

# Nixon's Defense

## Columbia, S.C.

President Nixon declared yesterday that the U.S. defense of South Vietnam has brought the world closer to peace than at any time since the end of World War II.

"America has demonstrated by its willingness to stand by a small, weak country until we achieved an honorable peace that we deserve, first, the trust of our allies and the respect of our potential adversaries in the world," Mr. Nixon told an applauding audience of South Carolina legislators.

In his first formal defense of his Vietnam policies since the peace agreement was signed January 27, Mr. Nixon occasionally seemed near tears as he spoke of the sacrifices of American mili-

tary men who had died in Vietnam or been taken prisoner.

### LETTER

The President read from a letter sent to him by Mrs. Louis J. Amendola, the mother of Army Captain James Amendola, who was killed in Vietnam in 1969:

"As a mother of a young man who gave up his life in this war, I felt very strongly about wanting an honorable peace agreement. Had you agreed to anything less, you would have let down not only the boys in Vietnam but also those who died in this war. We feel that our son James would have felt as we do, and would have supported your policy."

The President concluded his speech by reading from a cable he said had been sent him by Major Robert N.

Daughtery, a returned prisoner of war, who ended his praise of the President with the words, "God bless you, God bless America."

### CRITICS

During the past two weeks administration officials frequently have expressed their private concern the President has failed to receive sufficient gratitude from his anti-war critics for achieving a peace settlement in Vietnam.

His South Carolina speech was conceived partly as an answer to these critics and was a fullscale defense of America's historical role in Vietnam.

The South Carolina legislature was the first one in the country to pass a resolution expressing praise of Mr. Nixon's effort in achieving a peace agreement.

John Durst, an assistant to South Carolina Governor John C. West, said that administration officials sought out the South Carolina legislature as a forum.

"In all candor the initiative was exerted at the White House level rather than here," Durst said.

In his speech the President traced the course of U.S. involvement in Vietnam during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. He said that American troops were sent to Vietnam "for the most selfless purpose that any nation has ever fought a war.

"It was, very simply, to prevent the imposition by force of a Communist government on the 17 million people of South Vietnam," Mr. Nixon said. "That was our goal and we achieved that goal and we can be

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proud we stuck it out until we did reach that goal."

Had the U. S. followed a policy of "peace at any price" in Vietnam or withdrawn simply for an agreement to return U.S. prisoners of war, it would have "eroded, perhaps fatally" respect for itself among both allies and adversaries.

The President asserted that the initiatives undertaken by his administration with the Chinese government and the arms agreement achieved with the Soviet government was based upon this respect.

"So I say to you here today as we look to the future, the chances for us to build a peace that will last are better than they have been at any time since World War II," Mr. Nixon said.

The president also called upon Americans to honor

U.S. military men killed in Vietnam, their families and the returning prisoners of war.

### HONOR

"And finally, let us honor the 2½ million men who served, who did not desert America, but who served in a difficult war..." Mr. Nixon said.

"Now that we have brought an end to the war, let us honor them all, and the way to honor them, I say, is for us to work together to build a lasting peace in the world, a peace that can last not only in Southeast Asia, but a peace that the United States can help to build for this whole world in which we live."

Mr. Nixon was warmly applauded by the government officials, including United States Senators Strom Thurmond and Ernest F. Holl-

ings, who were allowed in the South Carolina capitol to hear the speech. The building was tightly sealed off to the public, but spectators jammed the grounds outside to hear the speech over loudspeakers.

### FLAGS

A friendly crowd waving American flags and leftover campaign signs greeted Mr. Nixon at the Columbia airport when he arrived from Key Biscayne, and other South Carolinians displayed banners of welcome along the motorcade route from the airport.

Most of the signs were supportive of the President and included such messages as "God Bless Nixon" and "Welcome, Mr. Peace."

But there was a sprinkling of critical placards, one of which said, "Only 1429 more

days until we have a Democrat in the White House — fire Roy Ash."

Governor West gave state employees an extended lunch hour and encouraged private employers to do the same in an effort to swell the crowd for Mr. Nixon's arrival. School children who wanted to hear the President were excused.

Mr. Nixon was introduced by West, who described South Carolina as "the heart of American patriotism." In his speech at this historic states rights citadel the President praised his own revenue-sharing program and said that "power should flow away from the concentration in Washington back to the states and the people — that is where it belongs and that is where it should stay."

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