

61a
(SPEECH INSERT)

Peace in Viet-Nam -- peace in the world -- is our goal.

Peace is what the South Vietnamese people want.

Peace is what the American people want.

Peace is what any thinking man wants.

But it is not that easy -- not that simple. We cannot have anything so dear simply by wishing for it.

You cannot have peace if the man who is shooting at you doesn't want it -- not a decent peace, nor a lasting peace.

Peace is a simple word -- a beautiful word. But it means many things to different men.

We can always get the peace of surrender.

We can always buy a Chamberlain-type peace.

We can always walk away from the problem -- ignore the danger -- settle for "peace in our time." But history has shown that this kind of peace doesn't last -- that it only prepares the way for future -- and more destructive -- wars.

There have been many times over the past 23 years when we could have bought quick and easy settlements -- by looking the other way, by refusing to get involved.

We could have done it when communist guerrillas were in the suburbs of Athens. We could have done it when the Huks were

in Manila. We could have done it by pulling out of Korea. And we could have tried to live with enemy missiles 100 miles off our shores.

But we didn't.

For we knew then that to do so would only have led to greater dangers -- deeper crises -- and bigger wars.

What are we trying to do in Viet-Nam?

Some people say we are trying to win a military victory.

Those who say so just don't know very much about Viet-Nam.

This is a political war -- a social war -- and an economic war -- as well as a military war.

It is the struggle of a people to remain their own masters and not be swallowed up by others. It is the struggle of a brave people who are trying -- even in the middle of a war -- to build new and free political institutions. It is the struggle to carry forward a social revolution in the midst of bitter fighting.

It is a war whose heaviest burdens must be carried by the Vietnamese themselves. It is a war that can only be won -- in the real sense -- by the Vietnamese people.

Are they carrying that burden? Are they doing what must be done to save themselves?

The record speaks for itself.

Yet that record is unknown to most Americans. We have been so concerned with what we were doing, that we have paid little attention to what they have been doing -- and the sacrifices they have paid for their own freedom.

And the critics are so determined to expose every Vietnamese weakness, every failing that we lose sight of what these courageous people have paid for their freedom.

Never before in history have we so weakened ourselves by attacking our own ally in time of war.

I submit that it does no one any real good to attack the Vietnamese for not drafting men under 20 --when they have been drafting men under 20 for weeks.

Last month, 10,000 Vietnamese young men were drafted. Another 10,000 volunteered for military service. And President Thieu has announced his nation's determination to bring 125,000 men under arms in the next few months.

That is the equivalent of a million and a half Americans. For South Viet-Nam has only the population of one of our largest states.

Do the Vietnamese fight?
Since Hanoi started its campaign to conquer the South in the late 1950's, more than 600,000 Vietnamese soldiers have died in Battle. They did not die by not fighting.

The Vietnamese people are determined to stand their ground and to preserve their nation. As President Thieu told his nation last Thursday

"This struggle is global in its significance, but it is being fought in Viet-Nam by Vietnamese. We Vietnamese must end it in victory for our people. No one can do that for us. It is for us to take up the burden of history now, for our small nations is the place and our ancient people the chief actors in the central drama of this decade."

"Let us" he said "be worthy of our ancestors! Let us become a proud memory for our children."

What, then, is the American role in this struggle?

We are there to help these people win the peace they so deeply want -- and so richly deserve.

We are there to help provide a military shield behind which the process of nation-building can go forward.

We are there to help make clear to the world that aggression cannot succeed -- to prove that those who take up arms to achieve their ends will be opposed.

We are there to show that political victory cannot come from the barrel of a gun.

What kind of peace is it that we work for and fight for?

The foundation stones are there for all to see.

We believe that the Geneva 1954 Agreement on Viet-Nam provides a base for a fair settlement.

This would:

- bring the shooting to an end;
- provide for the withdrawal from South Vietnamese territory of all non-Southern forces;
- permit the South Vietnamese to shape their nation and their institutions in their own way;
- provide for the eventual unification of all Viet-Nam in ways and at a time to be determined by the Vietnamese themselves.

We believe that the 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos should be made effective.

That means:

- a withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from Laos -- which Hanoi promised but never lived up to;
- an end to the use of Laos as a pathway for the introduction of men and weapons and military equipment into South Viet-Nam;
- an end to the shooting in Laos;
- letting the Laotian people themselves determine their own way of life and build their own country.

We are prepared to move immediately to work out the details of such a settlement.

We are prepared to talk with Hanoi tomorrow about this or any other reasonable settlement.

We are prepared to send a delegation to Geneva tomorrow if such a meeting can be arranged by the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference.

We are ready to talk in public -- or in private.

I make this pledge to the leaders in Hanoi:

-- we are ready to stop sending any additional men to

South Viet-Nam if Hanoi will do the same;

-- we are ready to stop bombing the North if you will not

use that event to strengthen your forces in the South;

-- we are ready to stop shooting if you stop shooting;

-- we are ready to begin withdrawing our forces from

the South if you will do the same;

-- if North Viet-Nam withdraws its forces and violence

subsides, American troops will be out of Viet-Nam

in six months;

-- if a settlement comes, those military bases now used by

our forces will be turned over to the Vietnamese people;

-- if the war ends, we shall contribute a billion dollars a

year for at least five years to help the people of South-

east Asia repair the damages of war and begin to [redacted]

a new and better and stronger economic life for their people.

-- North Viet-Nam can share in this process of rebuilding and of peaceful economic development.

The real question is: what kind of settlement does Hanoi want?

I ask the leaders in Hanoi:

-- do you want to build -- or to conquer?

-- do your people want peace or war?

-- do you wish to dominate South Viet-Nam and Laos and

Cambodia -- or to make a better life for your people

at home?

-- is it not clear that the best future for North Viet-Nam lies in growing food for its people, building its industry, and joining with its neighbors in the development of that rich and promising region through which the Mekong flows?

These are questions which only the leaders in Hanoi and their people can answer.

We await their answer. The world waits -- and hopes it will be the right answer.

As for the United States, we have assumed heavy burdens. Through our constitutional processes, we have undertaken commitments. After prayerful consideration -- and extensive debate -- we have given our pledge to help others in time of danger.

Today, we bear those burdens.

We live up to our commitments.

We honor our pledge.

If we tire of the struggle -- as the enemy deeply hopes we will -- I am absolutely certain that most of what this nation has built with others in the world community over the past two decades and more would be in grave danger.

The long, hard, slow work of building a world society in which aggression does not succeed would be undone.

In the past, young nations, weak nations, hopeful nations, could turn to us for help -- in building and in staying alive as nations.

But if we tire and withdraw at this stage -- when others have not yet achieved sufficient strength to stand alone -- we shall only be turning the fate of those nations over to the mercy of Hanoi and Peking and Moscow.

So long as I am your President, I shall fight to preserve what has been achieved since World War II -- through sacrifice, and bravery, and determination. I shall continue to strive to build the kind of world we all need and want.

That, I am sure, will also be the will of the American people.

If it is not, then we are in for a time of trouble and of tragedy compared with which our present suffering will seem as nothing.

I pray to God that we have the wisdom -- and the will -- to do
what must be done.

For if we fail, all mankind will pay the price of that failure.

I know we will not fail.

#