

1st Commander Eldon James

NOTES

'Operation Show your colors'

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

AMERICAN LEGION LEGISLATIVE DINNER

Patriotism.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MARCH 2, 1966

It is good to be back again with my friends of the Congress and the American Legion. I am particularly pleased to be in the company tonight of my good friend Representative Olin Teague. I can think of no one in the Congress who more deserves the award you have bestowed on him.

↳ There is no doubt what is on all our minds tonight.

It is the war in Vietnam.

As you know, I returned a few days ago from two weeks in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Tonight I would like to give you some of the impressions I bring home from my mission.

↳ First of all, ^{*The Struggle*} ~~may I say that the conflict~~ we face in Vietnam is not an isolated conflict. It does not exist in a vacuum.

↳ South Vietnam is the testing ground for two struggles taking place in Asia: The struggle of nations to maintain their independence while threatened by Communist subversion and aggression . . . and the struggle to bring about a social and economic revolution for the people of that part of the world.

↳ In Vietnam, the tide in both ~~these~~ struggles has begun to turn in our favor. But make no mistake about it, we must be prepared to face a long and costly effort.

Genl Westmoreland
- 3 -

The military situation has improved over even a few months ago. South Vietnamese, American, and allied forces are ^{more than} holding their own with the Viet Cong.

Korea
Australia
New Zealand
Philippines

↳ They are ~~today~~ taking offensive initiatives in Viet Cong sanctuaries which were previously immune to attack.

↳ Sections of road and railroad, previously unusable, are being used again. The Viet Cong defection rate has increased in the past few months. Defectors report low morale . . . food shortages and, above all, fear of bombing among Viet Cong forces.

↳ Allied firepower and mobility are increasing.

↳ Tactical air support is excellent.

↳ Our communication and supply situations have improved. Ports and Harbors are being constructed!

↳ Coordination among allied forces has improved.

Proud of our Men
& women!

- 4 -

I ~~think you should know that~~ our American troops
are conducting themselves in the best traditions of this
country, not only ^{in battle} on the field but in their work in
building rural schools and hospitals, in helping the
Vietnamese people to build, plan, and have hope for the
future. ↳ Their performance is good, their morale is high,
and we have every reason to be proud of them.

↳ Special mention should be made of the excellent
rescue and medical care available to our troops in Vietnam.

↳ Within three hours most wounded receive skilled medical
treatment. And fewer than 1 per cent of all wounded
troops hospitalized fail to survive -- this compared to a
rate of 8.5 per cent in World War I; 4.5 per cent in
World War II; and 2.2 per cent in Korea.

Medical

There are no "Yankee go home" signs on the walls in Saigon and other cities. Indeed, the Viet Cong

~~themselves~~ seem to have some trouble in getting their ~~own~~ soldiers to believe their own anti-American propaganda.

Questioning of prisoners and defectors shows that very few of the Viet Cong feel the United States seeks conquest or domination in Vietnam.

One prisoner who was questioned said this:

"I saw an American once, working with several Vietnamese to repair a bridge. He wore no shirt. I saw that he and the Vietnamese workers understood one another very well."

Another prisoner said that he had seen Americans nearly every day in his area and added:

"I've never seen an American doing something which showed that he wanted to rule the Vietnamese."

~~And he was right.~~

We are not in Vietnam to "rule" the Vietnamese.
We are there to repel aggression, and to prove to the aggressors that the price of their aggression comes too high.

∠ We are in Vietnam to maintain the rights of self-determination and national independence in face of calculated subversion, terrorism, and military force.

The ~~other side~~ ^{Enemy} calls itself the National Liberation Front. *I liberates no one - it oppresses & kills many.*
But, I agree that it is a front -- a front for ^{Hanoi and} ~~Hanoi~~ and for the expansionist drive of Asian communism.

I have had direct experience with the front tactic.
I faced Communists first-hand as Mayor of Minneapolis.
I helped clean them out of my state political party. And
I helped clean them out when they tried to infiltrate the
American labor movement and a number of liberal organizations.

*Refugees
to
South!*

And, in case there is any doubt in anyone's mind, let me make it clear that the people who use the front tactic are not mild-mannered social reformers. They are hard, callous men filled with a drive for power and domination over others.

The so-called National Liberation Front in Vietnam is being used by Communists . . . it is led by Communists - *it is Communist* - and its direction comes from the North.

And I challenge tonight the idea that the Viet Cong is anything but an instrument of the Asian Communist thrust for power.

Some There are no doubt ^{some} honest nationalists ~~swept up~~ ^{in the past may have} ~~been swept up~~ in the Viet Cong movement. But their tragedy is great, for they are being deluded and used -- just as others have been in the past.

↳ I said earlier that there are two struggles in Vietnam and Southeast Asia: the struggle against subversion and aggression; and the struggle for a better life for the ordinary people of that part of the world. *& we must win both! -military-*

↳ The first struggle is going better, although there will undoubtedly be disappointments and setbacks ahead.

↳ What about the second struggle -- the struggle which can build that area's long-term health and stability?

↳ When I left Saigon, Prime Minister Premier Ky told me "We have begun 12 years late. But it is not too late."

↳ The South Vietnamese government has now undertaken -- late in the day, it is true -- programs which will give the people of the countryside a feeling of participation and a stake in their government.

↳ The South Vietnamese government is working hard
to educate Vietnamese children; to feed, clothe and house
hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees; to
overcome a dangerous inflation in the Vietnamese economy;
to defeat corruption and administrative inertia. ↳ It is
working hard toward the day when truly free elections
may be held. ~~Here are our objectives~~

↳ And we are helping in this second struggle just
as we are in the first.

↳ At the same time we seek, as strongly as ever, to
bring this conflict to negotiation, ^{to peace -} Our aim in that
negotiation: The establishment of a just and honorable
peace . . . and the chance for the long-suffering, valiant
people of South Vietnam to decide their own futures.

↳ We have chosen no easy course. We have not
chosen the course of withdrawal. Nor have we chosen
the course of massive escalation, and ~~violence~~

↳ We have chosen the course which faces with sober responsibility the whole complex situation there.

ask others
ask

↳ Have we the resolve, the staying power, and the courage to see it through? - we must!

↳ If we do not, we may face tomorrow elsewhere the aggression we face today in South Vietnam.

go, I found, on my journey, that almost all the independent nations of Southeast Asia fear the ~~expansionist~~ drive of Asian communism -- an ideology which seeks to exploit every possible point of weakness in that part of the world.

↳ The approach of Asian communism is not merely economic, although it capitalizes on the poverty and despair of the Asian peasant.

↳ Its tactic is not merely political, although its hardcore followers are dedicated believers in Marxist doctrine,

and although it wraps itself in the robes of nationalism to attract those who are not yet ready for the full gospel.

↳ Its thrust for power is not simply military, although it has never won power except by ruthless use of force -- and I believe it never will.

Its objective - conquest - Dominators.

↳ Here in the United States, many thousands of miles away, it is easy to debate and theorize about Asian communism.

But, in Asia, it is not a subject for debate. It is a harsh, dangerous reality. The peoples and governments of Southeast Asia are facing this reality. And we -- and an increasing number of our allies -- are facing it with them.

↳ The people of Asia ^{Asian} want to decide their own futures. They want to be independent. But no free Asian nation is strong enough to stand alone in face of massive military force, subversion and terrorism directed against it.

~~I believe that~~ the time may come when Asian
communism may lose its fervor . . . when it may lose
some of its neuroses . . . when it may realize that its
objectives cannot be gained by aggression.

↳ But, until that time, ~~I believe~~ we have no choice
but to help the nations of Southeast Asia strengthen
themselves for the long road ahead.

↳ There truly is no alternative. #

↳ The continent of Asia may seem distant and remote
to us here in this comfortable ballroom. But I would
remind you that, in this nuclear age, no point on the
globe is any longer remote from any other. In this time
we would well heed the words of ^{the} great Asian thinker Confucius:

"If a man take no thought about what is distant, he
will find sorrow near at hand."

↳ And so it is that we must rededicate ourselves
to the pledges made last month in the historic Declaration
of Honolulu -- pledges,

to defense against aggression;

to the work of social revolution;

to the goal of free self-government;

to the attack on hunger, ignorance and
disease; and

to the unending quest for peace.

#

FOR RELEASE AFTER 8:30 P.M. - 3/2/66

NOTES

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY
AMERICAN LEGION LEGISLATIVE DINNER
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 2, 1966

It is good to be back again with my friends of the Congress and the American Legion. I am particularly pleased to be in the company tonight of my good friend Representative Olin Teague. I can think of no one in the Congress who more deserves the award you have bestowed on him.

There is no doubt what is on all our minds tonight. It is the war in Vietnam.

As you know, I returned a few days ago from two weeks in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Tonight I would like to give you some of the impressions I bring home from my mission.

First of all, may I say that the conflict we face in Vietnam is not an isolated conflict. It does not exist in a vacuum.

South Vietnam is the testing ground for two struggles taking place in Asia: The struggle of nations to maintain their independence while threatened by Communist subversion and aggression . . . and the struggle to bring about a social and economic revolution for the people of that part of the world.

In Vietnam, the tide in both those struggles has begun to turn in our favor. But make no mistake about it, we must be prepared to face a long and costly effort.

The military situation has improved over even a few months ago. South Vietnamese, American, and allied forces are holding their own with the Viet Cong. They are today taking offensive initiatives in Viet Cong sanctuaries which were previously immune to attack. Sections of road and railroad, previously unusable, are being used again. The Viet Cong defection rate has increased in the past few months. Defectors report low morale . . . food shortages and, above all, fear of bombing among Viet Cong forces.

Allied firepower and mobility are increasing.

Tactical air support is excellent.

Our communication and supply situations have improved.

Coordination among allied forces has improved.

I think you should know that our American troops are conducting themselves in the best traditions of this country, not only in the field but in their work in building rural schools and hospitals, in helping the Vietnamese people to build, plan, and have hope for the future. Their performance is good, their morale is high, and we have every reason to be proud of them.

Special mention should be made of the excellent rescue and medical care available to our troops in Vietnam. Within three hours most wounded receive skilled medical treatment. And fewer than 1 per cent of all wounded troops hospitalized fail to survive -- this compared to a rate of 8.5 per cent in World War I; 4.5 per cent in World War II; and 2.2 per cent in Korea.

There are no "Yankee go home" sign on the walls in Saigon and other cities. Indeed, the Viet Cong themselves seem to have some trouble in getting their soldiers to believe their own anti-American

propaganda. Questioning of prisoners and defectors shows that very few of the Viet Cong feel the United States seeks conquest or domination in Vietnam.

One prisoner who was questioned said this:

"I saw an American once, working with several Vietnamese to repair a bridge. He wore no shirt. I saw that he and the Vietnamese workers understood one another very well."

Another prisoner said that he had seen Americans nearly every day in his area and added:

"I've never seen an American doing something which showed that he wanted to rule the Vietnamese."

And he was right.

We are not in Vietnam to "rule" the Vietnamese. We are there to repel aggression, and to prove to the aggressors that the price of their aggression comes too high.

We are in Vietnam to maintain the rights of self-determination and national independence in face of calculated subversion, terrorism, and military force.

The other side calls itself the National Liberation Front.

I agree that it is a front -- a front for Hanoi and for the expansionist drive of Asian communism.

I have had direct experience with the front tactic. I faced Communists first-hand as Mayor of Minneapolis. I helped clean them out of my state political party. And I helped clean them out when they tried to infiltrate the American labor movement and a number of liberal organizations.

And, in case there is any doubt in anyone's mind, let me make it clear that the people who use the front tactic are not mild-mannered

social reformers. They are hard, callous men filled with a drive for power and domination over others.

The so-called National Liberation Front in Vietnam is being used by Communists . . . it is led by Communists . . . and its direction comes from the North.

And I challenge tonight the idea that the Viet Cong is anything but an instrument of the Asian Communist thrust for power.

There are no doubt honest nationalists swept up in the Viet Cong movement. But their tragedy is great, for they are being deluded and used -- just as others have been in the past.

I said earlier that there are two struggles in Vietnam and Southeast Asia: the struggle against subversion and aggression; and the struggle for a better life for the ordinary people of that part of the world.

The first struggle is going better, although there will undoubtedly be disappointments and setbacks ahead.

What about the second struggle -- the struggle which can build that area's long-term health and stability?

When I left Saigon, Premier Ky told me "We have begun 12 years late. But it is not too late."

The South Vietnamese government has not undertaken -- late in the day, it is true -- programs which will give the people of the countryside a feeling of participation and a stake in their government.

The South Vietnamese government is working hard to educate Vietnamese children; to feed, clothe and house hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees; to overcome a dangerous inflation in the

Vietnamese economy; to defeat corruption and administrative inertia. It is working hard toward the day when truly free elections may be held.

And we are helping in this second struggle just as we are in the first.

At the same time we seek, as strongly as ever, to bring this conflict to negotiation. Our aim in that negotiation: The establishment of a just and honorable peace . . . and the chance for the long-suffering, valiant people of South Vietnam to decide their own futures.

We have chosen no easy course. We have not chosen the course of withdrawal. Nor have we chosen the course of massive escalation and violence. We have chosen the course which faces with sober responsibility the whole complex situation there.

Have we the resolve, the staying power, and the courage to see it through?

If we do not, we may face tomorrow elsewhere the aggression we face today in South Vietnam.

I found, on my journey, that almost all the independent nations of Southeast Asia fear the expansionist drive of Asian communism -- an ideology which seeks to exploit every possible point of weakness in that part of the world.

The approach of Asian communism is not merely economic, although it capitalizes on the poverty and despair of the Asian peasant.

Its tactic is not merely political, although its hardcore followers are dedicated believers in Marxist doctrine, and although

it wraps itself in the robes of nationalism to attract those who are not yet ready for the full gospel.

Its thrust for power is not simply military, although it has never won power except by ruthless use of force -- and I believe it never will.

Here in the United States, many thousands of miles away, it is easy to debate and theorize about Asian communism. But, in Asia, it is not a subject for debate. It is a harsh, dangerous reality. The peoples and governments of Southeast Asia are facing this reality. And we -- and an increasing number of our allies -- are facing it with them.

The people of Asia want to decide their own futures. They want to be independent. But no free Asian nation is strong enough to stand alone in face of massive military force, subversion and terrorism directed against it.

I believe that the time may come when Asian communism may lose its fervor . . . when it may lose some of its neuroses . . . when it may realize that its objectives cannot be gained by aggression.

But, until that time, I believe we have no choice but to help the nations of Southeast Asia strengthen themselves for the long road ahead.

There truly is no alternative.

The continent of Asia may seem distant and remote to us here in this comfortable ballroom. But I would remind you that, in this nuclear age, no point on the globe is any longer remote from any other. In this time we would well heed the words of great Asian thinker Confucius:

"If a man take no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand."

And so it is that we must rededicate ourselves to the pledges made last month in the historic Declaration of Honolulu -- pledges, to defense against aggression; to the work of social revolution; to the goal of free self-government; to the attack on hunger, ignorance and disease; and to the unending quest for peace.

#

TO: RUTH

FROM: JULIE

RE: AMERICAN LEGION--EDITED TRANSCRIPT

COPY

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
AT MID-WINTER CONFERENCE
AMERICAN LEGION

WASHINGTON, D. C.
MARCH 2, 1966

Thank you very much, National Commander Eldon James. Members of the Congress who are present this evening and our distinguished honored guest of the evening, Olin Teague:

May I first, Mr. Commander, just commend you on behalf of the nation for the tremendous job you have performed as National Commander of this great organization. They tell me that you are a human dynamo, and I guess that's what it takes to be Commander of the American Legion. It doesn't hurt a bit to have a little of those qualities even to be Vice President of the United States.

I am particularly pleased that our nation's Capital is not only the scene of this Mid-Winter Legislative Conference, but will also be the host to the 48th Annual American Legion National Convention starting, I believe, in the latter part of August, this year.

COPY

Commander James, I want to thank you for honor-

ing me tonight by pasting on the lapel of my coat this flag pin. I know that you presented one to President Johnson and to millions of other Americans. This pin "Operation Show your Colors" and the little card that comes with it which I shall carry with me and keep as a very precious possession -- is a reminder of commitment and purpose. "Operation Show Your Colors" notes "Americans are serving the cause of freedom in Vietnam. I wear my country's flag to show that I support their efforts."

I hope every American will see fit to wear this emblem, demonstrating the unity of purpose and the commitment of this nation. I for one want to express deep thanks and appreciation to this great patriotic organization, the American Legion, for its initiative in this important matter. My fellow Americans, a little old fashioned patriotism never hurt anybody; in fact, it's mighty good. And sometimes when you travel about it means a great deal to you to know that there is this feeling among our fellow Americans. I would like to have the people of the world know that Americans wear this little symbol, "Operation Show Your Colors," rather than just to see exhibitions of dissent and protest which I think have had far more than their just share of publicity. I would not want to be misunderstood -- I believe in the precious right of dissent, but I also believe in my right to dissent with the dissenters, and I do so on this issue.

COPY

I'm pleased to be here as my friend, Olin Teague, receives this high honor and citation with such full recognition on the part of the American Legion that he is a great citizen, a great patriot and a great legislator. Representative Teague has appropriately and rightfully said that throughout this audience there are members of the Congress that have worked side by side with him in the House and the Senate who deserve as he does tonight the commendation and the respect which this great organization, the American Legion, has paid to them by this dinner.

Now, I know what's on your mind, and I'm going to get right at it. What is on your mind tonight is the war in Vietnam. As I stood to honor these men from the battlefield who wear the uniform of this country serving in Vietnam, I could see your vital interest, your concern, your dedication to this struggle.

It's been said by your National Commander that I returned just a few days ago from a rather extensive tour in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. I did so and I haven't had a chance to settle down since I returned. This afternoon, I spent three hours before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; following that, at least three more hours with different members of Government, relating to the very problems and concerns that we speak of tonight. But I am happy to do it because I feel just as other members of the Government have felt when they returned from a visit to Vietnam.-- that whatever you can do, it is not enough. There is so much to be done that everyone needs to give his whole measure of dedication and devotion to it. I am of the opinion that those who doubt our cause or even have concern

- 4 -
COPY

as to the manner in which the cause is being upheld or fulfilled, would only have to journey to any part of South Vietnam where this struggle is being waged, and his doubt would be erased. So, let me give you a report on some of the impressions that I bring home from this mission.

I went there not to speak for the cause of war, but rather to speak of the hope of peace. I did not go as the emissary of this country to discuss military tactics or strategy, because, of that, I know little. I went instead to talk about how we can help rebuild a nation that has suffered and suffered and suffered for years and years.

First of all, I would observe for you that the struggle we face in Vietnam is not an isolated conflict, unrelated to the rest of Asia; it does not exist in a vacuum. It is a struggle that is a part of a larger struggle taking place throughout Southeast Asia and the subcontinent. South Vietnam is the testing ground for two struggles: the first, the struggle of nations to maintain their independence while threatened by Communist subversion and aggression and second, the struggle to bring about a social and economic revolution for the people of that part of the world. I am happy to say that, in Vietnam, the tide in both of these struggles has begun to turn in our favor. I say this, because I believe the American people need to know that these struggles can be won and that we do not strengthen ourselves nor fortify our resolve by listening to prophets of doom and gloom who suggest to you that "there is no way out," "that there is no end to the difficulty." Make no mistake about it, we need to be prepared for a long and costly effort, but this is

COPY

NOT the first time this Nation has faced difficult days. In fact, when I journeyed in some areas of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, I remembered how our allies in Australia faced difficult days in 1941 and 1942, but no one suggested that they were "defeated."

The British faced difficult days after Dunkirk, but defeat was not in their vocabulary. The United States faced difficult days after Pearl Harbor, but the thought never came across the mind of man that this nation would be defeated. And it is because of this will and also because of the knowledge of our resources and strength that we can say, without being boastful, but because we know that this struggle for national independence, this struggle against Communist aggression, this struggle for a better life -- can be achieved.

Now, the military situation was discussed with me, as I am sure it was with members of the Congress when they visited there. I was with General Westmoreland and his staff. Let me say right now that America has no finer soldier, no finer commander, a soldier that represents the finest quality of American citizenship than General Westmoreland who is in command in Vietnam. The military situation, General Westmoreland told me, is better, yes, appreciably better than a few months ago. South Vietnamese, American, Australian, New Zealand and Korean troops are more than holding their own against the Viet Cong, in fact, they have taken offensive initiatives in the Viet Cong sanctuaries which were previously immune to attack. This does not suggest that the road is

6
COPY

easy; it only suggests what is a fact--that now the resources of the Allied forces are being mobilized, and the day is a brighter one. Sections of road and railroad, previously unusable, are being used once again. The Viet Cong defection rate has increased in the past few months. Defectors report low morale, food shortages and above all, the fear of bombing among Viet Cong forces. As these men know, mobility is increasing, tactical air support is excellent, our communication supply situation has improved. Needless to say, much needed improvement has been made in port and harbor facilities that were previously almost non-existent -- with the exception of Saigon. New facilities are now being constructed in one of the most massive programs of construction that that part of the world has ever known. And let us not underestimate the military feat of being able to transport and to place on the field of battle and establish in distant camps and fortified areas -- better than 150,000 men in less than six months. No nation on the face of the earth has ever performed such a military feat. Coordination among Allied forces has improved.

I mention these things, because when I made the statement not long ago to some of our fellow Americans that I was of the opinion that we had reason to be encouraged, that I had, what I call restrained optimism, I read that the Vice President was "ebullient, exuberant, optimistic." Well, may I say that if I'm a bit optimistic, it's an old American characteristic which I hope we will always have. But no one can be "exuberant"-- this is a painful experience, a sorrowful one, but because it is painful and because it is sorrowful does not mean that you must talk like a defeatist.

-7-
COPY

Rather, it means that the American people have a right to know what there are changes for the better. And whatever changes need to be made to make it still better will be made by the American people and their Government. Our American Troops are conducting themselves in the best traditions of this Nation, not only on the battlefield, but in their work in villages and hamlets, in building roads and schools and hospitals and helping the Vietnamese people to build and plan and to have hopes for a future. There has never been anything like it.-- soldiers themselves waging war against the ancient enemies of poverty and despair, hunger and disease. The performance of these Americans is good; it deserves the unqualified commendation and praise of every citizen of this land. Morale is high, and I think that every one of us has every right to be proud of them and to show our pride by our support of their efforts. Special mention should be made of the excellent rescue and medical care available to our troops in Vietnam. I visited hospitals, and I saw the wounded; it's an experience that touches your heart. Yet, it is reassuring to know that, within three hours, most of the wounded received medical treatment; the rescue operations are extremely good. Fewer than 1 per cent of all wounded troops, hospitalized, failed to survive--a medical miracle. This compared to the rate of 8 1/2 per cent in World War I; 4.5 per cent in World War II; and 2.2 per cent in Korea. We can be very grateful to the medical profession, to the healing arts and to the management of our military -- for this phenomenal operation of hospital and medical care for our Armed Services.

COPY

There are no "Yankee Go Home" signs on the walls in Saigon or on the walls of other cities -- none at all. Indeed, the Viet Cong seem to have some trouble in getting their own soldiers to believe their own anti-American propaganda. Questioning of prisoners and defectors shows that very few of the Viet Cong feel that the United States seeks conquest or domination in Vietnam. If you want some interesting reading sometime take a look at transcripts of the statements of prisoners and defectors, and listen to some of the broadcasts that come from Peking and Hanoi as they harangue their troops to exercise what they call "Communist ideology discipline", rather than yield to the program of open arms of Viet Nam or to the courage of Allied forces on the field of battle. Many of you, I am sure, heard President Johnson speak a week ago in New York City when he received the Freedom Award. I think it was the clearest, the most precise statement of American aims, objectives and policy, delivered by any President. I hope that it will be studied carefully, because there are those who would seek to confuse the record, confuse, if you please the people. When the Chief of State, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States speaks in such clear and unmistakable language as the President of the United States has spoken, then, I think the American people ought to be reassured in the knowledge that we know our objectives, we know what we seek to do and what we do not seek to do. We are not in Vietnam to rule the Vietnamese. We are there to repel aggression, and to prove to the aggressors that the price of their aggression comes too high. We are in Vietnam to maintain the right of self-determination and national independence in the face of calculated, premeditated

COPY

subversion, terrorism and military force. I submit that these objectives are simple, direct and honorable, and they ought to be supported by a brave and free people.

Now the enemy calls itself a "National Liberation Front." It would be better titled the National Oppression Front. It liberates no one; it is a concoction from Hanoi; it is political front for the military arm of the Viet Cong. It is indeed, however, a military front for the expansionist drive of Asian Communism. It is not an indigenous movement in South Vietnam. This is no civil war; this is a struggle in which the direction and the control of the National Liberation Front and the Viet Cong come from Hanoi, backed by Peking -- Communist China.

The American people need to know that, too. In case there is any doubt in anyones mind, let me make it clear that the people who use the front tactic are not mild-mannered social reformers. They are hard, callous, disciplined men, filled with a drive for power

and domination over others. I can't help but think when I hear my fellow Americans state that if there was a free election in Vietnam, most likely "Ho Chin Minh would win." But isn't it interesting that, whenever there is a movement of refugees, whenever there is a movement of people in the battle, they never go North; they come into South Vietnam; they vote for freedom with their feet, since they have no chance to vote with a ballot. So, the so-called National Liberation Front in Vietnam is used by Communist leaders and its direction comes from the Communist North; it is Communist. And I challenge tonight the idea that the Viet Cong is anything but an instrument of Asian Communism's thrust for power. You may wonder why an officer of this Government spends that much time on this matter. It is because this is one of the areas of confusion in this land.

Now, of course some honest Nationalists in the past may have been swept up in the Viet Cong movement. But their tragedy is great, for they were deluded and used, just as others have been deluded and used in the past. Now I said earlier that there are two struggles in Vietnam and Southeast Asia -- the struggle against subversion and aggression and the struggle for a better life for the ordinary people. And I said and I repeat we can and we must win both. The first struggle -- the military ~~p-~~ is going better.

COPY

COPY

What about the second struggle; the struggle which can build into the areas, long term economic health and stability? When I left Saigon, Premier Ky told me, "We have begun 12 years late, Mr. Vice President, but it is not too late. This Government, with all of its difficulties knows that job must be done for its people." The South Vietnamese Government has now undertaken late in the day, it is true, programs which will give the people of the countryside, the peasantry, the feeling of participation and a stake in their government. The South Vietnamese Government is working hard to educate Vietnamese children -- for the first time textbooks for all children up to the sixth grade, to feed and clothe and house hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees, to overcome dangerous inflation, to defeat corruption and administrative inertia.

I submit that it is working hard toward the day when truly free elections may be held. And we are helping in this second struggle, just as we are in the first. At the same time we seek, as strongly as ever, to bring this conflict to a peaceful solution. We search relentlessly for an honorable peace. We are strong enough to come to any conference table, brave enough to meet any adversary anywhere. Peace is our objective, and peace is a noble aspiration of a free people and the leaders of free nations. The establishment of a just and honorable peace is our ultimate goal, and it is the chance for the long suffering people of South Vietnam to decide their own future.

COPY

Now, we haven't chosen the easy way; we have not chosen the course of withdrawal a few have advocated. Nor have we chosen the course of massive escalation that carries with it the possibility of horrible nuclear confrontation. We have chosen, instead a course which faces with sober responsibility the whole complex situation there. Asians and others have asked me, and I am sure, asked my associates in the Congress: "Do we have the resolve, do we have the staying power, have we the will, the determination, the courage, to see it through?" I am confident that, when Hanoi knows that there isn't one shadow of doubt as to the willingness and the capacity and the ability of this nation to see this struggle through, that that will be the one thing that will show the men of the North, Ho Chin Minh and all the others in Hanoi that the best thing for them to do is to come to the conference table and stop the fighting.

If we lack this resolve, if we do not have the courage to see it through, (which would seem impossible to me) we had better face up to the fact that we will have to face tomorrow somewhere else the aggression that we face today in South Vietnam. Aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed. If we haven't learned that lesson in the past 25 years, than we have learned nothing in this century.

COPY

Yes, I found in my journey that almost all of the independent nations of Southeast Asia are deeply concerned over the drive of Asian Communism and fearful of it and its ideology which seeks to exploit every possible point of weakness in that part of the world. The approach of Asian Communism is not merely economic, although it capitalizes on the poverty and despair of the Asian peasant. Its tactic is not merely political, although its hard core followers are dedicated believers in Marxist doctrine, and although it wraps itself in the robes of Nationalism to attract those who are not yet ready for the "full gospel." Its thrust for power is not simply military, although it has never won power except by the ruthless use of force, and I believe that it never will. Its objective is conquest, its purpose -- domination, its chance for success -- weakness on the part of free nations, its chances for defeat -- firmness on the part of free nations. Here, in the United States, many thousands of miles away, it is mighty easy for us to debate and theorize about Asian Communism. But, in Asia, it is not a subject for theory or academic discussion or debate. Communist subversion and Communist aggression in Asia are the hard reality of their life. In Communism there is a matter of death, destruction, pillage. They see it a little differently than some others. It is a harsh, dangerous reality, and the peoples and governments of Southeast Asia are facing that reality, and we and our increasing number of allies are facing

COPY

it with them. How good it was to read the other day when I was in Manila that President Fernando Marcos -- the new dynamic leader of that Republic -- had asked his Congress to repeal a law which prohibited the Philippines from sending troops outside of their national boundary. I predict that, under the able leadership of President Marcos, our Philippine brothers, Philippine friends will have an engineer battalion and supporting troops in Vietnam, backing the allied forces in that country in short order.

In conclusion, let me say simply this -- just as we want to decide our own future, so the people of Asia want to be independent; they want to be left alone. But no free Asian nation is strong enough today to stand alone in the face of massive military force, subversion and terrorism directed against it. Now the time may come when Asian Communism may lose its favor and its militancy, when it may lose some of its neurosis, when it may realize that its objectives cannot be gained by force and aggression, and when it may learn that the rest of the world will not tolerate the law of the jungle. But until that time, we have no choice but to help the nations of Southeast Asia, just as we helped nations in Europe to strengthen themselves for the long road ahead. There truly is no easy way. There truly is no other alternative.

- 15 -
COPY

The continent of Asia may seem distant and remote to us here in this comfortable ballroom. But I would remind you that, in this nuclear age and in the space age, no point on the globe is any longer remote from any other. In this time, we of the occidental world might well heed the words of that great Asian thinker, Confucius: He said that "if a man take no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand" -- words of a prophet. And so it is that we must dedicate ourselves to pledges made last month by the President of the United States in the Honolulu meeting with the representatives of the Government of South Vietnam in the Declaration of Honolulu. These are the pledges that we give as a free Nation to people who seek to live in freedom, pledges to defense against aggression, pledges to work for a social revolution, pledges to work to the goal of free, self-government -- to the attack on hunger, ignorance and disease; and pledges to the unending quest for peace. It is to this Declaration that America gives its hand. And it is to this Declaration in this struggle in Vietnam that your President, indeed, your Congress, asked the people of America to give their hand and their hearts. Thank you.

#####



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org