

Remarks by

Everett McKinley Dirksen
Senate Minority Leader

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Mr. President: It was a strange experience to listen to the senior Senator from Idaho and the junior Senator from South Dakota in this chamber yesterday.

I confess that I listened with mixed emotions.

I was confused because I thought, as I listened, that the calendar -- showing 1965 -- was in error. For as I heard their high hopes of doing business with the cruel and evil aggressors it seemed that we must be back in 1954. That was the year of the hopeful, but alas, unrealistic negotiations with the Communists for the peaceful division of North and South Vietnam.

Or perhaps we were back in 1962 when a peaceful settlement was once again sought -- this time in Laos -- with the Red aggressors. We negotiated. We acted in good faith. The Communists took our good faith for weakness, and free men ever since have been paying the price in blood for our naivete.

But then I realized it was February 17 of 1965. As I translated, as best I could, the Senators' words into thoughts, I realized that our nation was being urged to conduct another experiment to determine if the Communists have stopped lying and will now, like good men, keep their promises.

You know, and I know, that the Communists won't do any such thing!

I say to my distinguished colleagues who are advocating negotiation: Before you try to entice free men back into the Red bear trap of negotiation, tell the aggressors to show some evidence of good faith. This they can do by simply complying with their Geneva agreements of 1954 and 1962.

But, again, you and I know that the Communists won't do this. They'd have to give up the dividends of their deceit. They want more of those kinds of profits. They want them the same way -- by negotiation.

Another round of negotiations like 1954 and 1962 and we'll find ourselves negotiated right out of Asia and right into a really big war.

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If we don't man the ramparts of freedom on our outer defense line from Korea to South Vietnam, we'll inevitably be facing the enemy on the inner line from Alaska to Hawaii.

And, I was sad, too, as I listened to their strategic appraisal of our position in Southeast Asia. They spoke at different times, but it was more like a chorus -- a chorus of despair sung to the tune of a dirge of defeat. I was truly sad to hear, in this chamber, which echoes with the courageous words of brave men now gone, the opinion that we can't win, that in effect we must break our word to the South Vietnamese. Who, then, Mr. President, will ever again accept our word?

All this is nothing but an unnecessary confession of defeat. However such proposals for negotiation under pressure may be explained or camouflaged by intricate rationals, it is simply a proposal to run up the white flag before the world, and start running away from Communism. Of course, we'll eventually have no more room to run.

I was also glad when I heard those speeches of despair yesterday in this chamber. I was glad that they were made here -- now -- at this time -- that they weren't made to the freezing Continentals at Valley Forge -- to John Paul Jones on the leaky Bon Homme Richard -- to our embattled GI's at Bastogne -- or to our Marines at the Chosen Reservoir.

I suspect that the urgings of the you-can't-win-exponents would have been viewed less tolerantly then than now.

And now, Mr. President, I would like to address my remarks to a few of the strategic conceptions expressed in the course of yesterday's debate.

In the course of his remarks the Senator from South Dakota told this Senate that Japan, the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Australia, and New Zealand, plus -- and I quote: "plus the Russians and our European allies have an interest in joining with us to stabilize Southeast Asia..."

This is really adding fable to myth. Russia! Doesn't the Senator know of Mr. Kosygin and his recent travels; his conferences with Mao in Peking; his consultations in North Korea; his stay in Hanoi; his promises of military assistance to the North Vietnamese aggressors; the delivery, already, of some of those weapons; his arrogant denunciations of the United States; and Russia's demands for our withdrawal from Southeast Asia?

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Anyone who believes that the Kremlin will join with us to bring peace and freedom to Southeast Asia can also, it appears, believe that Communists don't lie.

The senior Senator from Idaho has, also, made some interesting but puzzling statements. For instance, he proposes an "international agreement for the neutralization of the whole region that used to be French Indo-China." Now, if that's what he wants there's no need for new negotiations. All that's needed is for the Communist aggressors to back up and live up to their agreements of 1954 and 1962.

The only thing to negotiate in a new conference would be how much the Reds could keep of what they've gained by breaking their previous agreements. And that won't settle anything!

His suggestion that the U.S. pledge "our armed might" in defense of Asian governments against Chinese attack raises an interesting point. Would such a pledge apply only to what the Senator terms "overt" attacks? If so, it's meaningless in view of the Communist preference for subversive "wars of liberation." But, if it does include indirect and subversive aggression, then the Senator is really proposing that we start moving not only into South Vietnam, but also into Thailand because Red China has called for the overthrow of that pro-American government and has already begun a propaganda, subversion and guerrilla campaign against the Thais. And Laos, too, is under Red attack. And to the south, Malaysia is fighting off Sukarno, who is openly supported by Peking and Moscow.

Thus, if it is proposed that we pledge to defend our friends in Southeast Asia against aggression by subversion and infiltration -- which are the typical Communist tactics -- then, according to the Senator, we should be moving U.S. forces into most of Southeast Asia right now. But, at the same time, the Senator is proposing we negotiate ourselves out of South Vietnam.

This is, it seems, a strategy of moving in all directions at the same time. It might confuse the enemy, but it would certainly confuse everyone on our side from Joint Chiefs of Staff to squad leader.

In all seriousness, Mr. President, there are some fundamentals that have been sidestepped in all this impassioned pleading for us to default on our promise to South Vietnam.

There is some vague idea that what's going on in South Vietnam can be neatly separated from the rest of the Communist aggression
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throughout the vast Southeast Asian peninsula. This is strategic nonsense. South Vietnam's struggle against Communism is inseparably linked with the other Communist-caused conflicts in the area.

If we let South Vietnam go, another giant step in the march of Communism will be taken, and the remaining nations of the Southeast Asian peninsula will be in ever-deepening danger.

Without South Vietnam where do we make a stand? In Thailand? Or do we defend Singapore? Would we let that great base, controlling the water corridor between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, fall to Communist aggression?

To negotiate in South Vietnam while Communist aggression is spreading throughout the entire Southeast Asian peninsula is like a man trying to paint his front porch while his house is on fire.

Mr. President, our nation has taken a stand in South Vietnam. Three Presidents have faithfully stood by that pledge. It is not a partisan political issue. It is one of principle, of our good faith, and one, most certainly, of our own national security.

As I hear these claims that we can't win, that we've got to negotiate -- make a deal so we can get out of South Vietnam -- I am grieved, but not surprised. This isn't the first time our spirit has been tested in crisis.

Thomas Paine said it well, in 1776 --

"These are times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."