressed a widespread anxiety about the reach of American or Western power in Asia. "We must take it as decided," he said, "that the tutelage of the Western Empires in Asia is coming to its predestined end." And that was and is an authentic reflection of American judgment.

So the two impulses meet now in Vietnam and will manifest themselves in their curious contradictory way in the Senate hearings, no doubt. If the Senators are to have a fair chance of reconciling this dichotomy, they must remember that in application the "Truman Doctrine" turned out to be a peace-making and not a war-making doctrine. Even in Greece, the object was to secure the freedom of Greece—not to produce a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the West. The trick then was to save Greece without having a war with the Soviet Union. And it was accomplished. The aim now ought to be to save South Vietnam without having a war with China. This is essentially the policy the Administration is pursuing. It is the policy that the Senators will be examining. It is the "Truman Doctrine" enunciated in March 1947—a doctrine that not all Americans have caught up with yet—nearly 20 years later.

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