



# Affirmative Alternative in Vietnam

by SENATOR GEORGE S. McGOVERN

TO ANYONE taking a hard-headed, realistic look at the situation in South Vietnam it is somewhat puzzling that the terms "hard line" and "soft line" seem to be reversed when discussing that nation on the other side of the world. Where Vietnam is concerned, those who discount the present and offer only hopes for the future are considered "hard" whereas those who look at the actual situation and point to the current map of Communist-controlled areas of Vietnam are accused of following a "soft line."

It is both hard—in the sense of being difficult—and hard-headed—in the sense of being realistic—to admit honestly to ourselves what the facts are.

We are not winning in South Vietnam. We are backing a government there that is incapable either of winning a military struggle or governing its people. We are fighting a determined army of guerrillas that seems to enjoy the cooperation of the people in the countryside and that grows stronger in the face of foreign intervention, be it Japanese, French, or American. In this circumstance, the proposal to expand the American military involvement would be an act of folly designed in the end to create a larger, more inglorious debacle.

For nearly a quarter of a century, Southeast Asia has been torn by military and political conflict. First, there was the Japanese invasion of World War II. Then came nearly a decade of struggle with the French culminating in the collapse of the French army at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The French lost the cream of their army in an unsuccessful effort to reestablish

French control over Indo-China. U.S. aid totaling \$2 billion financed eighty per cent of the French war effort.

Then came the gradually deepening American involvement in Southeast Asia in the ten years after 1954. American expenditures in Vietnam, in addition to \$2 billion in aid to the French, now approach \$4 billion, and 248 Americans have died trying to counsel and assist the Vietnamese forces.

Yet we are further away from victory over the guerrilla forces in Vietnam today than we were a decade ago. The recent confrontation of the Vietcong Communist guerrillas and the South Vietnamese army at Bin Ghia was a painful, dramatic demonstration that the struggle is going badly for our side. Government prestige was hurt seriously in that battle. Communist stock has gone up. Concerned Americans are asking, "What has gone wrong?" and it seems a fair question.

In my judgment, the first answer is that South Vietnam is not basically a military problem but a political one. Neither the Diem regime nor its successors has won the political loyalty and active support of the people of South Vietnam, especially those who live outside town and city limits.

There are rarely military answers to political dilemmas of this nature. Military proposals in South Vietnam, whether for special forces, strategic hamlets, insurgency programs, or more

---

GEORGE S. McGOVERN, U.S. Senator from South Dakota, was the first director of the Food for Peace program. He wrote the recently published book, "War Against Want."

---

suitably-designed airplanes are not likely to overcome the political weaknesses of the existing South Vietnamese government. Even the sophisticated weapons of the nuclear age cannot overrule the basic precepts of successful government.

This is a political problem, and it is a South Vietnamese problem. The United States can accomplish much through foreign aid and military support, but we cannot create strong, effective, and popular national leadership where that leadership either does not exist or does not exert itself. That is not only expensive and impractical, it is just plain impossible.

For nine years the United States helped the Diem government at a cost of \$3 billion. Diem's rule was marked by the achievement of some measure of economic stability, but principally by an increasing political disaffection. That disaffection was encouraged by North Vietnam, but basically Diem's own arbitrary rule made possible Vietcong gains. The very fact that Vietcong strength was and still is greatest in the Mekong Delta and around Saigon—more than a thousand miles away from North Vietnam—indicates that there is basic popular support for the guerrillas among the South Vietnamese peasants.



It is not isolationism, either of the old variety or the new, to recognize that United States advisers, however able, are simply no substitute for a competent and popular indigenous government. It is not idealism either; it is simply realism. Only the Vietnamese themselves can provide the leaders and the sustained support to defeat the Vietcong. The United States can at most only hold a finger in the dike until the South Vietnamese find themselves. Therefore, even at this eleventh hour, when there is mounting pressure to send more U.S. troops to South Vietnam and enlarge the conflict, we must be hard-headed realists.

Americans in Asia are basically aliens, of a different race, religion, and culture. Moreover, the Vietnamese are nationalistic and race-conscious in their outlook. As an on-the-scene observer pointed out, "If you imagine a

Chinese sheriff speaking Cantonese and trying to keep order in Tombstone, Arizona, in its heyday, you will begin to understand the problem."

More American troops, in addition to the 25,000 now in South Vietnam, would not necessarily mean more success, because victory in the Vietnam countryside depends on accurate intelligence information, peasant support, and quick action by Vietnamese troops. These factors cannot be controlled by Americans. They must depend on the South Vietnamese, and we must recognize that fact.

The more Americans are brought in to do what should be the responsibility of the Vietnamese government, the greater will be the tendency of the Vietnamese government to rely on United States advisers rather than on able Vietnamese; the greater will be the prestige of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese for holding at bay not merely their own countrymen but also the gathered might of the United States; and, finally, the greater will be the grassroots reaction against Americans. In theory, our government has recognized that the South Vietnamese bear primary responsibility for the war and civilian policies. In practice, Americans have assumed roles of increasing influence and leadership with slight military gains but disturbing deterioration on the local political level.

I for one am very much opposed to the policy, now gaining support in Washington, of extending the war to the North. I am disturbed by the recent reports of American air strikes in Laos and North Vietnam.

Attacks on North Vietnam will not seriously weaken guerrilla fighters a thousand miles away, fighters who depend for eighty per cent of their weapons on captured United States equipment and for food on a sympathetic local peasantry. The principal foe is not the limited industrial capacity of North Vietnam, not the North Vietnamese who have remained at home, nor even their training camps and trails. It is the 30,000 individual guerrilla fighters from North and South who have no trouble finding sanctuary within South Vietnam or the neighboring states of Laos and Cambodia. Bombing North Vietnam is not calculated to reduce their determination, but undoubtedly it would antagonize

many other Asians and could easily lead to increased Communist Chinese involvement in the whole Indo-Chinese peninsula.

The only viable policy for the United States in Vietnam is negotiation and a political settlement. Until such time as negotiation is possible and a settlement can be devised which does not surrender South Vietnam to Communism, the United States would doubtless not find it feasible to withdraw. But the aim of our current policy must be seen as a prelude to diplomatic settlement and not an occasion for war against North Vietnam, or, even worse, Communist China.

There are many different ways to approach such a diplomatic settlement. Last August, I suggested we might take up French President Charles de Gaulle's proposal for an international conference, including the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, China, Malaya, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Canada, Poland, India, and North and South Vietnam. More recently, Walter Lippmann raised the possibility of a Congress of Asia. The groundwork for any such gathering would have to be carefully laid and therefore, for the present, the first step should probably be informal approaches to the interested nations and preliminary private talks.

What are the objectives or terms on which we might be willing to put an



Pratt in The Sacramento Bee

**"The Problem, Sam, Is to Keep Our Heads Above Water"**

end to fighting in South Vietnam? If military victory is impossible—as I believe it is—we can settle only on the kind of terms that would be generally acceptable to North Vietnam. Yet, equally clearly, we cannot simply walk out and permit the Vietcong to march into Saigon.



The minimum terms which might be acceptable on both sides would probably include:

¶ Closer association or confederation between North and South Vietnam, not under a unitary Communist government from the North, but with local autonomy for the South as well as the North.

¶ Renewed trade and rail links between North and South Vietnam, which admittedly would be most useful to the North where there is a pressing need for the food grown in the South.

¶ Cooperative planning to benefit North and South Vietnam from the Mekong River development. For the South, it would mean primarily flood control. For the North, now outside the Mekong watershed, it could mean hydroelectric power for industry.

¶ Neutralization of North and South Vietnam, including guarantees that foreign troops and military advisers would gradually be eliminated. Although this is a key point, it would not by any means eliminate all United States military forces from Asia nor would it bar AID and other civilian advisers. At the same time it would represent some protection to North Vietnam from the North as well as the South.

¶ Establishment of a United Nations presence or unit in Southeast Asia with the right to enter every country, to guarantee national borders, to offer protection against external aggression, and, insofar as possible, to insure fair treatment of tribal and other minorities.

Would such terms be acceptable to North Vietnam? Why should Ho Chi Minh settle for even half a loaf if he sees the prospect for ultimate victory

or thinks the United States might soon be ready to pull out altogether?

Actually, North Vietnam cannot benefit, any more than South Vietnam, from a prolonged conflict; both have much to fear from any spread of the war, even subversion or infiltration. The North Vietnamese know what happened to the people and resources of North Korea during that war.

Moreover, although Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam is closely allied to Communist China, the Vietnamese have for centuries regarded the Chinese with suspicion. Obviously, Peking's desire to exert hegemony over Indo-China runs directly contrary to all Vietnamese ambitions. Escalation of the war by the United States would make North Vietnam increasingly dependent on China and strengthen, not Ho Chi Minh's influence, but, rather, Mao Tse-tung's. In fact, apart from China, no nation has anything to gain from a long drawn out struggle in Vietnam. Only China gains from continuing confusion and weakness in Vietnam. Only China gains, in time and resources so that it will be better able at some future time to exert its influence in Southeast Asia.

France, with considerable property in North and South Vietnam, is eager for peace, putting economic stability ahead of almost any political denouement. Great Britain, which has a conflict between Malaysia and Indonesia, has never really endorsed United States' policy in South Vietnam.

Even the Soviet Union can be expected to give quiet support to policies designed to prevent expansion of the fighting and to reduce Peking's influence in Southeast Asia. In fact, new links between Moscow and Hanoi are being forged right now, both economic and diplomatic. Moscow's influence could well be thrown, as it was in 1954, toward a negotiated settlement in Southeast Asia.

The United States certainly is not anxious for broader commitments on the Asian mainland, but the key element in U.S. thinking is whether a negotiated settlement would merely pave the way for a Communist takeover in South Vietnam or elsewhere. To that question there can be no simple answer, for it would depend on the abilities of the South Vietnamese to form a government with popular support

and with the ability to cooperate in some fields with the North without losing its own independence. To be realistic any settlement in the foreseeable future will have to replace the present hostility between North and South with greater economic cooperation and more political acceptance. The policies and directions that Vietnam takes will de-

pend on the character of the leadership from Saigon as well as Hanoi. The United States can help that leadership in a number of ways, but in this nationalistic era, the United States cannot offer American leadership or American soldiers as a substitute for popular and effective government from Saigon.



## The Morals of Congress

by HALE MONTGOMERY

**D**ISCLOSURES of Congressional favors for sale and testimony concerning political payoffs have raised serious suspicions about the moral climate in the nation's highest legislative body. The sorry saga of the Bobby Baker case, and other evidence of improprieties by some members of Congress, have brought increased pressure for reform on Capitol Hill before the country is led from the New Frontier into the Great Society.

One sign of the voters' poor opinion of Congressional integrity was revealed by a Louis Harris poll last spring. Of those interviewed, fifty per cent said they felt members of Congress tended to "represent special interests;" thirty per cent felt members "represent public interests;" and twenty per cent were "not sure."

This public cynicism about the moral and ethical standards of Congress has not gone unnoticed by members who must face the voters at re-election time. It has prompted a number of reform proposals keyed to the maxim that Americans must have faith and respect in those who govern them if democracy is to be effective.

One reform most frequently advo-

cated to avoid conflicts of interest is a system of financial disclosure. Under it, members of Congress would be required to reveal their personal finances to the public. Proponents concede it is not a cure-all, but they argue that it would be a powerful inducement for members to hew to the straight path, and help to promote integrity in legislative practices. The proposal would not demand that members divest themselves of financial interests, but only that they make the facts known.

Congress is notoriously bashful about reforming itself, but it was this abrasive issue that created angry moments last year in the democratic processes of that unique and prideful citadel of power, the U.S. Senate. Members sensed that the citizens back home were restless; that the moral standards of the "greatest deliberative body on earth" had come under sharp suspicion because of the revelations involving the business capers of one of the Senate's own employees, Robert G. (Bobby) Baker.

In 1942, Bobby Baker entered the Senate sanctum at the age of fourteen as a knickers-clad page boy. Twenty-one years later, he resigned under fire his \$19,600-a-year post as secretary to the Senate Democrats. When he left, he was the intimate of the influen-

---

HALE MONTGOMERY covers developments on Capitol Hill for United Press International.

---