

#### WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?

In recent weeks quite a number of Senators have been discussing the war in Vietnam. Sometimes they come out with an affirmative suggestion, often they have no suggestion except perhaps to make some criticism of some particular thing that is done and take exception to the conduct of the war. Now all this of course does stimulate people to write letters and remark about something they've seen in the press and I do get some letters of course continuing to raise the inquiry as to just why we are in Vietnam.

I thought perhaps by way of a capsule summary I could indicate to you some of the reasons why we are there and to do so it would be necessary to go back 13 years. That would take us back to September of 1954. It was at that time, 13 years ago, that we entered into a treaty arrangement with 6 other countries and it is known as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. Well of course when you enter into a treaty with other countries you mutually pledge and you jointly bind yourself with the others in order to offer help and assistance just in case the need should arise. Well that's precisely what we did 13 years ago and we addressed ourselves to the fact that if there was an assault on the territorial integrity of any one of these countries or to a protocol country that came in, as a matter of fact because it wanted to be associated with the treaty organization, then of course one or all would tender aid. Now that's one reason why you have Australia, New Zealand and the United States and others who are in Vietnam at the present time. That would be the first reason so we'll set that down and say because of SEATO -- Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.

The second reason that I think could be assigned is there has been aggression and as a result it had to be stemmed before it moved too far. Now I've made the point that there is actually no defense line between Saigon, which lies in the south of Vietnam, and Singapore, which is way over on the strait in Malaya. If perchance South Vietnam should fail in this endeavor to protect her sovereignty and her independence and freedom, then of course there would be no natural defense line short of Malaya, and I could see nothing to prevent the Communist horde from taking over in Malaya and ultimately Indonesia and then if the map distances are correct that is only ten miles from the Philippine Islands. So you can see what is involved in that whole Southeast Asia Area.

Now there is a third reason and that is that when World War II was over, we inherited the leadership in this world to which we have got to be responsive and the responsibilities of which we cannot escape. There was no other place to go for leadership in this world, we were going to maintain peace, and so when these cries for aid came, it was up to the United States if it could, and if it rightly could, to properly respond.

Now our officials from time to time express the concern over our own security when eruptions like that in Southeast Asia break forth and you have to deal with those who would communize countries like South Vietnam.

But now there is still another reason because this matter came formally to the United States Senate some time back and we passed a resolution affirming our interest and indicating that we would support the efforts to protect and defend the freedom and the integrity of South Vietnam. As I recall that resolution passed the Senate by a vote of 88 to 2.

But now there is still another reason and that was when President Eisenhower and Ngo Dinh Diem, the former Chief of State of South Vietnam, had this interchange of views and they had this agreement. Knowing that the Republic of South Vietnam is covered by Article 5 of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, President Eisenhower and President Ngo Dinh Diem agreed that aggression or subversion threatening the political independence of the Republic of Vietnam would be considered as endangering peace and stability. So there you had the President of the United States and the President of South Vietnam making a very solemn and profound statement as to what they thought their mutual duties were in case of trouble.

And now there's still another reason because when the late John Kennedy became President, he said on the 2nd of August, 1961, and that's 6 years ago, that the United States is determined that the Republic of South Vietnam shall not be lost to Communists for lack of any support which the United States could render. You see here we have a treaty under which we undertook certain responsibilities, and those have been successively affirmed by President Kennedy and by President Eisenhower. But now on the 14th of December, 1961, President Kennedy wrote to President Diem in South Vietnam and stated that the U.S. was prepared to help the Republic of South Vietnam to protect its people and to preserve its independence. Well I don't know where you would find stronger language to give aid and comfort to a rather defenseless people who were under aggression and who were under attack.

Now we take this a step further because we set up what was known as an International Control Commission in connection with SEATO. Their business is of course to supervise and to observe and try to lend their offices to maintain peace. It consists of one person from Poland and one from India and I think one from Canada and that is their duty. Now they make investigations to ascertain whether there was aggression, whether there were preparations for attack, and they did find that in 1962 there was evidence to show that arms and ammunition and supplies had been sent from North Vietnam into the South zone with the objective of carrying out hostilities and armed attacks against the armed forces of the South Vietnam administration and to harass and to badger those people, and had that been permitted to go on, obviously there would have been no freedom left, no independence; there would have been nothing actually to protect and to defend.

Now we go one step further because this happened in 1964. To be exact it was on the 10th day of August in that year that both the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States once more passed upon this whole matter in the form of a resolution. It passed the Senate by a vote of 88 to 2 and it passed the House by a vote of 416 to 0, approving the determination of the President as Commander-in-Chief to take all necessary measures including the use of armed force to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression. Now that resolution also recited that the United States is therefore prepared as determined by the President to take the necessary steps including the use of armed force to assist any member or any member protocol state of the SEATO that might request assistance in the defense of its freedom.

Well Diem sent up the Macedonian cry, he said they were under attack and they needed assistance in order to repel the aggressor. So here is the steady line of action that goes back to September of 1954 and these are the successive steps which involve three Presidents of the United States; namely President Eisenhower and President Kennedy and President Johnson when he asked for this resolution.

So here we are with a very difficult situation on our hands and there are those who have counseled to stop the bombing or make a unilateral withdrawal or to retreat or do a more diligent job in bringing the enemy to the negotiation table. I do not believe that anybody in government has been wanting in trying to bring about that latter situation.

In fact there have been just about 30 very affirmative endeavors to get the enemy to the negotiation table in one way or another. None of them have succeeded and we've just about exhausted I think any hope of effort in that field, so what remains to be done except to use force in such measure and in such dimension as to bring about the results that must be brought about. That is sort of the long and the short of this whole matter. I've said a number of times, I don't know how we can escape victory because you're going to have to lead virtually from the strength of victory in order to get these problems resolved that would be on the negotiation table and the first one will be of course that there has to be an ironclad assurance from Hanoi and the Vietcong that this aggression, that this assault on the independence and the sovereignty of the people of South Vietnam must come to an end and I think it can be said for the stepped up bombing that had taken place that a good deal of the power supply of North Vietnam has certainly been obliterated far more than I believe we generally realize and without power they can't produce and maybe that's the road on which we've got to travel in order to bring this frightfully unpleasant thing to an end to an honorable end.

Thank you.