

"Sunday Evening Forum -- The United States and Vietnam, What Lies Ahead,"

Tucson, Arizona, October 22, 1967

NOTE: The following text is reprinted from the original notes used for this speech

Tonight I come to talk about war and peace and Presidents and dominoes and commitments and mistakes. I want to start with some of my own commitments and at least one of my own mistakes.

Six years ago when the people of Arizona's Second Congressional District elected me to represent them I made some commitments to myself: to represent my constituents honorably and diligently; not to take myself too seriously; to make the tough and unpleasant decisions as they came; to speak out at times when remaining silent might be easier; to admit my own mistakes; and to advocate new policies when old ones, no matter how dearly held, had failed.

Two years ago, when this country had fewer than 50,000 men in Vietnam, I wrote a newsletter defending the President's Vietnam policy and pleading patience and understanding for what he was trying to do. I have thought about that newsletter many times as I have watched with increasing dismay and doubt while the limited involvement I supported has grown into a full-scale Asian land war with half-a-million American troops scattered in jungles and hamlets, fighting an enemy who is everywhere and nowhere, seeking to save a country which apparently doesn't want to be saved, with casualties mounting and no end in sight, with more and more troops being asked for and sent, and with the dangers of World War III looming ever larger.

In the past two or three years I have attended many White House and State Department briefings on Vietnam. Every time I've been told things are starting to look up. The "crossover point" is just around the corner. The kill rate -- what a delightful term -- is always gaining. Ambassador Lodge or General Westmoreland or someone is always reporting that the pacification program, despite difficulties, is showing "real progress." Enemy morale is always down; in fact, each report brings new superlatives of gloom and doom for the enemy's forces. And the South Vietnamese army, that modern counterpart of the Roman Legion, is always beginning to be ready to fight instead of run.

But each escalation has been matched by escalation on the other side. And the grim reality as I speak tonight is that new and bigger escalations lie ahead. Unless we change our policy I predict we will have 750,000 troops committed to Vietnam within the next 18 months. There will be more bombing, more civilian deaths in South and North Vietnam, more American casualties, and new, astronomical demands on the American taxpayers to pay for all this.

I have listened to all the arguments of the Administration, read all the reports available to me, attended all the briefings, heard all the rosy predictions of an end to hostilities, and I still conclude that we're on a road to ruin. In my judgment continuing our present policy will require that we send several hundred thousand more American troops to thresh around almost aimlessly in the jungles of Vietnam, thousands upon thousands of them dying and many more losing arms and legs and eyes without ever achieving what we know as victory, all the while the material cost of this war is climbing from the present thirty billion dollars a year to forty and fifty billions of dollars.

What's even worse, I fear more and more that the inevitable end product of this policy is a wider war. I know, there are those who say Russia and China would be foolish to come in with all the advantages they are enjoying from the present stalemate. But the generals and diplomats have been wrong before, and they can be wrong again. In 1951 they told us China wouldn't dream of going to war with us if we invaded North Korea, and they even persisted in this line of argument after the first Chinese forces began attacking our troops. The generals who tell us now we can safely drop bombs on or near Soviet ships in Haiphong harbor can be as self-confident as they like, but I've read the history of many wars, and I believe they are wrong. Interdicting supplies is fine, but bringing in new belligerents is not the way to win wars, as the Germans learned when they began sinking neutral Americans ships on the high seas in 1917.

Many of the wise old heads in Congress say privately that the best politics in this situation is to remain silent, to fuzz your views on this great issue, and to wait for the skies to clear. I hear few dovish noises from editors or from other elected officials in Arizona, and I suspect that this kind of head-in-the-sand approach would be the best politics for me. This would be especially true if it should turn out, as recent White House rumors would have us believe, that the war is approaching a successful conclusion.

Then why am I here tonight? I believe the time has come for some plain, blunt talk, and politics be damned. I have come here tonight to say as plainly and simply as I can that I was wrong two years ago, and the President and his Vietnam policy are wrong today. Victory may indeed be just around the corner; nothing is certain in this life. But life goes on, and men must make decisions based on the best information available to

them at the time. Waiting for things to happen is not leadership, and steering a safe political course is not the highest order of public service.

Therefore, I have made my assessment of this war and the way we are conducting it. If I end up out on a limb, so be it. I would rather history branded me wrong than found me a coward or a fence-straddler. I firmly believe this is what lies ahead for us if we continue our present course, and I believe I owe a duty to the people of Arizona to say so.

This decision to speak out has not been easy. I am of the President's party; I have defended him on a great many occasions, including a visit I made to Cambridge University in England last February when my questioners were highly critical of his policies. I know from history and from observing two Presidents first-hand what a man-killing job the Presidency is. So I take no satisfaction in disagreeing with our President tonight on the gravest issue facing our country. But disagree I must, just as Lincoln advised: "Stand with anybody that stands right. Stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong."

I am parting with the President on Vietnam, but not without having advised him on several occasions of my grave doubts and misgivings about this war, and not without holding out the hope that he will yet change course and adopt a policy I can support once again. And I have sent the President an advance copy of this speech which I am giving tonight.

As I look back over the last two years I see the United States getting on a treadmill that is going ever faster -- so fast it seems impossible now to get off. Yet I am convinced that we must get off that treadmill and that we can. The hour is late, but I believe this nation of ours has the brains, the know-how, the imagination to extricate itself from a war we should never have blundered into.

Shortly I shall outline those steps I believe our country should take in Vietnam. However, I don't want to fool you or myself. The steps I propose will cost something, too, and, if taken, may have convulsive effects for a time in our own national life. But, in my judgment, the costs of staying with a mistaken policy will be far greater.

The great rationalization for our involvement in Vietnam is that we are there to contain communism, to demonstrate that the United States honors its commitments, to strengthen the free world. We are failing, and I believe we will continue to fail as long as we maintain our present policy of military escalation. Indeed, I believe this policy is strengthening the communist cause, weakening the free world, and raising grave doubts about the capacity of the United States to back up its commitments effectively.

Let me make clear I am advocating a change, not out of any fear or love for communism or admiration for Ho Chi Minh, but out of love for America and for its national aspirations. I am convinced our present policy in Vietnam does not serve our interests, and to a staggering degree it is as though we had designed it to please our enemies. This is a strong statement, but let's think about it for a minute.

Let's suppose there was a world communist meeting in, say, July 1964. What would the delegates have had to report? Everything was in disarray. The once-monolithic communist movement was in a shambles. The two major Red powers, the Soviet Union and China, were at each others' throats. The Russians had suffered humiliating reverses in Berlin, Cuba, Africa and elsewhere. I recall *U.S. News and World Report* the previous fall had published an article entitled, "Is Russia Losing the Cold War?", and concluded that it was.

Suppose that at this imaginary meeting a brilliant young theorist had come forward with a dramatic plan to reverse the unhappy trend. Let me recite what he might have said.

"Comrades, I have a plan. By means of it we can enmesh the United States in the Asian land war its leaders have always warned against. Within three years I promise you 500,000 American soldiers will be hopelessly bogged down in jungle fighting, consuming huge amounts of supplies and vast quantities of ammunition while gaining essentially nothing. They will be seen as white men fighting Asiatics, colonialists, burning villages, destroying rice crops, killing and maiming women and children. Their casualties will be heavy -- perhaps 100,000 by late 1967. They will have to boost their draft quotas and raise taxes. The war will cost them \$30 billion or more a year. And this will upset their economy, cause inflation, threaten their balance of payments, and play hob with all their domestic programs. There will be great internal dissension and even riots in their cities. And, Comrades, in spite of our differences, this is one cause that will bring us together, fighting on the same side. Furthermore, we can achieve all these wonderful results without committing a single Russian or Chinese soldier, sailor or airman, and at a total cost of perhaps 1 or 2 billion a year.

"You ask me: what is my plan? I will tell you. We will ask Ho Chi Minh to fuel up two old torpedo boats and make a run against the U.S. fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin. I have made a study of President Johnson's advisors, and I can tell you that if Ho will just do this one thing, everything I have predicted will come true."

Well, if there had been such a communist summit meeting, I can imagine some older party leader getting up and saying, "Comrades, we know the Americans are stupid, but they're not **that** stupid." Of course there was no such meeting and no such plan.

I'm not suggesting that anyone in our government knowingly has advocated measures that would help the communists or hurt our interests. But the fact is that a dedicated President, surrounded by advisors with the highest patriotism and aided by a well-meaning but pliant Congress -- all with the best of intentions -- has achieved precisely these results. We have handed our enemies all of this on a platter, and a majority of my colleagues in the Congress, the big bomber advocates and the escalators of all kinds, are ready to hand them a lot more of the same. I think it's time we called a halt to this insanity.

After all, what we are doing today is essentially an act of national rationalization. Because we're big and powerful we can't admit we made a mistake. I simply refuse any longer to accept this tortured logic which allows for little mistakes to be admitted but requires big ones to be pursued to the bitter end, regardless of their cost in lives and money. To me, this is the senseless psychology of the compulsive gambler at the race track. If he's lost a whole week's wages on some unfortunate nag, he ought to quit and go home, sadder but wiser. But no, he's not through yet. He'll go down to the bank and draw out his life savings, mortgage his house, and wipe out his children's chances for a college education, all in the vain hope that he can recoup his losses. And this is what we are doing in Vietnam.

When I try to analyze the doubts and frustrations about this war which trouble me and most other Americans, I get down to one tough, fundamental question:

Why is it that the United States, the most powerful, efficient and successful nation on earth, can't defeat a little, miserable, backward country like North Vietnam and do it overnight -- or at least in six days like the Israelis?

On the face of it it is ridiculous. But there is logic and reason behind every event if we will only search for it. There are answers to this tough question -- and they make sense -- if we'll only look the truth in the face. Those answers as I see them come down to four fundamental propositions:

- You cannot win a political and guerrilla war in South Vietnam by any amount of bombing in North Vietnam, or by technological wizardry.
- You cannot win this kind of war when the government you are backing is largely run by wealthy landowners and a military elite who have no real interest in the poor, illiterate peasants over whom this war is being fought. And you can't win many followers when that government is permeated with corruption, graft, blackmarketing, kickbacks and nepotism.
- You cannot save a people who do not want to be saved and will not fight for the government which runs their lives.

- You cannot win in this deadly poker game when any escalation bet on your part can be matched by a much smaller escalation on the part of the enemy. Thus you cannot assume that when you increase your forces the other side will stand still giving you a clear margin of superiority.

These are the grim truths about Vietnam, as I see them; before I go on I want to discuss them just a little further.

Our policy seems to assume you can win this kind of war in South Vietnam with a bombing sideshow in North Vietnam. In my judgment there simply isn't a cheap, easy, sanitary way you can convert the people of South Vietnam into supporting the kind of government we've seen in Saigon, and that is what the war is all about.

It should be starkly clear to everyone by now that our bombing policy has failed. It began with two objectives -- to stop or restrict the flow of men and materials to the south, and to bring Hanoi to the conference table. It has done neither.

In January, 1965, the enemy strength over all was about 120,000. Today it's estimated at 296,000, in spite of casualties the Pentagon says are astronomical. If we could believe all these body counts, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong lost 149,000 men in 1966 alone. And yet their forces have doubled in size. By the math of guerrilla warfare which requires that we outnumber them at least 4 to 1, the Communists have more than matched our build-up to 500,000 men.

As far as the other objective is concerned, President Johnson tells us he hasn't heard from Hanoi. So apparently the bombing hasn't accomplished anything on that score either.

You know, when I hear people say we aren't bombing enough -- and that is their explanation for our failures -- I wonder what kind of scale they're using. I presume most of you were living during World War II, and you recall the merciless, intense bombing raids the Germans made upon England in the early days of the war and the far greater devastation we rained upon the major cities of Europe in the later years. The peak was about 80,000 tons of bombs a month, yet we're dropping more than that now on a little country half the size of Arizona.

I'll admit there are some fairly highly placed people who think that 80,000 tons of bombs a month amount to a pretty half-hearted gesture. My friend, Congressman Gerald Ford, the Republican minority leader who spoke on this Forum last year, is one. But as James Reston of the New York Times has said, this position makes a lot more political than military sense. "It is hard to imagine a worse strategy than

President Johnson's," Reston wrote, "but Representative Ford may very well have found it."

The fact is we've substantially destroyed the production facilities of North Vietnam. Since their war materials are now coming from factories in China and Russia which we aren't bombing, some people think we must destroy the goods in transit, no matter what risks are involved. What Ford and the other big bombing advocates never really answer is this: what happens when we start dropping bombs on China or on Soviet ships in Haiphong?

I wonder whether they really believe that major nations like these have no commitments of their own, and that they will submit meekly to a blockade or quarantine which the United States would never tolerate. If the Russians or Chinese sought to blockade the harbors of South Vietnam, do you suppose we would turn our ships around and send them back home?

I am told that an old hand in the Far East sized up our posture in Vietnam some time ago about like this: "It's all very well for you people to put out any kind of propaganda you want, but for heaven's sake, don't start believing it yourselves!" I'm afraid that's precisely what we're doing when we say we have a right to supply our troops but the North Vietnamese have no similar right -- and when we talk about winning this war through bombing of the North.

I say this because surely President Johnson and his military advisors know that bombing Haiphong and Hanoi will not convince a villager in South Vietnam that he owes his loyalty to a corrupt, disinterested government in Saigon. For this is where the struggle lies. We have been fighting principally to preserve the residue of French colonialism in Indochina -- an oligarchy of well-to-do, landed beneficiaries of a century of French rule. And this is not easy to sell. And it's not going to be sold by bombing North Vietnam into the Stone Age.

Vietnam is a nation whose history has been marked by turmoil, and by sporadic warring between North and South, for a thousand years. It is a nation that has known oppression at the hands of the Chinese, Japanese and French. It has never been able to develop a strong national government. The only government they ever see is the tax collector. Some of the areas we are trying to liberate today haven't paid allegiance to Saigon for years. In fact, the whole history of Vietnam is one of local autonomy and great hostility to any central government, and one of the reasons so many local officials have been murdered by the Vietcong is that they were imposed on the villages by the Saigon government. Under these circumstances we have taken on a rather big order in staking our claim for freedom and democracy on the government of South Vietnam.

I sincerely hope that the recent election represents a turn toward popular government and attention to the needs of the people. And I recognize the problem of trying to build a nation in the midst of a civil war. But thus far there has been little to give one a feeling of encouragement.

I wonder if you realize just how bad the situation is. Officer commissions in South Vietnam can be bought. Military supplies are stolen constantly. Bribery is a way of life. And in three years of fighting, out of 600,000 South Vietnamese troops, only one officer of the rank of major or above has been wounded, and none has been killed. Can ordinary men be expected to follow leaders like this? The answer is obvious.

I might mention that through February of this year the United States lost, not one or two, but 109 of its officers of the rank of major or above in this military action. The number is even higher today.

As an American I also feel considerable resentment that our young men are required to risk their lives in Vietnam while that nation permits 360,000 of its own young men to dodge the draft and another 100,000 or so to desert the army every year. And it is shocking to me to realize that young Vietnamese can be deferred from the draft to go to college even if they never show up in class.

There is another thing about this war that makes it utterly impossible. I suppose the average American imagines that our soldiers over there are spending their time fighting North Vietnamese who have infiltrated to the South. Let's not fool ourselves. Eighty percent of the troops opposing us are South Vietnamese. Recently along the Demilitarized Zone we have been fighting some North Vietnamese main force units, but these constitute only a small portion of what we call "the enemy." The truth is that in the typical battle Americans are fighting, not North, but South Vietnamese. I ask you: what are we doing? What are Arizona boys doing fighting South Vietnamese on behalf of other South Vietnamese who don't want to fight?

Along this line I was shaken to learn recently that some of our American pacification teams in Vietnam are supplied every month with black bags of cash with which to bribe the public officials of that country into cooperating with us as we try to defend them.

I said earlier that we are fighting this war on the enemy's terms and with the odds stacked against us. Let me give you an example.

An American lieutenant recently talked to a news correspondent as he viewed the battle in a valley. Three helicopters were fluttering over a jungle area and shots were ringing out. The officer observed, "Look at this. I have three million dollars worth of

equipment and twelve or fifteen highly trained, well educated men. Opposed to them over in that clearing is one peasant with a fifty-dollar gun. If the peasant is lucky, he wins the whole ballgame, and twelve men and three million dollars of equipment are gone." These are the odds we're playing over there. [NOTE: Rope Bridge is penciled in on the left margin of the original document.]

As I see it, the fundamental error in our policy of continual escalation is the assumption that if we increase our forces the other side will stand still, giving us a clear margin of superiority. This has been the reasoning behind every new division sent, every new bombing target selected. And every time the effort has been self-defeating because the other side has escalated, too, and we have found ourselves in the same old stalemate, only at a new, more dangerous and more costly level.

Where does all this end? It has cost us close to one hundred billion dollars and nearly 100,000 casualties already. And what have we gained for our country, for Vietnam, or for the cause of freedom? The time has come, I believe, to look at this war to see what we stand to gain by continuing our present policy or to lose by abandoning it for some other policy. In short, I think we ought to see "what's in it for us."

The question is: How important is Vietnam in the scheme of things? Is this Armageddon? Is this the ultimate test of strength between free societies and closed, between capitalism and communism? Is the government of South Vietnam the one whose existence will determine the future course of civilization? Is this the showdown for the concept of "wars of national liberation?" If the answers to these questions are "yes," then we must proceed at all cost to win this war and insulate the government of South Vietnam from all future attack, subversion or rebellion.

But suppose, as I believe, that this is not Armageddon. Suppose this is just one of countless episodes of revolution and turmoil occurring and about to occur in a world that is seething with the forces of change. Suppose that our extremely costly and exhausting response to this episode reveals to our enemies that we obviously can't afford to go through this process again soon. Suppose that the most we can hope for out of this fantastically expensive enterprise is a delay of 10 years or so in the ultimate success of the National Liberation Front in reunifying Vietnam under a left-wing, Peking-oriented government. If this is the case, then I believe we must start thinking of our goals as a nation and not just the immediate military goals our generals might propose for the conduct of this war.

I have reflected long and hard on what this war is, what significance it holds, and what effect various courses of action would have on our future role in world affairs. And I will tell you frankly I no longer see the war in Vietnam as Armageddon. And I'm no longer interested in hearing how we can win the next elusive military objective. I'm

interested in hearing how we can cut our losses, reduce our future expenditures in lives and resources, and bring this venture down to scale. I'm convinced our national interest -- not Russia's, not China's, not North Vietnam's demands that we drastically modify our present policy and that we do so immediately.

The great fallacy of the President's policy, as I see it, lies in the assumption that stopping this "war of national liberation" will prevent any and all future wars of this type. Such wars were beaten back in Malaysia and Korea, yet this did not stop Vietnam. We are only due for more frustration and anger in the years ahead if we spend more blood and treasure to get some kind of final "victory" in Vietnam.

This brings me to the hard question the President and his advisors always put to their critics: "All right, you don't like what we're doing. Precisely what would you do, and what are the likely results of your policy?"

This is a fair question that demands an answer. And this is how I would reply. Mr. President, I'll tell you specifically what I propose, but first let me make crystal clear what I do **not** propose.

We are in South Vietnam. It was a mistake to get there, but we're there. I am not suggesting any "cut and run" policy or proposing that the United States now withdraw from this war at once. I am not suggesting that we surrender to Ho Chi Minh. I am not suggesting that we turn our backs on those in South Vietnam who have come to rely on our commitments -- people who, if we departed, would be the victims in a blood bath of the kind we saw in Indonesia. I am not suggesting that this country violate the limited commitments we originally made. I do not propose that our investment in American blood and money be abandoned without giving the South Vietnamese every reasonable chance to save themselves.

Now, what **do** I propose? Mr. President, I propose that the United States cease expanding and Americanizing this war and that it discontinue here and now sending more American boys to do a job that ought to be done and can only be done by Asian boys. I am suggesting that we de-escalate and de-Americanize this war and that we begin the slow, deliberate and painful job of extricating ourselves from a hopeless, open-ended, so-called commitment the American people never made. I am suggesting that we start bringing American boys home and start turning this war back to the Vietnamese. I am suggesting that we offer the people of Southeast Asia something better than the prospect of Vietnam-type wars as an answer to threats of subversion or aggression. I am suggesting that, at long last, we show some common sense/"wisdom" in putting together a credible foreign policy for that part of the world.

And then I would say: Mr. President, making this decision will take as much courage as any President has ever displayed. Many people will vilify you. You will be accused of appeasement. Countless armchair generals will tell you victory was just around the corner. But you have a higher responsibility than merely to be popular, and I believe, in the end, the American people will rally behind you when they realize that this decision will strengthen our country and advance its interests.

Mr. President, I propose you go on television tomorrow night and speak plainly to the American people, to the people of South Vietnam, to the leaders of North Vietnam, to the Soviets and the Chinese, and to our allies and friends around the world. I propose you tell them something like this.

To the American people I would say that Lyndon Johnson didn't start this war but he enlarged it. I did this in the honest belief it could be won at moderate cost. My best advice in 1964 was that fewer than 100,000 troops would do the job. This didn't work. I was told that 300,000 would do the job. This didn't work, either. Then I was told 500,000 was enough. It isn't. Now I'm hearing that another 100,000 or 200,000 will be the magic number. I was told that bombing extensively in the North would stop infiltration and bring Hanoi to the peace table. Instead, infiltration has increased in direct proportion to the increase in bombing, and we're farther from the peace table than when we began. On the basis of all this advice I'm dropping more bombs on this small, miserable country than the allies dropped on Europe at the peak of World War II, and yet our objectives elude us. So far I've seen 700 of our most costly aircraft destroyed and 1500 of our best pilots downed. I've seen 15,000 of our young men killed and 80,000 wounded, and countless others confined under unspeakable conditions in Communist prisons.

I tell you frankly, my fellow citizens, that my advice was wrong and the decisions I made were wrong. As your President I now refuse to compound these mistakes, to follow this bad advice any longer, or to subject you and your sons and your tax dollars anymore to a course which is defeating this country's interests and dividing its people. I happen to believe that the pacification of Detroit and Newark is at least as important as the pacification of jungle hamlets in South Vietnam.

Accordingly, I am ordering a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam. I am ordering a gradual de-escalation of our entire war effort and I am directing our military men to prepare plans to back our troops off within a reasonable time to those areas of South Vietnam which can be defended most readily, and to turn over the remaining defense job to the South Vietnamese themselves. Within a reasonable time after that we will turn over the balance of this war effort to the South Vietnamese and bring virtually all our troops back home. In keeping with our commitments, we will continue to supply whatever is needed to maintain the South Vietnamese forces while this threat

continues and as long as we are convinced the Government of South Vietnam is working in the interest of its own people.

Finally, I am calling upon our allies in the free world to assist this country in formulating a program of land reform, economic development, health and education throughout Southeast Asia, and shortly I will ask the Congress to authorize a small part of the money saved through reduction of our war effort for a fund to begin this program. Through this program I propose to alleviate one of the most serious problems threatening the governments of Southeast Asia and thereby to deprive the Communists of their most effective weapon of subversion, not only in Vietnam but in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma and the other so-called "dominoes" on the southern reaches of the Asian continent.

To the elected leaders of South Vietnam, I would say something like this. Our commitment to you is to assist you in repelling external aggression, not in defending your central government from your own people. We promised to help you build a free and non-Communist government, not to perpetrate military juntas or a corrupt ruling oligarchy. Insofar as we have seen this war in terms of invasion from the North we have felt obligated to honor these commitments, and we have done so at tremendous cost in lives and in dollars. Wherever we have met main force units of the North Vietnamese, we have defeated them decisively. We are not leaving just yet, but we're cutting back because we think it is time for you to do your own fighting. This is your country and your war, not ours. And if your own people need pacifying, only you can pacify them; we can't begin to do a job like that. You must now build an army which can win this war; we can't win it for you. We will provide you with supplies and ammunition, but we are tired of cheating and blackmarketing and stealing while your people laugh at us. And a condition for our support will be stern measures by your government to bring these practices to an end.

You have had your elections now, and it is up to you to build a government which will root out corruption and nepotism, and that will be concerned about the health and education and safety of ordinary people. If you will do this, we will help you finance a program of public health, education, economic development and land reform that can make your government attractive not only to your own people but to the Vietcong in your midst, to members of the National Liberation Front, and to your fellow countrymen in North Vietnam.

I think it is time that you talk with these various elements of Vietnam and try to work out your problems. This war is more than a conflict between abstract ideologies, more than a chess game between the Communist and non-Communist worlds. This war is mainly a product of real forces at work in your own country. No matter how difficult these problems are, you the people of Vietnam ought to be working at them. We

Americans cannot settle these differences, but perhaps you can. You can do this, just possibly, by bringing the peasants and workers and Buddhists and Catholics into a broad representative government that the people of your country will have a stake in.

To Ho Chi Minh and the other leaders in Hanoi I would say something like this. We have beaten your main force units in every engagement, and we can continue to do so indefinitely. But we don't choose to do so because this is your kind of war, not ours. No longer will American troops contest you for every ridge, hill or patch of jungle. You will now be fighting your fellow countrymen. If you choose to fight our forces while they remain in Vietnam, you're going to have to attack us in strongly fortified areas where we have all the advantages. And this is going to be the new fact of life for you in Vietnam. No longer are we basing our plans on forcing you to the conference table in a hurry with one escalation after another. We're settling down now and building a firm base for the government of South Vietnam. If you want to negotiate with us, we'll consider it, but we're in no hurry. The pressure is off. You know where to reach us if you have anything you want to say.

Furthermore, Ho, I want you to understand that you can take absolutely nothing for granted. While we will confine ourselves principally to certain areas of South Vietnam, the South Vietnamese will be everywhere, and we will not hesitate to come out and spoil offensive preparations directed against those areas we control when we feel so inclined. And whatever happens American air power and naval power will remain in the Pacific. If this arrangement doesn't appeal to you, then, as I said, you know where you can reach us.

One thing more, Ho. You said a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam might persuade you to negotiate. Note that I am ordering a halt to the bombing. I suggest you now have an obligation to either "put up" or "shut up."

To our allies and those nations of the world which have complained of our bombing and escalation policies, I would say this. These policies you objected to have ended. Now let's see what you can do to find an avenue to peace in Vietnam. [NOTE: Geneva has been penciled in after the preceding paragraph.]

To Secretary U Thant of the United Nations I would say: You've talked a lot about our bombing operations blocking any hope for peace. Now here is your chance. If the Russians really want peace, as you have suggested, if an end to the bombing can bring an end to the war, let us now see results. Let both sides de-escalate. Let the Russians now de-escalate their supply operation. Let them show good faith in their statements about bringing this matter to the conference table -- either that or stop talking peace while making war.

There you have it -- a plan I believe could start to get us off the Vietnam treadmill. I frankly admit there is nothing very heroic about it. It's a far cry from "damn the torpedoes", "surrender, hell, we've just begun to fight," and other such stirring phrases from our history. But I think it is a wise and humane proposal which will advance our country's interests. I'm just enough of an optimist to believe that a dramatic change of this kind would command support from a large majority of American mothers and fathers and sons and taxpayers and people who are concerned about the problems of our cities and our environment. I'm optimistic enough to believe that a majority of our citizens regard the welfare of this country and the peace of the world as more important than saving someone's face, be it that of the United States or Lyndon Johnson, John F. Kennedy, Dwight D. Eisenhower or Harry Truman. This country wants leadership, and it has always wanted to be told the truth -- even the unpleasant truth.

I don't know how the ornithologists ever got involved in this war, and I have little hope that this speech won't get me labeled as some variety of dove, chicken hawk or pigeon. However, if it should happen that I dropped dead leaving this meeting tonight, I would hope my tombstone might read: "Here lies a realist." Not a hawk, not a dove, but a man who was willing to face painful and unpleasant realities. It is my judgment that both the hawks and the doves have erred in our recent debate over Vietnam and that both have been unrealistic, in part, in what they have advocated. I will return to this in a moment, and I'll have some critical things to say to each.

In this life every choice has its consequences. It isn't enough to complain of a policy one doesn't like; one must have alternatives and be prepared to face their consequences. I realize that my proposals, too, will have some pretty distasteful ramifications. But I'm willing to face them, as I expect I will have to do in the question period tonight.

Because I think so much of our debate on Vietnam has been up in the clouds, I'd like to take a moment here to face up to five hard, stern realities which limit our options over there. Two of them the hawks in our midst just flatly refuse to face; three of them tend to be ignored by the doves.

The **first** of these is that no amount of bombing is going to stop transportation of enough supplies to keep the communist effort going in the South. The supplies aren't made in North Vietnam. They are made in Russia and China. If we permanently destroyed every railroad track and every bridge in the North, enough supplies would go through to keep this war at the present level indefinitely, and we have this on the word of Secretary McNamara in sworn testimony before the Senate. In 1966 the North Vietnamese were sending about 100 tons a day into the south. Today, following a year of the most intensive bombing in the history of the world they're not sending 100 tons

-- they're sending 300 tons a day. And yet we are told that 100,000 tons of bombs a month, instead of 80,000 will change the result.

The **second** of these stern realities is directed to those who write me saying, "Let's pull out the stops." I wonder if they have thought about where this will lead. As you know, the United States got into this mess through certain commitments made by a succession of Presidents. Other nations have made commitments, too. When commitments like this come into direct conflict, wars get started. Political scientists still like to play games with the combination of treaties and ententes and obligations of various kinds existing among the nations of Europe prior to World War I.

My second reality, then, is this: No living man can give us any assurance that Russia or China, or both, won't come into this war with both feet in the next week, or month, or year, if we keep on as we are. As a realist I have to agree that the odds are they will not. But what a crazy gamble. If we lose that gamble, we are talking not of 500,000 American troops and 30 billion dollars a year but perhaps five million troops and 300 billion dollars a year -- and maybe nuclear warheads on Tucson and every other important city.

Let's not forget the blunder we made in Korea. Recall that President Truman met with General MacArthur on Wake Island on October 15, 1950, and in that conference MacArthur told Truman the war was all but won and assured him neither the Russians nor Chinese would intervene in spite of our invading North Korea. With Truman's acquiescence MacArthur proceeded to launch a "final" offensive on November 25, followed one day later by Chinese intervention and one of the most costly retreats in American history. We ignored reality then; let's not repeat it.

I gather that among the "birds" here tonight are some doves. I have some hard counsel for you, too. Many of you have written saying that if we will but stop the bombing, Ho Chi Minh will join us in sincere talks. I hope I'm wrong, but I have to tell you of my **third** stern reality a firm belief that Hanoi won't pull our chestnuts out of the fire, or help us find some easy way to save face. I've studied the arguments about past peace efforts and the charges that we resumed bombing just as negotiations were about to begin. Our peace efforts have been clumsy, and probably insufficient, but I don't believe that Hanoi in the past three years has really been willing to make a peace our government would have accepted. The President was encouraged last winter to make something out of the "Tet" truce, and we stopped our bombing activities for a few days. Knowing this was coming, the North Vietnamese loaded up every truck and sampan they could find, and in those four days moved really huge amounts of supplies. But they didn't move a single diplomat, or a single peace feeler.

In spite of this gloomy peace prospect I think my program makes sense because it's right for our country. I'm tired of having decisions affecting 200 million Americans being determined by what some hard-nosed Politburo in Hanoi or Peking decides to do.

And this brings me to stern reality number **four**. There are legitimate, effective, democratic means available to work a change in the policies of our government. They still work, and I'm trying to use one of them tonight. Violence and disruption and name-calling won't work. I will tell you I am thoroughly disgusted at the antics of some of the anarchist types in our midst who think the way to express their views is to stage sit-ins at the Pentagons or storm-ins at the Capitol of the United States. This kind of nonsense contributes nothing to the solution of our problems or the advancement of reasonable alternatives.

In short, I think the fabric of our society has been ripped and torn by this war, and our dialogue has degenerated. I would hope we could end this war, but short of that I would hope we could restore our dialogue at least.

Thinking about the consequences of my proposal, I feel I must face up to one **final** very harsh reality, and that is the slim prospect that the government of South Vietnam and its army will be able to do the job I have outlined for them. I am frankly pessimistic. But if we give them a fair chance, if we assure them of all the supplies and ammunition and military hardware they need, and in spite of this they are unable to manage their own defense after a reasonable length of time, then so be it. The Lord has not assigned us the job of defending South Vietnam in perpetuity. The French withdrew from Indochina and Algeria. Britain did the same in India, Egypt and various countries of Africa. The Dutch did it in Indonesia. There were internal convulsions in each case, but those nations survived. Even the Ford Motor Company under the leadership of Robert McNamara abandoned its campaign to sell the Edsel. I think what's good for Ford is good for the country!

How ironic it is that we can live in this prosperous country and go calmly to bed at night while governments which call themselves "Communist" rule in Warsaw or Budapest, or indeed Havana. But we must accept tens of thousands of American casualties and put out endless billions of dollars to assure at all cost that there is never such a government in Saigon. I'd far prefer to see friendly governments in all of Asia; but there are limits to what this country can do and to the costs I'm willing to pay.

I have always wondered why it is that other countries can lose wars, admit mistakes and retreat once in a while, all without permanent injury, but the United States must always be absolutely right, it must win every war and press on each time to unconditional surrender.

I say let's continue to supply South Vietnam. Let's make clear we will withdraw our forces gradually. But in the end let's put the destiny of Vietnam in the hands of the Vietnamese, and let's us get back to our own serious problems in this country.

As I speak tonight we're about a year from our next Presidential election. Nearly everyone, I suppose, has been speculating about the choices that will face us in that contest. If the Republicans reveal more judgment than I tend to credit them with, they might present us with an option such as I have outlined tonight. If they do that, there might well be a Republican President in the White House in 1969. But I don't think they will give us this kind of option. I expect their candidate will be a Nixon or a Reagan who promises us even more bombing and more escalation and more likelihood of blundering into World War III. And the end result, after more years of bloodshed, bombs and war bonds -- if we're lucky -- will be some kind of cessation of hostilities without victory. And then a few years later some Asian Charles deGaulle will boot us out, and we will have gained nothing but bitterness and debt.

I might say that, if President Johnson could work some miracle and get a cease-fire tomorrow, I would expect this same result a few years hence. Charles deGaulle may be a unique personage, but he has no monopoly on ingratitude.

As I spoke of the consequences of my proposal, I'm sure some were saying, "Yes, but how about the Domino Theory?" My answer is that countries aren't dominoes, and wars aren't games. What's going on in Vietnam can't be explained simply in terms of a world ideological struggle. There are real issues involved in Vietnam and the other countries of Southeast Asia. A country that ignores these real problems is headed for trouble. A country that works at solving its problems probably is going to make out all right.

If you want my best judgment regarding the Domino theory, it is that our military operations in Laos and Thailand have made those countries far more likely to topple, like dominoes, than if we had never fought in Vietnam at all.

That brings me to the subject of commitments. Last spring in a House speech I quoted Historian Henry Steele Commager as saying that the succession of commitments we have made in Vietnam were essentially "mindless." I agreed with this and said it was as though at each moment when a world-shaking decision was to be made we had our minds on other matters and regarded these decisions as of little consequence. I still believe this, and as a Member of Congress I regret that our Presidents in the last twenty years have committed this nation to assume certain obligations without ever consulting the Congress or initiating any dialogue that could produce a clear mandate for such commitments. Let's review the series of commitments which have embroiled us in Vietnam. They are at least seven in number.

First there was President Truman's commitment of economic and military aid to the French to re-establish their colonial regime in Indochina after the Japanese were driven out. This commitment was made at a time when the people of Indochina were demanding the right to carve out their own destiny and govern themselves. Next came President Eisenhower's commitment to support the Diem regime, particularly at the time Diem reneged on the agreement, signed at Geneva, to hold nation-wide reunification elections. President Eisenhower in his book, *Mandate for Change*, acknowledges that if those elections had been held, Ho Chi Minh might well have won 80 percent of the votes. Blocking those elections was quite a commitment for a nation that says it stands for freedom and democracy. Then there was President Kennedy's decision to increase the number of U.S. military advisors from 800 to 17,000. And that was followed by our acquiescence in Diem's overthrow and certain assumed obligations to his successors. Then came President Johnson's decision to bomb the North and commit American ground forces to the South. And after that his decision to take over the main burden of the war by increasing the American commitment to half a million men. And finally there was President Johnson's decision to try to break the will of the government of North Vietnam by destroying its economy.

Each of these commitments was made, I believe, with the assumption that this was all that was needed for success. Now we are told that with just another 45,000 troops, and perhaps bombing of the last remaining targets in North Vietnam, we can do the job. Who really believes this?

This reminds me of an incident that occurred some years ago when I was practicing law here. A troubled businessman of modest means came to me as an old friend. His closest friend during a terminal illness had asked him to help the sick man's son, who was just starting in business. He readily agreed; in other words, he made a solemn commitment. Subsequently he loaned the boy \$5,000 after his friend's death. It soon became apparent the boy didn't have any business sense, but the agreement was a solemn one. Soon he had \$25,000 of his own money and half his working hours invested in a clearly losing venture, and he was neglecting his own business affairs. When he came to see me, he had just talked with his banker about mortgaging his home. It was apparent to me he was on a course that would lead eventually to bankruptcy.

I believe President Johnson and the war hawks are following a similar sort of logic. They say it was a mistake to commit ourselves, but we did, and therefore we have no alternative but to carry it on at any cost, no matter how great or for how long, until we can conclude it on terms which we consider satisfactory.

I told my Tucson friend that he had kept the spirit and word of any commitment he had made to his dead friend and that now he should tell the boy frankly that he could go no further. I told him, as I tell my countrymen now, that your first commitment is to your own people and your own future. Beyond this you do what you reasonably can for your friends, but no more.

Finally, I'd like to talk about that magic national attribute called "face." As I recall, this is something we used to say the Orientals were terribly concerned about. Now apparently it's become vital to us.

I don't accept this. In the long run a nation's prestige and greatness and "face" depend on doing what is right for its own people and taking the consequences. There is no dignity greater than that of a strong man, or strong nation, admitting a mistake, correcting it, and taking the consequences. There is no course more likely in the long run to destroy one's dignity or "face" than to become a prisoner of past mistakes.

I'm against Communist aggression and for building up the strength of the free world, and this is why I propose that we quit playing a Communist game on Communist terms. I propose to put Americans interests first for a change.

Perhaps this sounds isolationist. Well, I'm no isolationist. I don't think America can or should turn its back on the world. With the population explosion, technological development and all the rest, it's vital that we play a role in world affairs. But I do not believe the Lord ever put his foot on Plymouth rock and assigned us the mission to settle every controversy in every corner of the world.

What we must do is put Vietnam in perspective. If we could but read the history of the coming century, I think we would see that the struggle in Vietnam was but one of dozens of struggles in the underdeveloped, formerly colonial areas of Asia and Africa and Latin America. There are great forces of change at work in the world, and I'm not talking about communism. I'm talking about the aspirations of two-thirds of the human race to enjoy the good life now enjoyed by the other third. We can't prevent change from occurring, even if we wanted to do so. And we can't police the world and right every wrong. I believe we should save our strength and our influence and our "face" for those places and those contests of greater importance to us than the jungles of Vietnam.

Another irony of our Vietnam policy is that, while it is designed to make our commitments credible, it increasingly makes them less credible. Earlier this year the President dispatched three lonely transports to the Congo to aid in the latest eruption there. It provoked a violent storm of congressional criticism on the grounds that it represented the first step toward another Vietnam involvement. The hard truth is that

precisely because of Vietnam the United States is far less likely ever again to intervene in places where intervention is favorable, is called for, or might be successful.

There are some 125 nations in this world. In the years ahead many of them are going to be involved in civil wars, revolutions and clashes with their neighbors. In most cases our best policy will be to stand back, as we did in Indonesia, the fifth largest nation in the world, a rich source of many raw materials, an area far more important in any power struggle than Vietnam. For years this nation had what amounted to a Communist government under Sukarno. He broke relations with the United States, burned our libraries, denounced us at every turn. Surely here was a situation touching our interests. Yet we committed not a single soldier nor for many months a single dollar of aid. What was the result? As we stood back and waited, the people of that country took matters into their own hands and threw Sukarno and his Communist friends out. While many problems still beset it, Indonesia has started on a better course.

In Vietnam the task has been made infinitely more difficult by our actions of the past two decades, but we can still help the Vietnamese people to do the same thing for themselves. And, in any case, we should know by now that we can't do it for them.

The world has always been full of evil, suffering and injustice. I wish it were not so. But I agree with President Kennedy who said not so many years ago:

"We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent or omniscient -- that we are only 6 percent of the world's population -- that we cannot impose our will on the other 94 percent of mankind -- that we cannot right every wrong or reverse each adversity -- and that therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem."

And as I fly back to Washington tonight I'm going to be thinking of the prayer which that wonderful organization, Alcoholics Anonymous, teaches to its members; it might teach this nation something too:

"Oh Lord, give us the strength to change the things which can be changed; The Courage to accept the things which cannot be changed; And the wisdom to know the difference."