

Fiction and Fact Concerning American Policy in Vietnam

Address by Senator Wayne Morse

before Knights of the Round Table Eugene, Oregon
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Mr. Chairman, Fellow Knights of the Eugene Round Table and Guests:

Your invitation to present this paper tonight is a very much appreciated honor. Your continuing me on the rolls of the Knights of the Round Table as an honorary member forges a link in the chain of happy memories going back to the many years of my academic and civic activities in this, my home city of Eugene. Every once in awhile I pinch myself and wonder why I ever left the enriching and rewarding life of a teacher. The search for the facts, the penetration of the darkness of fiction by use of the searchlights of truth, the opening of minds to the generating power of knowledge so essential to human progress; - all these are among the controlling motivations and priceless attributes of the teacher dedicated to academic statesmanship. Each of us in his own way - whether of the town or the gown - should never cease being a student. Only by continuous search for more and more learning can we meet the ever-enlarging challenges of citizen-statesmanship. The destiny of any country, including our own, will depend upon the level of the knowledge of its people dedicated to formulating public policy on the basis of facts as they understand them to be.

In this critical period of our country's history the American people are not well informed about the facts concerning our foreign policy in Asia. Fiction, propaganda, concealment of behind-the-scene diplomatic and other activities of government officials and a shroud of government secrecy have withheld from the American people, the facts about our foreign policy to which they are entitled.

In this paper time will permit me to discuss only a very small segment of the early history leading to our involvement in the war in Asia. I do it in part because there are many who are prone to say it is no longer important as to how we became involved. They point out that because we are in and American troops are being wounded and killed in increasing numbers we should escalate the war to whatever degree is necessary to force a surrender.

Their assumption of course is that a surrender will produce a peace. They forget that the historic sequences leading to U. S. involvement are well known in many capitals of the countries of the world, both communist and free. They forget also that a surrender table in Asia will never become a peace table but only a truce table. They refuse to face up to the advice of many authorities on Asia that forcing a surrender on American terms may very well end the major shooting for a time whilst the resulting aggravated anti-American public opinion throughout Asia regroups and retrenches for the ultimate elimination of all American intervention in Asian affairs.

It is because the historic sequences that produced our country's military involvement in Asia bear such a direct cause-to-effect relationship to any settlement of the war that I am limiting this paper to a discussion of some of the early historic events that lead up to our intervention. These events are certain to influence the thinking of those who finally sit down to a negotiating table. If that table is bilateral in nature with the U. S. and our co-combatants on one side of the table and the communists on the other, only a truce is likely to come forth because of the rigid positions solidified on each side according to their respective interpretations of those events. If on the other hand the table is a tri-party table with the U. S. and our co-combatants on one side, the communists on the other, and at the head of the table the representatives of the non-combatant nations of the world calling the shots, so to speak, by presenting reasonable, equitable terms of settlement; then I believe that there can be hope for a peace settlement. I say "hope" provided the combatants on both sides are willing to recede from their historic mistakes. I think we have to admit that every nation in the world now has a vested stake in ending the Vietnam war. This should be obvious because if it is not soon ended, the escalation threatens to develop into an all-Asian war with Russia finally becoming involved. If that day should come, World War III is upon us.

It is my view that the U. S. has lost its right to insist, upon a bilateral negotiating table. It is to be noted that the offers of the Administration to negotiate are based upon two premises which are unacceptable to our adversaries; - first that the negotiations should be bilateral in nature between the combatants, and second that they shall be conducted on the condition precedent that there shall be acceptance by the enemy of

the existence of two Vietnam governments - South as well as North. The possibilities of successful negotiations of a peace treaty based upon those two premises are remote. It may very well be that a surrender truce on a bilateral basis can be forced upon the enemy if we kill more and more people, both military and civilians, while we continue our scorched-earth policy with increasing inhumanity. Of course, even this possibility depends on China's not coming into the war. We should not count on it.

What are some of the early events in the history of this conflict that led us into this war. On April 24, 1964, I made a major speech in the Senate in which I supported my consistently held position that under our Constitution, as well as under international law including our treaty obligations, our country's military intervention in South Vietnam is illegal. This speech as well as subsequent ones on the legal aspects of our involvement in the war caused the President not only to call me to the White House for a discussion of my views but resulted in my preparing for him at his request two memoranda on the international law aspects of the war.

My last Senate discussion of what I considered to be the illegality of our intervention in Asia was on October 20, 1966, when I inserted in the Congressional Record and discussed the article in the American Bar Association Journal written by a very able international law lawyer, Mr. William L. Standard. The title of the article is "U. S. Intervention in Vietnam is Not Legal." This article rebuts the contention of spokesmen for the State Department that our military intervention is legal. Mr. Standard's article backs up the major criticisms of the legal position of the U. S. in Vietnam as set forth in an earlier legal analysis which I inserted in the Congressional Record after it was issued in September, 1965. As I said when I inserted the William Standard article on October 20, 1966, the original memorandum of law was endorsed among others by Prof. Quincy Wright, of the University of Virginia, a recognized international law authority; Wolfgang Friedmann, of Columbia University, also a great authority in the field of international law; Thomas I. Emerson, of the Yale Law School; Richard A. Falk, of Princeton; Norman Malcolm, of Cornell; D. F. Fleming, of Vanderbilt; David Haber, of Rutgers; Roy M. Mersky, of the University of Texas; William G. Rice, of the University of Wisconsin; Chancellor Robert M. Maclver, of the New School for Social Research; Profs. Robert C. Stevenson, of Idaho State University, Alexander W.

Rudzinski, of Columbia, Darrell Randell, of the American University in Washington, D.C., Wallace McClure and William W. Van Alstyne, both from Duke University and the World Rule of Law Center. All of these men whom I have just named are recognized authorities and extensive writers in the field of international affairs.

The William L. Standard article discusses the following basic legal points which I believe deserve the consideration of the American people: First, the unilateral intervention of the United States violates the United Nations Charter; second, there was no armed attack within the meaning of the Charter justifying our intervention; third, the principle of "collective self-defense" does not justify our intervention; fourth, the U.S. military presence in Vietnam violates the Geneva Accords of 1954; fifth, the U.S. intervention violates the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization; and sixth, the U.S. intervention violates the Constitution.

It is my view that the Administration's rationalizations in support of its intervention rest on legal fictions not the law. Eventually we will be called to an accounting before the bar of International Justice if the rule of law is to prevail in the settlement of threats to the peace of the world.

HISTORY OF U.S. POLICY IN VIETNAM

One cannot review the history of American policy in Indochina, and later Vietnam, without concluding that the U.S. Government wanted France to stay there; and that when that failed, we took up where France left off. We refused to sign the Geneva Agreement, which took France out of Indochina. Our refusal gave fair indication of our intention to stay on and carry out the French role there alone. I wish to call the attention to my opinion that our failure to sign the Geneva agreement is of tremendous significance in connection with the subsequent development of American foreign policy in Vietnam. In 10 years time, we have effectively established a United States protectorate over South Vietnam. When our first choice of a local ruler proved totally inefficient, we encouraged his overthrow. I say "encouraged," because the extent of the American participation in the coup that overthrew Ngo Dinh Diem is still unknown. But it is widely known that not only were Americans in Saigon dissatisfied with the Diem government, but our officials also spread word that we would welcome a change in

governments. High administration officials said publicly that U.S. aid would be reduced unless the Diem government changed its policies. Ambassador Lodge told President Diem that he wanted his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, removed from his positions of office and influence. A resolution introduced in the Senate, with 22 cosponsors, called for an end to U.S. aid unless the Diem government changed its policies of repression.

When the coup finally came, we quickly welcomed and recognized the new government headed by General Minh. We resumed the aid that had been suspended in order to put pressure on Diem. It mattered little that 3 months later, another coup deposed General Minh, and installed General Khanh. The Diem, Minh, and Khanh regimes have all ruled South Vietnam only because of heavy financial backing by the United States. When we found one hopelessly incompetent, we have brought about a replacement. South Vietnam has become a protectorate of the United States. We have made it one, in order to protect what we regard as American interests in southeast Asia.

U. S. POLICY IN INDOCHINA

Our intentions in this respect are clear, from the history of the French withdrawal. I refer to the memoirs of Anthony Eden, who was British Foreign Secretary in 1954. His volume of memoirs covering this period is entitled "Full Circle"; and he writes as follows of the early months of 1952:

"There was a growing feeling in Paris, partly inspired by rumors of impending Chinese military intervention in Indochina, that Great Britain and the United States should give more help. The French complained that they could not be expected to defend the interests of the free world in Indochina singlehanded and at the same time make the contribution to European defense which was being demanded of them. Underlying this argument was the fear that, owing to her commitments in Indochina, France would find herself militarily inferior to a rearmed Western Germany in the proposed European Army.

These were the views with which the French Government confronted Mr. Dean Acheson and myself when we flew to Paris at the end of May for three-power discussions on the problems of Europe and southeast Asia. On the 26th, before the formal discussions opened, I had a long talk with Mr. Acheson at the British Embassy.

He told me of the U.S. determination to do everything possible to strengthen the French hand in Indochina. On the wider question of the possibility of a Chinese invasion, the U.S. Government considered that it would be disastrous to the position of the Western Powers if southeast Asia were lost without a struggle. On the other hand, the Americans were determined to do nothing in that area which would provoke a third world war. Their present thinking was that deterrent action was the best course. At an appropriate moment there might have to be some form of warning to the Chinese. If the warning were ignored, Mr. Acheson believed that a blockade of the Chinese coast and the dislocation of her communications would have to be considered. I agreed generally with Mr. Acheson's approach, though I personally thought it unlikely that China would enter the war, and said so. The present state of affairs suited China very well and she would have nothing to gain by internationalizing the conflict. I told Mr. Acheson that Her Majesty's Government were strongly opposed to any course of action in southeast Asia which would be likely to result in a war with China. We both agreed that although possible means of deterring China should be examined, any provocative action must at all costs be avoided."

By late 1953, a new American administration was in office, and the French position in Indochina had slipped still further. In December of 1953, the Vietminh, the Communist-led rebels against the French, had embarked on a new offensive, and Mr. Eden says of it:

"The new offensive was no doubt intended to show the ineffectiveness of the French guarantee to Laos in the recently concluded treaty. It may not have succeeded in this purpose, but it did serve to arouse concern for the future of the French military position. This concern, and fears of Chinese intervention, were becoming particularly acute in the United States. On December 29, Mr. Dulles told a press conference that in the event of an invasion of Indochina, the American reaction "would not necessarily be confined to the particular theater chosen by the Communists for their operations." On January 12, 1954, after proclaiming the doctrine of instant retaliation, Mr. Dulles gave warning that Chinese intervention would have "grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina." These admonitions did not seem to me on the mark. I did not believe that any Chinese intervention was imminent; there was no need for it. The Vietminh were

doing well enough as it was. More practically, the view was already being canvassed in the American press that the United States should step in to help the French with sea and air power before the military situation deteriorated further." Secretary Dulles set out to London to discuss an American proposal for a joint Allied intervention in Indochina. From what has been written and related about the position of the United States, Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford were advocating prompt American intervention of any degree necessary to save the French position. President Eisenhower, whatever his personal views of its wisdom, wanted congressional authorization and the participation of other countries. So Dulles and Radford both went to London to try to get participation from the British.

Mr. Eden writes that he summarized his own position in writing shortly before the Dulles visit: I quote the British Secretary:

"The U.S. proposal assumes that the threat of retaliation against China would cause her to withdraw aid from the Vietminh. This seems to me a fundamental weakness. There is a distinction between warning China that some specified further action will entail retaliation, which might be an effective deterrent, and calling upon her to desist from action in which she is already engaged. I cannot see what threat would be sufficiently potent to make China swallow so humiliating a rebuff as the abandonment of the Vietminh without any face-saving concession in return. If I am right in this view, the joint warning to China would have no effect, and the coalition would then have to withdraw ignominiously or else embark on warlike action against China. "Neither blockade nor the bombing of China's internal and external communications, which the U.S. Government appear to have in mind, were considered by our Chiefs of Staff to be militarily effective when these were discussed in connection with Korea. They would, however, give China every excuse for invoking the Sino-Soviet Treaty, and might lead to a world war. Nor should we commit British forces to operations in Indochina. "

About this time, American opinion was being explored by Vice President Nixon. In his famous speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in New York City on April 16, 1954, he spoke not for attribution. According to the account in the New York Times of April 17, he said that if the French stopped fighting in Indochina and the

situation demanded it, the United States would have to send troops to fight the Communists.

"We must take the risk of putting American boys in the fighting" if there was no other way. Those were the words of Richard Nixon in 1954.

Sir Anthony Eden goes on in his memoirs to report on the famous Winston Churchill conference in London with John Foster Dulles in April, 1954. Eden writes:- 10- "The Americans had therefore proposed that the United States and the United Kingdom Governments should give the French a joint assurance that they would join in the defense of Indochina, and that, as an earnest of this, they should be given immediate military assistance, including token British participation. I told the Prime Minister that I disagreed both with the American belief that such intervention could be effective and with the view that it could be limited to the use of air forces. I doubted whether intervention would have any substantial effect in rallying public opinion in Indochina, and I was certain that it would not be welcomed by nationalist opinion in southeast Asia generally. Militarily, I did not believe that the limited measures contemplated by the United States could achieve substantial results; no military aid could be effective unless it included ground troops.

"Sir Winston summed up the position by saying that what we were being asked to do was to assist in misleading Congress into approving a military operation, which would in itself be ineffective, and might well bring the world to the verge of a major war.

"We agreed that we must therefore decline to give any undertaking of military assistance to the French and Indochina."

The Dulles mission failed. Dulles failed to draw the British into a U.S. plan to start a major military operation in Indochina.

We cannot ignore that history. I express my view that the failure of Dulles to get the British to go along in starting a war in Indochina of a different type -- an Anglo-American war -- must be carefully considered when we try to figure out why the United States did not sign the Geneva agreements.

It is my view that we did not sign the Geneva agreements because we did not intend to go along. We have not gone along. Therefore, we stand today in this ugly,

shocking posture of the United States before the eyes of the world, engaging in a unilateral military action in South Vietnam.

The failure of the Dulles mission to London in his talk with Churchill and our refusal to sign the Geneva Accords paved the way to our unilateral military action in Vietnam. It was a case of our leaving our allies. It explains in no small measure our self imposed isolation from the major powers of the world over the Vietnam civil war. We proceeded to violate every major article of the Geneva Accords and we have kept on violating them right up to this hour.

It was during the days of negotiations at Geneva that the tenor of American policy was set by the American General in Saigon who was supervising our military assistance program to the French. By that time our military assistance was paying for 80% of the war's cost. General O'Daniel was quoted by the New York Times of July 8, 1954, as saying:

"The war in Indochina can still be won without bringing in a single American soldier to fight. The Vietnamese have ample manpower and even today outnumber the enemy by 100,000 with superior firepower at least in a ration of 2 to 1 and probably more. And we are ready to assist them in training an adequate national army for the security of their homeland."

But insofar as France was concerned, the war was over. The Geneva Agreement was entered into by France, China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and by representatives of the Indochinese states of Cambodia, Laos, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The United States and the representatives of the remnant of the French colonial government declined to sign the agreement. Specifically, President Eisenhower issued this statement at the conclusion of the conference:

"The United States has not been a belligerent in the war.... Accordingly, the United States has not itself been party to or bound by the decisions taken by the conference, but it is our hope that it will lead to the establishment of peace consistent with the rights and needs of the country concerned. The agreement contains features which we do not like, but a great deal depends on how they work in practice. The United States is issuing at Geneva a statement to the effect that it is not prepared to join in the Conference declaration, but as loyal members of the United Nations, we also say that,

in compliance with the obligations and principles contained in Article 2 of the Charter, the United States will not use force to disturb the settlement. We also say that any renewal of Communist aggression would be viewed by us as a matter of grave concern."

Of course, the notion that the United States could finance much of the French war effort and then decline to sign the settlement on the ground that we were not a belligerent, whereas Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union were expected to sign and then to assume responsibility for enforcing the agreement, is one of the great hypocrisies of our policy in Vietnam. It is not lost upon the rest of the world, even though most of the American people are unaware of it.

Nor did the Saigon government adhere to the agreement. It was now headed by Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese who sat out the war for independence. While in New York and Washington, he developed connections with high U.S. officials, particularly in the Central Intelligence Agency, who were of the opinion that he could still salvage a pro-western government in the section of Vietnam that was assigned to the French for grouping of forces prior to withdrawal.

Yet the Geneva Agreement said of the division of Vietnam that the demarcation line at the 17th parallel was to serve no purpose other than the purpose of military regrouping of the hostile forces. Paragraph 6 of the Final Declaration of the Conference stated:

"The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Vietnam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary." Paragraph 7 states: "In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of the International Commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from 20 July 1955 onward. "

Throughout the Agreement, the reference is not to North and South Vietnam as two countries or two governments, but two zones. Foreign military bases and military aid of any kind, other than replacement of equipment already there, was forbidden by the agreement throughout both zones.

U.S. CONTENTION OF AGGRESSION FROM THE NORTH IGNORES HISTORICAL FACTS:

I suppose that virtually the entire justification for the presence of 350,000 U.S. troops in South Vietnam today rests on the contention that South Vietnam is the victim of "aggression from the North." This contention is repeated over and over again by the President, by the Secretary of State, and by all Administration spokesmen on the war. But this repetition always ignores the history of relations between the two zones. For one thing, the State Department often refers to the 1962 report of the International Control Commission created by the Geneva Agreement and assigned to the policing of the Agreement. In 1962, the ICC found violations by North Vietnam. But our State Department never tells the American people about the violations by South Vietnam, in collusion with the United States, as early as 1956.

One current charge against North Vietnam is that its soldiers were left in the South in violation of the Agreement for the purpose of stirring up trouble in the future. But in February of 1955, the Control Commission found, and I quote:

"Despite difficulties of communication, frayed tempers due to eight years of strife, and differences in the degrees of effectiveness of administration in various parts of Vietnam, the provisions of the Agreement which are of a military or semi-military nature have on the whole been carried out according to the time schedule and directions given in the Agreement. As regards prisoners of war and civilian internees, by and large, the parties have and are carrying out the directions under Article 21, and the bulk of the exchanges have been completed."

In its 1956 report, the ICC reported more difficulty with the Saigon government in carrying out its inspections than with the North Vietnamese regime. It reported that it was not allowed to conduct reconnaissance and control of airfields in South Vietnam. Various recommendations regarding release of civilian internees and prisoners of war

and requests for notification of importation of war material and military personnel were not implemented. Under terms of the Agreement, the French were permitted to replace personnel and equipment, but not to increase it. Bernard Fall, perhaps the world's leading expert on modern Indochina, quotes an Indian member of the ICC as having seen U.S. warplanes being landed on an aircraft carrier in sight of Saigon's main thoroughfare and saying of it: "Yes, but officially we have not been informed of the presence of the aircraft carrier. "

The 1956 report of the Commission concluded with these words: "Neither party has fulfilled in their entirety these obligations. As has been revealed in the preceding paragraphs, the degree of cooperation given to the Commission by the two parties has not been the same. While the Commission has experienced difficulties in North Vietnam, the major part of its difficulties has arisen in South Vietnam."

By the time of its 1958 report, the Control Commission was complaining of failure of South Vietnam to notify it of U.S. military aid operations. Again in 1960, it recorded: "It will be observed that while in North Vietnam the Commission continued to receive, in general, the necessary cooperation, it did not receive the required cooperation in regard to its decision to carry out a reconnaissance of the Bach Mai airfield. The Commission did not receive the required cooperation from the government of South Vietnam in the matter of removal of time notice restrictions on the movement of the mobile elements of the Commission's Fixed Teams, as mentioned in paragraph 45. The Commission, therefore, continues to be forced to restrict its supervision and control in South Vietnam to the extent permitted by the party. "

By this time, the restoration of national unity through elections, north and south, had been completely frustrated not by Ho Chi Minh, who fully expected to win such elections, but by the Saigon government and the United States, who expected to lose them. On July 16, 1955, the Saigon government announced its refusal to meet with representatives of the North to lay plans for the elections. It used these words:

"The National Government has emphasized time and time again the price it has paid for the defense of the unity of the country and of rue democracy. We did not sign the Geneva Agreements. We are not bound in any way by these Agreements, signed against the will of the Vietnamese people.... The mission falls to us, the Nationalists, to

accomplish the reunification of our country in conditions that are most democratic and most effective to guarantee our independence. The free world is with us. Of this we are certain. . . . To those who live above the 17th Parallel, I ask them to have confidence. With the agreement and the backing of the free world, the National Government will bring you independence in freedom."

Here again, the United States now makes much of the action taken in Hanoi in 1960 to organize a liberation movement in the South; but how many Americans know that, in 1956, Diem was promising to liberate the people of the North, meaning to unite Vietnam under his rule, and that in 1958, the Saigon government created the Committee for the Liberation of North Vietnam. By our standards, that would be enough to justify Communist nations in coming from all over the world to help North Vietnam put down an announced attempt on the part of the Saigon government to subvert North Vietnam in violation of the Geneva Agreement.

NATURE OF SOUTH VIETNAM GOVERNMENT

In a recent issue of the New York Times, its long-time correspondent in South Vietnam, Neil Sheehan, put forth some of the reasons for his disillusionment with our role in Vietnam. He arrived there in 1952, full, as he said, of confidence in the American purpose and chances of making South Vietnam a better country.

The burden of his article, which appeared in The New York Times of October 9, 1966, is to itemize the ways in which we have done no more than replace the French in Vietnam and the ways in which we are destroying much of that country and its people in the name of American security interests.

"It is the tragedy of Vietnam," he writes, "that what began as a war of independence from France developed, as a result of its Communist leadership, into a civil war. Attempts to describe the current war as a geographically based struggle between North and South Vietnam breaks down almost immediately when it is recalled the Premier Ky and several other important members of his government are North Vietnamese by birth, who fled south after the French defeat, while Pham Van Dong, the premier of North Vietnam, was born in the south. The war is, rather, a struggle between different elements of the Vietnamese people as a whole.

"The division of the country into two separate states at the 17th parallel in 1954 was a provisional arrangement ending one scene in the drama. Vietnam's larger political realities extended then and still extend now in both directions across the demarcation line. North Vietnam controls and supports with men and materials the Vietcong guerrillas in the South because the Vietcong leaders, although native Southerners, are members of the Vietnamese communist party and obey orders from the Politburo in Hanoi. In 1958, the late Ngo Dinh Diem organized a Committee for the Liberation of North Vietnam, and since 1960, the Saigon government, with American connivance and aid, has been smuggling saboteurs and commando teams into the North in a so-far vain effort to instigate a guerrilla movement among the Northern Catholics and mountain tribesmen. The opposing sides, in short, have never recognized the 17th parallel as a permanent boundary and have violated the frontier whenever it suited them."

In describing our so-called allies in the South, Sheehan writes of the Saigon government:

"Over the 13 years since 1953, the United States has supplanted France in Vietnam. Yet among the Vietnamese themselves, the two opposing sides have changed little. When France colonized the country in the 19th century, much of this native aristocracy of mandarins drawn from the merchant and landowning families became, in effect, colonial civil servants. During the first Indochina war, these Vietnamese, with a stake in the traditional society which a French presence would preserve, cooperated with France. Now the same Vietnamese, for identical reasons, cooperate with the United States. Air Vice Marshal Ky, the current premier of South Vietnam, was a French pilot. The Deputy premier, Lt. General Co, and other generals in the Saigon military junta, were officers or sergeants in the French colonial forces. Premier Ky and the earlier successors of Bao Dai have also promulgated rent-reduction and land-reform laws at the urging American advisers eager for social progress. All of these measures have been sabotaged because the regimes were and are composed of men who are members of, or who are allied with, mandarin families that held title to properties they have no intention of renouncing. While there are some patriotic and decent individuals among them, most of the men who rule Saigon have, like the Bourbons, learned nothing

and forgotten nothing. They seek to retain what privileges they have and to regain those they have lost. "

Some of us who have followed events in Vietnam closely for the last ten years can confirm Sheehan's estimate of the so-called reform efforts. Periodically, there is great fanfare given to land and other economic reforms in South Vietnam. But the interesting thing is that we should have reformed the land ownership pattern several times over, if any of these plans had been carried out. A little less than a year ago, the President and Premier Ky met in Honolulu, and out of that conference emerged new plans and new funds for land reform. This month, out of the Manila Conference has come a new pledge by Ky that land reform will be undertaken. As Sheehan puts it:

"Promises of land reform are solemnly reported in the American press and are apparently taken with some seriousness in official circles in Washington. I have often wondered why, since the promises are never carried out and the speeches : made today are practically identical in content and phrasing to those made four years ago by some other government leaders.

"Most non-Communist Vietnamese," he writes, "are incapable, because of the values of the society in which they live, of looking beyond individual and family interests. Their overwhelming concern with 'me and my relatives' deprives the society of a social consciousness Americans take for granted in their own culture and fosters the corruption and nepotism that exist throughout the administration.

PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE

The communique from the Manila Conference cannot afford much realistic hope either for peace or for the future of Vietnam. A key paragraph of the joint communique of October 25 states:

"In particular, they (the participating governments) declared that allied forces are in the Republic of Vietnam because that country is the object of aggression and its government requested support in the resistance of its people to aggression. They shall be withdrawn, after close consultation, as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, ceases infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides. Those forces will be

withdrawn as soon as possible and not later than six months after the above conditions have been fulfilled. "

The great paradox in this condition for peace lies first in its departure from our previous position that we would welcome a mutual, supervised withdrawal of outside forces from South Vietnam. Now; we require that all North Vietnamese — an estimated 35,000 — would first have to withdraw and then, some six months later, the non-South Vietnamese, totaling nearly 400,000, would withdraw.

Second, we are also in the paradoxical position of having put several thousand troops into South Vietnam in order to keep its pro-western governments from falling to the local guerrillas, not to the North Vietnamese infiltrators. Again in the words of Neil Sheehan: "The United States can no longer make any pretense of fighting to safeguard South Vietnam's independence. The presence of 317,000 American troops in the country has made a mockery of its sovereignty and the military junta in Saigon would not last a week without American bayonets to protect

This judgment has been made by many reliable authorities on Vietnam, and diplomatic correspondents, most recently by James Reston. He specifically pointed out that even without help from North Vietnam, the indigenous Southern Vietcong guerrillas had carried on their campaign against Saigon so successfully that large-scale American help had to be brought into the civil war within the South to keep Diem from toppling. It is no doubt intended to be an entirely rhetorical question as to whether U.S. forces could leave, even six months after the Northern infiltrators withdrew. Clark Clifford, special assistant to the President, described this pledge as being aimed not at Hanoi as an inducement to end the war but at other Asian countries who fear we will stay forever in Vietnam.

There has never been any doubt that the military might of the United States could destroy as much of Vietnam, Southeast Asia, and China as we choose to destroy. But that would not insure the establishment of viable governments that will be pro-United States. Even in South Korea, 13 years after the end of the war, we support its government with financial aid, we arm and finance its army of 600,000 men, and on top of that we still keep 50,000 Americans there.

The prospect for Vietnam is the same, only more so. The government of South Vietnam has for 12 years been threatened, not by aggression from abroad but by unrest, dissatisfaction, and revolution at home. By "at home" I mean in South Vietnam as well as in the area encompassed by the two Vietnams.

The elections held in the South last September were to select an assembly to draw up a constitution. But the candidates who ran were all screened first by the government, and their campaign materials and media were furnished by the government. We understand quite well the showcase nature of this practice when we see it in Communist territories -- like in North Vietnam. But when the technique is practiced in an American territory, we close our eyes to the implications and we label it "democracy" to make ourselves feel better about the acts we are committing. The elections in fact were a facade of a dictatorship arranged to fool the people of South Vietnam, of the United States and of the free world.

Conceivably, this assembly could emerge into a legislative body, or it could draw up a constitution that would have some meaning. But Diem governed South Vietnam in a bloody and repressive rule under a constitution. The constitution died with him. The question is not whether that territory has a paper constitution, but whether there are reforms going on within its society that will make a constitution meaningful. Under U.S. military rule implemented through a South Vietnamese puppet junta any so-called paper constitutionalism drafted by any assembly resulting from the recent elections is bound to be a political fraud.

The signs all point to a very long American occupation of South Vietnam. It will be long because we are there for reasons of American interests, and we will not find it possible to entrust those interests to anyone else, any more than we have been able to do in Germany, or Korea, or Japan. We keep U.S. soldiers by the thousands in those nations because we want them on the spot in case some threat to our interest arises. All these areas have been staked out as affecting the interests of the United States, and we intend to see that they are defended as we want them defended. This is true equally of Vietnam, and in fact, that is the reason we went in there in the first place.

Not until the United States stops trying to impose its political will upon the millions of Vietnamese, both South and North, -- who for years have been in rebellion against

the Mandarin oligarchs now entrenched in South Vietnam under the protection of American guns -- will there be any possibility of ending the civil war or any hope for permanent peace with resultant political self-determination for the people of those beleaguered countries.

Not until the American people reverse our government's foreign policy of seeking to implant an American foothold on the mainland of Asia behind the cloak of puppet dictatorships, will the civil strife subside in that war-torn area of the world, and reduce the growing hatred for The United States in increasing numbers of Asian regions.

Not until the American people make clear to our government, through the checking power of their ballots, that American military intervention in Asia must be brought to an end -- just as the French people in 1954 made clear to Mendez- France by their ballots that French blood-letting in the IndoChina war must stop --will the United States regain its lost "face" throughout the world.

It is ironical that American advocates of an American war in Asia seek to rationalize our blood-letting by the lame excuse that we must continue to escalate the war until the enemy capitulates, otherwise the UnitedStates will lose "face". We have already lost our nation's "face" by covering it up with the ugly mask of Mars.

Only the ballots of free Americans which are cast in support of policies of peace and of the substitution of the rules and peace-keeping procedures of International Law -- as replacements for the jungle law of American military might now being abusively used in Asia -- can stop the march toward World War III lead by the United States.

In closing, I wish to say that I offer this paper not as an exhaustive account of early historic events that lead to our country's involvement in the war. It will take volumes yet to be written by historians to tell the complete story. I have sought only to emphasize that altruism did not lead us into this war. Neither are we justified in this bloodletting because of fictitious references to national motivation based upon defense of freedom; to alleged legal commitments to a friendly nation; to a national obligation to stop "alleged" communist aggression; to defense-treaty obligation; to the Tonkon Bay incident which was even of our provocations; to the violation of the Geneva Accords by North Vietnam with never a mention of our collaboration with South Vietnam in its many violations, along with North Vietnam, as found by the International Control Commission;

nor to all of the rest of the weak excuses which the Administration has given for our being involved in this war which I consider to be an illegal, immoral, and completely unjustifiable American military intervention in Asia.

Whatever disagreements you may have with me, I am sure you will agree with me on one thing. I keep faith with my promise that I ask not for agreement but for thought.

You have given me all any public official is entitled to - a fair, respectful and open-minded hearing for which I thank you very much.