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**THE U.S. COMMITMENT IN VIET-NAM: FUNDAMENTAL
ISSUES: Statements by Secretary Rusk and Gen. Maxwell D.
Taylor Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations¹**

SECRETARY RUSK, FEBRUARY 18, 1966

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee: The immediate occasion for these hearings is a request by the President for a supplemental appropriation to the AID administration of \$415 million, of which \$275 million are intended for South Viet-Nam. Mr. David Bell, the Administrator of AID, and I have both already testified on this particular request. These hearings, as the chairman has pointed out, have also entered into the largest and most far-reaching aspects of our interests and involvements in Southeast Asia. For my part, I welcome this opportunity to appear again before the committee to discuss with you these larger issues.

Since World War II, which projected the United States into the role of major world power, we Americans have had to face a series of difficult tasks and trials. On the whole, we have faced them very well. Today we are facing another ordeal in Southeast Asia, which again is costing us both lives and treasure.

South Viet-Nam is a long way from the United States, and the issues posed may seem remote from our daily experience and our immediate interests. It is essential, therefore, that we clearly understand—and so far as possible agree on—our mission and purpose in that faraway land.

Why are we in Viet-Nam? Certainly we are not there merely because we have power and like to use it. We do not regard ourselves as the policeman of the universe. We do not go around the world looking for quarrels in which we can intervene. Quite the contrary. We have recognized that, just as we are not gendarmes of the universe, neither are we the magistrate of the universe. If other governments, other institutions, or other regional organizations can find solutions to the quarrels which disturb the present scene, we are anxious to have this occur. But we are in Viet-Nam because the issues posed there are deeply intertwined with our own security and because the outcome of the struggle can profoundly affect the nature of the world in which we and our children will live.

The situation we face in Southeast Asia is obviously complex but, in my view, the underlying issues are relatively simple and are utterly fundamental. I am confident that Americans, who have a deep and mature understanding of world responsibility, are fully capable of cutting through the underbrush of complexity and finding the simple issues which involve our largest interests and deepest purposes. I regard it, therefore, as a privilege to be able to

¹ Department of State Bulletin, vol. LIV, No. 1393, Mar. 7, 1966, pp. 1-17.

discuss these problems with the committee this morning—to consult with you—and at the same time to try to clarify for the American people the issues we must squarely face.

I do not approach this task on the assumption that anyone, anywhere, has all the answers or that all wisdom belongs to the executive branch of the Government, or even to the Government itself. The questions at issue affect the well-being of all Americans, and I am confident that all Americans will make up their own minds in the tradition of a free and independent people. Yet those of us who have special responsibilities for the conduct of our foreign policy have had to think hard and deeply about these problems for a very long time. The President, his Cabinet colleagues, and the Congress, who share the weightiest responsibilities under our constitutional system, have come to certain conclusions that form the basis for the policies we are now pursuing.

Perhaps it is worth pointing out that those who are officially responsible for the conduct of our public affairs must make decisions—and must make decisions among existing alternatives. None of us in the executive or the legislative branch has fulfilled our responsibilities merely by formulating an opinion—we are required to decide what this nation shall do and shall not do and are required to accept the consequences of our determinations.

What are our world security interests involved in the struggle in Viet-Nam?

They cannot be seen clearly in terms of Southeast Asia only or merely in terms of the events of the past few months. We must view the problem in perspective. We must recognize that what we are seeking to achieve in South Viet-Nam is part of a process that has continued for a long time—a process of preventing the expansion and extension of Communist domination by the use of force against the weaker nations on the perimeter of Communist power.

This is the problem as it looks to us. Nor do the Communists themselves see the problem in isolation. They see the struggle in South Viet-Nam as part of a larger design for the steady extension of Communist power through force and threat.

I have observed in the course of your hearings that some objection has been raised to the use of the term "Communist aggression." It seems to me that we should not confuse ourselves or our people by turning our eyes away from what that phrase means. The underlying crisis of this postwar period turns about a major struggle over the very nature of the political structure of the world. Before the guns were silent in World War II, many governments sat down and thought long and hard about the structure of international life, the kind of world which we ought to try to build, and wrote those ideas into the United Nations Charter. That charter establishes an international society of independent states, large and small, entitled to their own national existence, entitled to be free from aggression, cooperating freely across national frontiers in their common interests, and resolving disputes by peaceful means.

But the Communist world has returned to its demand for what it calls a "world revolution," a world of coercion in direct contradiction to the Charter of the United Nations. There may be differences

within the Communist world about methods, and techniques, and leadership within the Communist world itself, but they share a common attachment to their "world revolution" and to its support through what they call "wars of liberation."

So what we face in Viet-Nam is what we have faced on many occasions before—the need to check the extension of Communist power in order to maintain a reasonable stability in a precarious world. That stability was achieved in the years after the war by the valor of free nations in defending the integrity of postwar territorial arrangements. And we have achieved a certain stability for the last decade and a half. It must not be overthrown now.

Like so many of our problems today, the struggle in South Viet-Nam stems from the disruption of two world wars. The Second World War completed a process begun by the first. It ripped apart a structure of power that had existed for 100 years. It set in train new forces and energies that have remade the map of the world. Not only did it weaken the nations actively engaged in the fighting, but it had far-reaching secondary effects. It undermined the foundations of the colonial structures through which a handful of powers controlled one-third of the world's population. And the winds of change and progress that have blown fiercely during the last 20 years have toppled those structures almost completely.

Meanwhile the Communist nations have exploited the turmoil of a time of transition in an effort to extend Communist control into other areas of the world.

The United States first faced the menace of Communist ambition in Europe, when one after another of the nations on the boundaries of the Soviet Union fell under the dominion of Moscow through the presence of the Red army.

To check this tidal wave the United States provided the Marshall Plan to strengthen the nations of Western Europe and then moved to organize with those nations a collective security system through NATO. As a result, the advance of Soviet Communist power was stopped and the Soviet Union gradually adjusted its policies to this situation.

But within a year after the establishment of NATO, the Communists took over China. This posed a new and serious threat, particularly to those weak new nations of the Far East that had been formed out of colonial empires.

The problems in Asia were, of course, different from those in Europe. But the result was much the same—instability, uncertainty, and vulnerability to both the bully and the aggressor. Western Europe, with its established governmental and traditional social institutions, recovered quickly. But certain of the new nations of Asia—particularly those that had not known self-government for a century or more—continued to face a far more formidable problem, which they still face.

The first test of Asia came in Korea, when the United Nations Forces—predominantly American—stopped the drive of Communist North Korea supported by material aid from the Soviet Union. It stopped the Chinese Army that followed. It brought to a halt the Communist effort to push out the line that had been drawn and to establish Communist control over the Korean Peninsula.

We fought the Korean war, which like the struggle in Viet-Nam occurred in a remote area thousands of miles away, to sustain a principle vital to the freedom and security of America—the principle that the Communist world should not be permitted to expand by overrunning one after another of the arrangements built during and since the war to mark the outer limits of Communist expansion by force.

Before the Korean war had ended, the United States, under President Truman, moved to settle and consolidate the situation in the Pacific through a peace treaty with Japan, and through bilateral security treaties with Japan and the Philippines, and through the ANZUS treaty with Australia and New Zealand.

Hardly had the Korean war been finished when France, which had been fighting a protracted struggle in Indochina, decided to relinquish its political presence in Southeast Asia. After a brief negotiation it came to terms with the Communist forces that had captured the nationalist movement. The result was the division of Indochina into four parts: a Kingdom of Cambodia, a Kingdom of Laos, and Viet-Nam divided at the 17th parallel between the Communist forces in the North and a non-Communist Vietnamese government in the South.

Recognizing that the Communists had not abandoned their ambitions, the United States Government, under President Eisenhower, took steps to secure the situation by further alliances. Bilateral treaties were concluded with the Republic of Korea and the Republic of China on Formosa. In the Middle East the so-called "northern tier" of countries lying to the south of the Soviet Union entered into the Baghdad Pact, which established what is now known as CENTO—the Central Treaty Organization. The United States did not become a formal member of this alliance, which is composed of Great Britain, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. But we are closely associated with CENTO and have bilateral military assistance agreements with its regional members, concluded by the Eisenhower administration.

In order to give support to the nations of Southeast Asia, the United States took the lead in the creation of an alliance embodied in a treaty and reinforced by a collective security system known as SEATO—the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. In this alliance the United States joined with Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan, and the Philippines to guarantee the security not only of the member nations but also to come to the aid of certain protocol states and territories if they so requested.

South Viet-Nam was included in this protocol. The United States had not been a party to the agreements made in Geneva in 1954, which France had concluded with the Communist Vietnamese forces known as the Viet Minh. But the Under Secretary of State, Walter Bedell Smith, stated under instructions that the United States would not disturb the agreements and "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the *** agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."

Under Secretary Smith's statement was only a unilateral declaration, but in joining SEATO the United States took a solemn treaty

engagement of far-reaching effect. Article IV, paragraph 1, provides that "each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack *** would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."

It is this fundamental SEATO obligation that has from the outset guided our actions in South Viet-Nam.

The language of this treaty is worth careful attention. The obligation it imposes is not only joint but several. The finding that an armed attack has occurred does not have to be made by a collective determination before the obligation of each member becomes operative. Nor does the treaty require a collective decision on actions to be taken to meet the common danger. If the United States determines that an armed attack has occurred against any nation to whom the protection of the treaty applies, then it is obligated to "act to meet the common danger" without regard to the news or actions of any other treaty member.

The far-reaching implications of this commitment were well understood by this committee when it recommended, with only the late Senator [William] Langer dissenting, that the Senate consent to the ratification of the treaty. The committee's report states:

The committee is not impervious to the risks which this treaty entails. It fully appreciates that acceptance of these additional obligations commits the United States to a course of action over a vast expanse of the Pacific. Yet these risks are consistent with our own highest interests. There are greater hazards in not advising a potential enemy of what he can expect of us, and in failing to disabuse him of assumptions which might lead to a miscalculation of our intentions.

Following this committee's recommendation, the Senate gave its advice and consent to the treaty by a vote of 82 to 1, the late Senator Langer dissenting. All members of this distinguished committee who were then Senators voted for that treaty.

Our multilateral engagement under the SEATO treaty has been reinforced and amplified by a series of bilateral commitments and assurances directly to the Government of South Viet-Nam. On October 1, 1954, President Eisenhower wrote to President Diem offering "to assist the Government of Viet-Nam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means." In 1957 President Eisenhower and President Diem issued a joint statement which called attention to "the large build-up of Vietnamese Communist military forces in North Viet-Nam" and stated:

Noting that the Republic of Viet-Nam is covered by Article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, President Eisenhower and President Ngo Dinh Diem agreed that aggression or subversion threatening the political independence of the Republic of Viet-Nam would be considered as endangering peace and stability.

On August 2, 1961, President Kennedy declared that "the United States is determined that the Republic of Viet-Nam shall not be lost to the Communists for lack of any support which the United States can render."

On December 14, 1961, President Kennedy wrote to President Diem, recalling the United States declaration made at the end of the

Geneva conference in 1954. The President once again stated that the United States was "prepared to help the Republic of Viet-Nam to protect its people and to preserve its independence." This commitment has been reaffirmed many times since.

These, then, are the commitments we have taken to protect South Viet-Nam as a part of protecting our own "peace and security." We have sent American forces to fight in the jungles of that beleaguered country because South Viet-Nam has, under the language of the SEATO treaty, been the victim of "aggression by means of armed attack."

There can be no serious question as to the existence and nature of this aggression. The war is clearly an "armed attack," cynically and systematically mounted by the Hanoi regime against the people of South Viet-Nam.

The North Vietnamese regime has sought deliberately to confuse the issue by seeking to make its aggression appear as an indigenous revolt. But we should not be deceived by this subterfuge. It is a familiar Communist practice. Impeded in their efforts to extend their power by the use of classical forms of force such as the invasion of Korea, the Communists have, over many years, developed an elaborate doctrine for so-called "wars of national liberation" to cloak their aggressions in ambiguity.

A "war of national liberation," in the Communist lexicon, depends on the tactics of terror and sabotage, of stealth and subversion. It has a particular utility for them since it gives an advantage to a disciplined and ruthless minority, particularly in countries where the physical terrain makes clandestine infiltration relatively easy.

At the same time the Communists have a more subtle reason for favoring this type of aggression. It creates in any situation a sense of ambiguity that they can exploit to their own advantage.

Yet, in spite of Communist efforts to confuse the issue, the nature of the conflict in South Viet-Nam is very clear.

Let me review the facts.

With the benefit of hindsight no one can doubt that, in agreeing to the 1954 accords, the regime in Hanoi fully expected that within a relatively short period the South Vietnamese would fall under their control. The South seemed overburdened with troubles. Its formidable economic problems were complicated by the need to absorb almost 1 million North Vietnamese, who—having seen the true face of communism—fled South after the 1954 accords. The North, moreover, had concealed resources in the South. At the time of the accords in 1954, many Communists fighting with the Viet Minh had been directed by the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi to stay in the South, to hide their arms, and to devote their efforts to undermining the South Vietnamese Government. These efforts of subversion were in the initial years quite unsuccessful.

Much to the dismay of the Hanoi regime, South Viet-Nam made substantial progress in spite of the extraordinary problems it faced, while North Viet-Nam lagged far behind. As a consequence the Communist leaders in North Viet-Nam were forced to conclude that more active measures were necessary if the subversion in South Viet-Nam were to succeed.

During the 5 years following the Geneva conference the Hanoi regime developed a secret political-military organization in South Viet-Nam based on the cadres who had been ordered to stay in the South. Many of the activities of this organization were directed toward the assassination of selected South Vietnamese civilians. More than 1,000 civilians were murdered or kidnaped from 1957 to 1959. In 1960 alone, terrorists assassinated 1,400 local government officials and kidnapped 700 others, while armed guerrillas killed 2,200 military and security personnel.

In September 1960, the Lao Dong Party—the Communist Party in North Viet-Nam—held its Third Party Congress in Hanoi. That Congress called for the creation of a front organization to undertake the subversion of South Viet-Nam. Three months thereafter, the National Liberation Front was established to provide a political facade for the conduct of an active guerrilla war. Beginning in 1960 the Hanoi regime began to infiltrate into South Viet-Nam the disciplined adherents whom the party had ordered North at the time of the settlement. In the intervening period since 1954, these men had been trained in the arts of sabotage and subversion. Now they were ordered to conscript young men from the villages by force or persuasion and to form cadres around which guerrilla units could be built.

All of this was documented by the Legal Committee of the International Commission for Supervision and Control. That body, established to supervise the performance of the Viet-Nam cease-fire, is composed of Indian, Polish, and Canadian members. The Legal Committee, with Poland objecting, reported in 1962:

There is evidence to show that arms, munitions, and other supplies have been sent from the zone in the North to the zone in the South with the objective supporting, organizing and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks, against the armed forces and administration of the zone in the South.

There is evidence that the PAVN [i.e., the North Vietnamese Army] has allowed the zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging and supporting hostile activities in the zone in the South, aimed at the overthrow of the administration in the South.

In the 3-year period from 1959 to 1961, the North Viet-Nam regime infiltrated 10,000 men into the South. In 1962, 13,000 additional personnel were infiltrated. And by the end of 1964, North Viet-Nam may well have moved over 40,000 armed and unarmed guerrillas into South Viet-Nam.

Beginning over a year ago, the Communists apparently exhausted their reservoir of Southerners who had gone North. Since then, the greater number of men infiltrated into the South have been native-born North Vietnamese. Most recently, Hanoi has begun to infiltrate elements of the North Vietnamese army in increasingly larger numbers. Today there is evidence that nine regiments of regular North Vietnamese forces are fighting in organized units in the South.

I have reviewed these facts—which are familiar enough to most of you—because, it seems to me, they demonstrate beyond question that the war in Viet-Nam is as much an act of outside aggression as though the Hanoi regime had sent an army across the 17th parallel rather than infiltrating armed forces by stealth. This point is important since it goes to the heart of our own involvement. Much of the confusion about the struggle in South Viet-Nam has arisen over a failure to understand the nature of the conflict.

For if the war in South Viet-Nam were—as the Communists try to make it appear—merely an indigenous revolt, then the United States would not have its own combat troops in South Viet-Nam. But the evidence is overwhelming that is, in fact, something quite different—a systematic aggression by Hanoi against the people of South Viet-Nam. It is one further effort by a Communist regime in one-half of a divided country to take over the people of the other half at the point of a gun and against their will.

Up to this point I have tried to describe the nature of our commitments in South Viet-Nam and why we have made them. I have sought to put those commitments within the framework of our larger effort to prevent the Communists from upsetting the arrangements which have been the basis for our security. These policies have sometimes been attacked as static and sterile. It has been argued that they do not take account of the vast changes which have occurred in the world and are still in train.

These contentions seems to me to miss the point. The line of policy we are following involves far more than a defense of the *status quo*. It seeks rather to insure that degree of security which is necessary if change and progress are to take place through consent and not through coercion. Certainly, as has been frequently pointed out, the world of the mid-20th century is not standing still. Movement is occurring on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Communism today is no longer monolithic; it no longer wears one face but many, and the deep schism between the two great power centers of the Communist world—Moscow and Peking—is clearly one of the major political facts of our time.

There has been substantial change and movement within the Soviet Union as well—and perhaps even more among the countries of Eastern Europe. These changes have not been inhibited because of our efforts to maintain our postwar arrangements by organizing the Western alliance. They have taken place because of internal developments as well as because the Communist regime in Moscow has recognized that the Western alliance cannot permit it to extend its dominion by force.

Over time the same processes hopefully will work in the Far East. Peking—and the Communist states living under its shadow—must learn that they cannot redraw the boundaries of the world by force.

What we are pursuing, therefore, is not a static concept. For, unlike the Communists, we really believe in social revolution and not merely in power cloaked as revolution. We believe in constructive change and encourage it. That was the meaning of President Johnson's initiatives at the Honolulu conference—to encourage the efforts of the South Vietnamese Government to transform the country in a way that will correct ancient injustices and bring about a better life for all the people.

In meeting our commitments in South Viet-Nam we are using substantial military forces. At the same time, we are making it quite clear to North Viet-Nam and to the world that our forces are being employed for a limited and well-defined objective.

What we seek in South Viet-Nam is to bring about a restoration of the conditions contemplated by the accords of 1954. We seek, in

other words, to restore the integrity of the settlement made between the French Government and the Communist forces under Ho Chi Minh—a settlement which was joined in by the United Kingdom, Communist China, the Soviet Union, Laos, and Cambodia. This settlement forms a part of the structure of arrangements that are the key to stability in the present-day world.

Unfortunately, the limited nature of our purpose is foreign to the philosophy of the Communist world. It may be hard, therefore, for them to realize that the United States seeks no territorial aggrandizement in South Viet-Nam or anywhere in Southeast Asia. We do not wish to maintain our troops in that area any longer than is necessary to secure the freedom of the South Vietnamese people. We want no permanent military bases, no trade advantages. We are not asking that the Government of South Viet-Nam ally itself with us or be in any way beholden to us. We wish only that the people of South Viet-Nam should have the right and the opportunity to determine their future in freedom without coercion or threat.

For months now we have done everything possible to make clear to the regime in Hanoi that a political solution is the proper course. If that regime were prepared to call off the aggression in the South, peace would come in almost a matter of hours. When that occurred, the people of North Viet-Nam could safely go about their business. For we do not seek to destroy the Hanoi regime or to force the people of North Viet-Nam to accept any other form of government. And—under conditions of peace—we would be quite prepared for the North Vietnamese people to share with the other peoples of Southeast Asia in the economic and technical help that we and other nations are extending to that area.

This is the simple message that we have tried to convey to Hanoi through many channels. We have sought in every way to impress upon the Communist world the ease with which peace could be attained if only Hanoi were willing.

We have used every resource of diplomacy. I know of no occasion in history where so much effort has been devoted—not only on the part of the United States but of many other nations—in an effort to bring about a political solution to a costly and dangerous war. I know you are generally familiar with the record.

But to this point the sounds from the other side have been harsh and negative. The regime in Hanoi has been unwilling to accept any of the possibilities open to it for discussion. All we have heard is the constant insistence that they will not negotiate unless we accept in advance their four points. Yet the effect of those four points, as propounded by Hanoi, would be to give away the very purposes for which we are fighting and to deliver the people of South Viet-Nam against their will to the domination of a Communist regime.

To understand the situation realistically, we should not underestimate the harshness of the Communist side or overestimate the ease of a political solution.

From time to time we have heard it suggested that we should seek a Geneva conference, or enlist the good offices of the conference cochairmen, or take the problem to the United Nations, or invite the mediation efforts of neutral nations. Well, we have done all of these

things, and in most cases we have done them repeatedly—with no result.

We heard it suggested also, by governments and individuals on both sides of the Iron Curtain, that no peace was possible so long as American planes were flying bombing missions over North Viet-Nam but that negotiations might be possible if the bombing were discontinued. We did that also—not once but twice. The last pause, as this committee will recall, lasted more than 37 days. And again with no response.

Certainly we shall do everything consistent with our national objectives to seek a solution through diplomacy. There is no doubt as to the elements for an honorable peace as we see it. We have made them clear again and again. Most recently we have summarized them in the form of "14 points."

1. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia;

2. We would welcome a conference on Southeast Asia or on any part thereof;

3. We would welcome "negotiations without preconditions" as the 17 nations put it;

4. We would welcome unconditional discussion as President Johnson put it;

5. A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions;

6. Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose;

7. We want no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia;

8. We do not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Viet-Nam after peace is assured;

9. We support free elections in South Viet-Nam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice;

10. The question of reunification of Viet-Nam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision;

11. The countries of Southeast Asia can be nonaligned or neutral if that be their option;

12. We would much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Viet-Nam could participate in a regional effort to which we would be prepared to contribute at least one billion dollars;

13. The President has said "The Viet-Cong would not have difficulty being represented and having their views represented if for a moment Hanoi decided she wanted to cease aggression. I don't think that would be an insurmountable problem."

14. We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Viet-Nam as a step toward peace although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped.

These 14 points are on the public record. Our Government has made quite clear what kind of peace we are prepared to accept—a peace that will guarantee the security of South Viet-Nam, a peace that will stop armed aggression in violation of international agreements and international law.

This is the position that we have made known to the other side both directly and through intermediaries. How does this compare with the position of the Hanoi regime?

Both Hanoi and Peking have repeatedly rejected our proposal for unconditional discussions. They have insisted instead that before any discussions can take place our side must agree in advance to the four points of Hanoi's program. The words that they have used have differed from formulation to formulation. Sometimes they have said their points are the "sole basis" for negotiations, sometimes the "most correct basis." But the effect is the same. What they are insisting upon is that we accept in advance their substantive position and then discuss only the ways in which it shall be given effect. The technique of demanding such substantive agreement in advance is a familiar Communist negotiating tactic. It does not mean that the basic points are open for discussion or that they can be loosely interpreted. It means just what it says.

We have subjected these four points to the most careful scrutiny. What do they reveal?

The first point calls for "recognition of the fundamental national rights of the Vietnamese people: sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity." This point also calls for the withdrawal of U.S. forces, dismantling of our military bases, and abolition of our military alliance with the Government of South Viet-Nam "in strict conformity with the Geneva Agreements."

The United States has made clear that we, too, are prepared to support a restoration of the provisions of the Geneva agreements and that we are prepared to withdraw our troops and dismantle military bases once there is compliance with the accords by all parties. We have said also that we would not expect or require a military alliance with a free South Viet-Nam.

The second point relates to the military clauses of the Geneva agreements, and these, too, we could agree to under the conditions I have indicated.

The fourth point provides that the issue of peaceful reunification should be settled by the Vietnamese people without foreign intervention. This also we could accept if it be clearly understood that conditions must first be created both in the North and South that will make it possible for truly free elections to be held.

It is in the third point that the core of the Communist position is disclosed. That point provides that "The internal affairs of South Viet-Nam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front."

To understand the significance of this point, it is necessary not only to examine what is meant by the "program of the National Liberation Front" but to explore somewhat further the character of the Front itself and the purposes it serves in the tactics of the North Vietnamese regime.

Let us turn first to the Front itself. Both Hanoi and Peking have made clear again and again—and they have been joined in this by other Communist powers—that negotiations will be possible only when the United States recognizes the National Liberation Front as

the "sole genuine representative of the entire South Vietnamese people."

What are the implications of this proposal, and why are the Communists urging it so insistently?

The evidence is overwhelming that the National Liberation Front is exactly what its name implies—a Communist front organization intended to give support to the deliberate fiction that the war in Viet-Nam is an indigenous revolt. The Front is, as the facts make clear, an invention of the Communist Party of North Viet-Nam, to serve as a political cloak for its activities in the South.

As I have noted earlier, the Front was created by the North Vietnamese Communist Party—the Lao Dong Party—in 1960, soon after North Viet-Nam's military leader, General [Vo Nguyen] Giap, announced: "The North is the revolutionary base for the whole country." The individuals proclaimed as leaders of the Front are not personalities widely known to the Vietnamese people, either in the North or in the South. To suggest that they represent the aspirations of the Vietnamese people is absurd. The significant fact is that at no time has any single individual of political significance in South Viet-Nam adhered to the Front or to its policies. While some Vietnamese leaders and groups may differ among themselves on how the country is to be led, none of them differs on the fact that the Front does not speak for them.

In 1961 Hanoi sought to strengthen the fiction of the Front's indigenous origins by creating a seemingly independent Communist Party as the principal element of the Front. It therefore established the People's Revolutionary Party. A secret Lao Dong circular dated December 7, 1961, advised party members that "The People's Revolutionary Party has only the appearance of an independent existence. Actually our Party is nothing but the Lao Dong Party of Viet-Nam unified from North to South under the Central Executive Committee of the Party, the chief of which is President Ho. * * * during these explanations, take care to keep this strictly secret, especially in South Viet-Nam, so that the enemy does not perceive our purpose."

The People's Revolutionary Party has not concealed its role in the Front. It has frankly stated that it is the dominant element. On February 15, 1961, the Viet Cong Committee for the South went even farther, stating that in time the Communist Party would "act overtly to lead the revolution in South Viet-Nam." In other words, the Communists have told their followers that, at the proper moment, they would emerge from cover and cast off the disguise of the National Liberation Front.

And so the Communists have a clear purpose in insisting that we recognize the National Liberation Front as the sole representative of the South Vietnamese people. For them this is not a procedural question but a major question of substance. They insist on our recognition of the Front as the sole spokesman for the people of South Viet-Nam since our acceptance of the Front in that capacity would in effect mean our acceptance of the Communist position as to the indigenous nature of the conflict and thus our acceptance of a settle-

ment on Hanoi's terms—which would mean delivering South Viet-Nam into the control of the Communist North.

In spite of these clear realities, we have not asserted nor do we assert an unreasoning attitude with regard to the Front. The President said in his state of the Union message, "We will meet at any conference table, we will discuss any proposals—4 points or 14 or 40—and we will consider the views of any group"—and that, of course, includes the Front along with other groups.

To the extent then that the Front has any validity as a representative of a group, the views of that group can be heard and the issue of the Liberation Front should, as the President has said, not prove "an insurmountable problem."

It remains a problem only because Hanoi insists on using it to establish its own substantive position—that the Front represents the hopes and aspirations of the South Vietnamese people—and hence should control them.

The significance of this issue is clearly seen when one examines the so-called "Program of the National Liberation Front" as it was announced from Hanoi on January 29, 1961, and revised and amplified in a second publication on February 11 that same year. The first point of this program discloses the full Communist intention. It calls for the overthrow of the South Vietnamese Government in Saigon and the establishment of a coalition government from which the government in Saigon would be totally excluded.

In other words, the Hanoi regime is demanding the following preconditions to which the United States must agree before the Communists will even condescend to negotiate:

First, that the South Vietnamese Government be overthrown;

Second, that the Liberation Front, the creature and agent of Hanoi, be accepted as the sole bargaining representative for the South Vietnamese people;

Third, that South Viet-Nam be put under the control of a coalition government formed by the Communists and from which the South Vietnamese Government would be excluded.

May I conclude, therefore, Mr. Chairman, with certain simple points which are at the heart of the problem and at the heart of United States policy in South Viet-Nam.

1. The elementary fact is that there is an aggression in the form of an armed attack by North Viet-Nam against South Viet-Nam.

2. The United States has commitments to assist South Viet-Nam to repel this aggression.

3. Our commitments to South Viet-Nam were not taken in isolation but are a part of a systematic effort in the postwar period to assure a stable peace.

4. The issue in Southeast Asia becomes worldwide because we must make clear that the United States keeps its word wherever it is pledged.

5. No nation is more interested in peace in Southeast Asia or elsewhere than is the United States. If the armed attack against South Viet-Nam is brought to an end, peace can come very quickly. Every channel or forum for contact, discussion, or negotiation will remain active in order that no possibility for peace will be overlooked.