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OUR OBJECTIVES IN VIETNAM AND OUR INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY: ARE THEY CONSISTENT?

A Draft Speech Prepared According to the Instructions of
The Honorable Robert Dole

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OUR OBJECTIVES IN VIETNAM AND OUR
INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY: ARE THEY CONSISTENT?

Facing our nation today is a critical situation in Vietnam. The United States has once again been drawn into a military conflict and has assumed the role of gatekeeper of freedom--not by choice so much as because there is no other nation in the world with the capabilities to perform that role.

We, veterans, have known the ~~horrendous~~ ravages of war, but we have also known that particular momentary glory which not all men have an opportunity to experience, that personal glory which a man knows when he has been confronted by the enemy threat and has risen to the occasion with full personal commitment. The United States now has a commitment in Vietnam, which it must fulfill and will fulfill in order to preserve its dignity as a nation.

What is this commitment, and why are we involved in Vietnam? Our policy objectives with regard to South Vietnam have been reiterated many times: 1) To contain the expansion of communism within its present borders; 2) to strengthen the viability of South Vietnam and to guarantee its right of sovereignty, free from external aggression and interference.

We are fully committed to these stated policy objectives because of the strategic importance of South Vietnam to the United States today. The question is not that of the strategic location of a small nation halfway across the world--although it is strategically

located in the sense that if it were to fall behind the bamboo curtain (Red Chinese control) or perhaps, behind the iron curtain, Laos, Cambodia, and even Thailand might well topple after it. More vital is the fact that the United States could not afford an extension of the Communist stranglehold nor a growing doubt of American ability to lead and protect the free world. Smaller, non-aligned nations throughout the world might cease to believe in American assurances of protection and through fear and the growing conviction, as one nation followed another, that communism is the wave of the future, might follow suit, losing their will to resist.

None of our allies could alone withstand a major Communist onslaught. The borders of the free world might shrink closer and ever closer to those of the United States. We would indeed then be "Fortress America," but perhaps with inadequate strength to fortify that fortress. With the intercontinental ballistic missiles and the rapidly advancing technology of our present world, no nation is in reality further from our borders than is Cuba. Communist aggression against and infiltration into any small nation of the world should not be considered any less a threat to our national security than against those in close proximity to our nation.

Having briefly examined our policy objectives and the importance of the Vietnam situation, I would like to review the history of our involvement in Vietnam.

At the time of the Geneva Accords of 1954 when Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel into two zones, Washington officials were already foreseeing possible Communist aggression from the north into South Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh having established a Communist regime in North Vietnam. The United States, therefore, agreed to extend economic and military aid to South Vietnam. In addition, we initiated the establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization--a security alliance for the mutual aid of the signatories in case of armed aggression against any single member. This was primarily established for the other small nations of the area, Vietnam being prohibited by the Geneva Accords of 1954 from joining any such alliance.

From 1954 to 1960, the United States military personnel in South Vietnam amounted to a few hundred men acting in the capacity of a military assistance advisory group. It was then, in 1960, that the Ngo Dinh Diem government was besieged both by internal conflict and by increased activity of the Viet Cong.

By December 1961, Diem wrote to President Kennedy, "Vietnam is not a great power and the forces of international Communism now arrayed against us are more than we can meet with the resources at hand." The United States response to this plea for help was to greatly increase the level of our assistance to South Vietnam.

We are all aware of the events of the past few years--the overthrow of the Diem government, the Tonkin Gulf incident, the air strikes north

of the 17th parallel--the increasing involvement of the United States in order to revitalize the South Vietnam government and military forces and "to put the brakes on" the ever-increasing momentum of Viet Cong strength and victories.

In order to thwart the Communist goals in South Vietnam, we have decisively increased our military strength in Vietnam. At the beginning of this year the number of American military men in Vietnam was around 22,000. The latest estimates of American military personnel there reach 144,784 with a contemplated increase to 225,000 in the near future. The casualty figures are saddening. Since January 1, 1961, ^{nearly 1000} ~~800~~ American boys in an undeclared war and under peacetime draft conditions have given their lives in fulfillment of the American commitment in Vietnam. Four thousand, two hundred and fifty nine have been wounded. In this year alone, as of October 11, ^{nearly 4,000} 551 have died and ~~2,225~~ have been wounded. ~~X~~

In addition to increasing our military forces in Vietnam, we have been backing this military personnel and reinforcing the South Vietnamese struggle for freedom with the fruits of our technological advances. Adapting our military capabilities to the unique type of warfare taking place in Vietnam, we are now using "flying cranes"-- huge helicopters which can lift bulldozers to the top of a mountain to construct helicopter landing places. I was most impressed by a television news shot I saw the other night, which you may have seen also, of a special net which can be dropped on the ~~top~~ of trees in

a jungle on which a helicopter can land. Wounded men are then elevated in a cage-like apparatus to the net-perched helicopters to be taken to hospitals.

In making the air strikes on supply routes north of the 17th parallel, we have gone beyond the strategic measures taken in the Korean Conflict. If this past year has not convinced the Hanoi leaders and the Communist overlords in Peiping and Moscow that the United States is determined to fulfill its commitment in South Vietnam, then I say, "they ain't seen nothin' yet!"

However, there is one point on which I am in deep disagreement with our present foreign policy relative to Vietnam. It has become a matter of grave concern to me and to many of my colleagues in the House and in the Senate that although the Administration's policy in Vietnam has been accelerated and rendered more effective in this past year, the Administration has simultaneously suggested increased trade with Russia. The fulfillment of our commitment in Vietnam is rendered much less convincing in my opinion by such talk of increasing trade with Russia and other Communist-bloc countries. Most of the attention in these recent proposals has been focused on the sale of wheat and other agricultural commodities to Russia. May I point out that although it is not definitely known or officially acknowledged, there is suspicion expressed in certain news sources that Russia may be transshipping wheat sold to the Soviets by other

nations to both Cuba and North Vietnam. If this is transpiring, then it would be feasible that American wheat could be transshipped to North Vietnam by the Russians as well. It is unthinkable that we should indirectly feed the very men pushing the button, pulling the trigger--that results in the death of American boys. It is inconsistent "to fight Communism with the one hand and to feed it with the other."

Let me give you some of the numerous reasons why such sales to Russia would be detrimental to our national interest.

Many objections were raised when the question of wheat sales to Russia first came up. First of all, the competition between the Communist system and the American system according to the Communists is primarily based upon the difference between our economies. At a time when the Communist system is obviously deficient in meeting the agricultural needs of the Russian people, why should we take the Soviet leaders off the hook by making available to them at a price lower than that on the American market the basic agricultural product, wheat?

It is generally accepted among economists that that economy is most efficient which concentrates manpower and materials on the products which it is best equipped to produce, exporting those products and buying from other nations those products which they can more economically produce. If by selling wheat and other

agricultural products to Russia we enable the Soviets to divert manpower and materials from agricultural production to industrial production, we are in effect contributing to their military preparedness. It stands to reason that in a planned economy such as the Soviets' manpower hours not used in agricultural production can be added to the manpower hours which go into industrial and defense production.

Under present conditions private American firms can sell wheat to Russia with the provision that half of that wheat must be transported on American-flag vessels. Trade with Russia has not increased to the extent expected since the misguided liberalization of trade by the American government, because of the higher American shipping costs and presumably because the Russians do not relish the appearance of American ships in their ports which could be construed both by bloc countries and the other nations of the world as meaning they had to turn to the United States for products needed by their economy. Our own unions are refusing to load grain on ships unless half of it goes on American ships, which is in compliance with this 50-percent restriction. In my opinion this 50-percent restriction itself should have never been approved and no trade should have been permitted.

When the issue of the sale of wheat to Russia was first being warmly debated and discussed in Congress, some speakers in opposition

referred to the Agricultural Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-128--section 2(c), in which is stated that it is: "the policy of the Congress to expand foreign trade ... and in no manner .. to make available any subsidized agricultural commodity to any nation other than friendly nations."

Russia can in no imaginable way be categorized as friendly. The Attorney General, however, issued an opinion that the above section of that law was not legislative in nature, but rather an expression of the consensus of Congress. Then, I say, the Administration has in effect ignored the voice of the Congress--the will of the people!

One of the major arguments for trade with Russia and the bloc nations, particularly under President Kennedy's "Strategy for Peace," is that modification of the Communist system might be induced through closer contact between the United States and the Soviet Union--that accommodation with regard to crisis areas might become more feasible in an atmosphere of more amicable relations. Let me draw upon an example from the Berlin situation in order to disprove this argument. The incident which mushroomed into an American/Soviet crisis was the convoy confrontation in late 1963, which involved the issue of the right of the Soviets to ask American military personnel to dismount from vehicles in order to be counted. The major confrontation over the dismounting occurred on October 10, 1963, when the Russians detained an United States Army convoy first fourteen hours at the Marienborn checkpoint and then around thirty-three hours at the Bablesburg checkpoint just outside West Berlin.

It was just one day before this confrontation that President Kennedy had approved the sale of wheat to Russia. In fact, the lull before this particular storm was one of such improved Soviet/American relations that it has even been designated as the "era of good feeling," when referred to in retrospect. In addition to wheat sales being approved, the test ban treaty had just recently been signed and just two weeks prior to this confrontation President Kennedy had proposed that the Soviet Union and the United States combine space efforts toward a joint shot to the moon. Obviously Western initiative in improving East-West relations does not put the Soviet Union in a spirit of accommodation.

To me, the major issue at stake is not the economic or political consequences of the sale of agricultural commodities to the Soviet Union, but rather the moral issue of trading with Russia at all while she is aiding our enemy in Vietnam. According to official sources, the Soviet Union has thus far only extended diplomatic, political and propaganda aid to North Vietnam. However, the American press has indicated that the Soviet-made surface-to-air missile sites known to be located near Hanoi were installed by Soviet technicians. In addition, the Viet Cong is believed to be in possession of at least one-half dozen Soviet twin-jet Ilyushin bombers. These missiles and bombers may have been directly provided to the Viet Cong by the Soviet Union or indirectly through the

Chinese Communists, having been given them by the Soviets prior to the Sino-Soviet split.

In my own mind, I am convinced by the many news sources I have read that the Soviet Union has given direct military assistance to North Vietnam.

A great deal is at stake in Vietnam, as I hope I have conveyed to you. We are deeply committed and involved in this conflict, and I hope the serious discrepancy of our present foreign policy-- the discrepancy between fighting communism and feeding Communists-- will soon be remedied.

We cannot continue to compromise the integrity of our nation. We must recognize this discrepancy and rectify it, so that our men on the battlefield will clearly have our full support.