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PEACE AND STABILITY FOR VIETNAM IS CONSTANT U. S. OBJECTIVE

By General Maxwell D. Taylor

(Editor's note: In this article, a distinguished soldier-diplomat gives a concise explanation of basic United States objectives in Vietnam. A former U. S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, General Taylor's career also has included service in such important assignments as Chairman of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and Commander of United Nations forces in Korea. He is now retired and speaks and writes as a private citizen.)

It has been reported, in some quarters, that the sheer volume of the material that has been published and broadcast about developments in Vietnam has tended to obscure what are essentially the simplest of facts and the clearest of objectives.

The basic aims and views of the United States concerning this critical part of the world, however, can be stated in a few easily understood sentences.

Since 1954, and under three presidential administrations, the United States objective has been and continues to be the establishment of peace and stability in South Vietnam. This includes the right of the South Vietnamese people to choose their own government, to live their lives in the way they prefer, and to advance toward economic prosperity and social improvement.

But before this goal can be reached, it is first necessary to bring an end to the external aggression, directed by Hanoi and supported by Peking, which seeks to unify North and South Vietnam into a single Communist-ruled state.

To supplement this brief statement of what the United States seeks, it is important to mention some of the things it does not seek. We in the United States are not seeking a permanent foothold on the continent of Asia. We want no bases, no alliances, no sphere of special economic advantages. From the beginning, we have intended to withdraw our forces from Vietnam as soon as they are no longer needed. We do not seek to widen the war but merely to bring the aggression against South Vietnam to an end.

If other reasons are needed for the course of action which the United States is pursuing in South Vietnam, it should be sufficient to cite the international consequences of a Communist victory there.

America's support of the struggle for freedom now being waged in distant Vietnam, therefore, also opposes and challenges a so-called "war of national liberation," the form of aggression which the Communists in Hanoi, Peking and Moscow have all proclaimed as the favored technique of the future for the expansion of militant communism.

The term "war of national liberation" is merely Communist jargon for the use of terrorism and guerrilla warfare to subvert a non-Communist government while disguising the aggression as a civil revolt.

This Communist technique is now on trial in South Vietnam.

The importance of the test is thoroughly recognized by the Communist leaders as well as by the governments of the United States, South Vietnam and other free world countries.

General Giap, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of North Vietnam, has said: "South Vietnam is the model of the national liberation movement of our time. If the special warfare which the American imperialists are testing in South Vietnam is overcome, then it can be defeated anywhere in the world."

The United States recognizes and accepts this challenge to the safety of all developing countries of the world. The United States is fully aware of the importance of the stake for South Vietnam and for many other emerging countries living in the shadow of the threat of a "war of liberation."

President Eisenhower said in 1959: "Strategically, South Vietnam's capture by the Communists would bring their power several hundred miles into the hitherto free region. The remaining countries of Southeast Asia would be menaced by a great flanking movement. The loss of South Vietnam would set in motion a crumbling process which could as it progressed have grave consequences for us and for freedom."

More recently, a joint resolution of the United States Congress, passed by a vote of 502 to 2 in August, 1964, stated: "The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia."

Thus, it is clear that the attainment of the U. S. national objective -- the independence of South Vietnam and its existence as a viable state -- is required not only as a matter of justice to a small country struggling to be free but also as a protection to other areas certain to be attacked if Hanoi succeeds in Vietnam. The importance of the

issue thus transcends the numbers of the forces presently engaged, the size of the territory involved and the resources immediately committed.

Attainment of the American objective of an independent South Vietnam requires a cessation of the continuous infiltration of men and materiel from North Vietnam into South Vietnam and the continued direction of the war from Hanoi. It will also require an eventual dissolution of the extensive guerrilla apparatus which has been clandestinely installed and progressively expanded throughout South Vietnam.

There is nothing in this definition of requirements, however, which in itself requires an unconditional surrender of the Communist forces or the destruction of the Communist state of North Vietnam.

A vital and continuing component of American policy is the clear indication of readiness to discuss a peaceful settlement in South Vietnam with any government sincerely interested in pursuing peace.

Leaders of the United States have stated this readiness over and over again while patiently awaiting a response from the Communist side. It should be clear to friends and adversaries alike that America wants peace -- a peace that is consistent with the basic objective of a free and independent South Vietnam living under a government chosen by its own people.

Meanwhile, in the absence of any indication of interest in a peaceful settlement, Hanoi's leadership will continue to be faced with a formidable dilemma -- whether to change their behavior and forego the

attempt to conquer South Vietnam or, alternatively, to accept an increasing cost to their country from air attacks. The North Vietnamese leadership is also faced with the deeply disturbing probability of eventually becoming a satellite of Communist China.

It is of the utmost importance that everything possible be done to convince Hanoi and the Communist leadership in general that they have no chance of a military or political success in South Vietnam.

The course that has been followed by those engaged in the defense of South Vietnam seems a sound one both from a military and a political point of view.

As the ancient Greek historian Polybius said: "It is not the object of war to annihilate those who have given provocation for it, but to cause them to mend their ways."

Sooner or later, it is to be hoped, the leadership in Hanoi will become convinced that they have no choice but to mend their ways.

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