

SENATOR KENNEDY AND VIETNAM STRATEGY

Mr. Dirksen. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. Kennedy, and I have much in common. Not only do we share membership in this great body, but we entered Army service as privates--I in World War I and he with troops abroad in 1951. Nothing so enriches the kinship of the uniform as the experience which comes from having been a Private.

Often do I think back to those days when one stood reveille, did KP (kitchen police) duty, mended one's own clothes, washed his own mess kit, learned squads right and squads left and performed a score of other duties to sharpen one's strategic and tactical expertise.

But one learns in due course that war is a tactical and strategic art. Objectives are to be assessed. Targets and positions must be evaluated. High ground and its importance in stopping infiltration must be equated with the cost in lives. The value of high ground was not lost on the Germans 25 years ago this week when they occupied the high promontory overlooking both Omaha and Utah Beaches and held it against every assault for more than 30 hours. To conclude that our military leaders in Vietnam were "senseless and irresponsible" as my distinguished colleague and Private-at-Arms put it, in taking Hamburger Hill, came as something of a shock. It did not dislocate my affection for him, but it did jolt my estimate of his wisdom and judgment.

Since that first statement on the Senate floor two weeks ago, he has spoken to a college graduation group in the course of which he was quoted as saying that senseless military actions in the hills and valleys of Vietnam "have delayed successful negotiation at the Paris peace talks."

All this has a slightly familiar ring. It sounds a bit like another Senator from Ohio who graced this body in 1861--more than a 100 years ago. His name was Benjamin Franklin Wade. He was Chairman of the Committee on Conduct of the War. When General McClellan remained rather deliberate, with President Lincoln's approval, Senator Wade went to the White House and demanded that Lincoln throw McClellan overboard. "Who do I put in his place?" asked Lincoln. "Anybody", asserted Wade. Very coolly Lincoln said, "Wade, anybody will do for you but I must have somebody." All this because of the military conduct of General McClellan.

If what is being done in Vietnam is senseless and irresponsible, the Senator from Massachusetts should contact the Commander-in-Chief and suggest that he dismiss our military commanders and find others.

But I have an idea that the President, the people of this country, and our knowledgeable leaders are not about to do anything of the kind. They are more likely to recall what the historian Titus Livius, better known as Livy wrote 2100 years ago when General Paulus was selected to conduct the war with Macedonia in 168 B.C. Here is what Livy wrote.

"Lucius Aemilius Paulus, a Roman Consul who had been selected to conduct the war with the Macedonians, B.C. 168 went out from the

Senate into the assembly of the people and addressed them as follows, according to the historian, Titus Livius (Livy):

'In every circle, and, truly, at every table, there are people who lead armies into Macedonia; who know where the camp ought to be placed; what posts ought to be occupied by troops; when and through what pass that territory should be entered; where magazines should be formed; how provisions should be conveyed by land and sea; and when it is proper to engage the enemy, when to lie quiet.

'And they not only demonstrate what is best to be done, but if anything is done in any other manner than what they have pointed out, they arraign the consul, as if he were on trial before them.

'These are great impediments to those who have the management of affairs; for everyone cannot encounter injurious reports with the same constancy and firmness of mind as Fabius did, who chose to let his own ability be questioned through the folly of the people, rather than to dismanage the public business with a high reputation.

'I am not one of those who think that commanders ought at no time to receive advice; on the contrary, I would deem that man more proud than wise, who regulated every proceeding by the standard of his own single judgment.

'What then is my opinion?

'That commanders should be counseled, chiefly, by persons of known talent; by those who have made the art of war their particular study, and whose knowledge is derived from experience; from those who are present at the scene of action, who see the country, who see the enemy; who see the advantages that occasions offer, and who, like people embarked in the same ship, are sharers of the danger.

'If, therefore, anyone thinks himself qualified to give advice respecting the war which I am to conduct, which may prove advantageous to the public, let him not refuse his assistance to the state, but let him come with me into Macedonia.

'He shall be furnished with a ship, a horse, a tent; even his traveling charges shall be defrayed.

'But if he thinks this too much trouble, and prefers the repose of a city life to the toils of war, let him not, on land, assume the office of a pilot.

'The city, in itself, furnishes abundance of topics for conversation; let it confine its passion for talking within its own precincts, and rest assured that we shall pay not attention to any councils but such as shall be framed within our camp.'

HISTORY OF ROME By Livy (Titus Livius)
Vol. 13, Book XLIV, Chapter 22."

That could have been written yesterday. It could have been gleaned from the pages of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. It is as fresh as new-mown hay. It is as true as the stars in their courses.

But all this has a very serious aspect. Hanoi quickly picked up this criticism. It was broadcast. Even the word "senseless" was used.

And what could be the impact on troop morale and discipline? When Senators, 12,000 miles removed from Hamburger Hill, call the ten-day action "senseless and irresponsible," can it be interpreted in any other way than a direct reflection on the judgment and competence of our field commanders in Vietnam. If this is to be taken as the home-guard appraisal of the skill, judgment, and capability of our commanders, what does it do to troop confidence?

General Paulus said it all 2100 years ago when he observed, "If, therefore, anyone thinks himself qualified to give advice respecting the war which I am about to conduct, which may prove advantageous to the public, let him not refuse his assistance to the state but let him come with me into Macedonia."