

-A CAPSULE STORY OF VIET NAM-

You've heard so much about the situation in Viet Nam either on the front page of the newspaper or by TV or radio or by the news magazines that I suppose you get a little bewildered like I do and what's more you somehow depart from the original causes and sources and begin to wonder a little what it's all about. I thought, therefore, that it might be a capital idea to try to capsule this Viet Nam picture as far as I could so as to just compress it in a junk and you would have the whole story.

Now, I think where we have to start is to orient ourselves with respect to Viet Nam and what it is. We use these terms loosely at times and so interchangeably that perhaps we miss the background that ought to go with it. Now, we use the word Viet Nam that is actually two words. The word Viet means a people--the Viet people or it would be like saying the Brazilians or the Germans or the Egyptians or the Japanese. So when you talk about the Viets that is a people and they lived in China a thousand years ago. I presume its probably nine hundred years ago that they migrated out of this center of China and went to what is known as Indo-China--that long strip that extends up and down the south side of the China Sea and Tonkin Bay or Gulf. Actually, the countries all over in Korea both north and south are Viet Nam, if we can use that term, is about a thousand miles long and, the northern section, better known as the Viet Minh, has a common border with Red China of about four hundred and fifty miles. Now, that's where the Viet people settled let us say nine hundred years ago.

But, when they got there they were subjugated all over again by the Chinese but there came a time after a good many hundreds of years of subjugation as a vassal state that they did rebut and rebuff the articles of Kuble Khan who is one of the old emperors and at the head of a Mongol horde and, for a time, at least they were the masters of their own destiny. But, that didn't last too long because it was probably seven hundred years ago that both the French and the Portuguese began to move into that area and took over a number of provinces and subsequently France established herself as a sort of a protectorate not only over Indo-China (that's the whole of the country both North and South) but over the country of Cambodia and the little country of Laos as well. That came about the last year of the Civil War and the French were there for roughly ninety years, I suppose, along with the Portuguese. But, at long last, the Portuguese were squeezed out and then in 1940, when World War II came on, the Japanese moved in and they took over the country and occupied it. With the coming of VJ Day that was the end of it and France wanted to move back in. But, she discovered that the Viet Minh or the Communist element had so entrenched itself in the Northern part of Indo-China that a conflict ensued right like now. So, first to nail down what the Viet Nam is, that is South, the South Viet country. In other words Viet People, Southern part of the country, and that is Viet Nam proper. Now, the Northern part since its separated at the seventeenth parallel is referred to sometimes as North Viet Nam but that's not an accurate term. It's really the Viet Minh. Now, after the Japs moved out and the French

and the Viet people came to blows in the Northern part, that raged along for I guess about nine years. I was in Saigon, the Capital of Viet Nam, and used to watch the French soldiers come off of the vessels that came right up off of the river, the Saigon river. In fact, they would debarr within a block of the principal hotel, the Majestic Hotel, in Saigon. Well, it ensued, I presume, for as much as nine years as I recall and they decimated the country, ravaged it. But, at long last, came the battle of what was known as Dien Bien Phu--that was way up in the Northern section of Indo-China. I remember that in part, too, because my first visit over there was prior to the time that the Bastian of Dien Bien Phu fell. I was up in Hanoi and Haiphong--Haiphong had an airstrip so I could fly in there and later on fly down to Saigon. But, I used to watch the French planes, they were really our Navy planes, that we had turned over to France, going off on these morning and afternoon sorties dropping their bombs and I presume they got the idea that that's all it took against what seemed like primitive people. But, at long last Dien Bien Phu fell and that was the end of the French. And, thereafter, there had to be a conference at Geneva in Switzerland in order to determine what to do. Now, we sat in on that conference at Geneva; we were not signatories, meaning we didn't sign any treaty or a convention. But, we did sit in and we agreed, more or less, that we would try to help that cause and protect the independence of the people in the south part of Indo-China, namely, Viet Nam. But, our of the Geneva accord, came virtual independence for Laos and independence for Cambodia free from a protectorate

and then, as to Indo-China. They divided the country in two at the seventeenth parallel; they just drew a straight line and said south of that was Viet Nam, north of that line is Viet Minh and the two sections of the country are about the same size. Roughly, I suppose, fourteen or fifteen million people in each. Each one got roughly about sixty thousand square miles. I would guess that's about the same territory that you would find in the state of Washington. So, here, then, were two countries and you would think that you would allay all the difficulty; they would behave themselves. Each country would work out its own destiny. But, that isn't the way it worked because in the Northern section, it was given over to Communists and Communism and to the Viet Cong. Now, it's strange--that word Viet Cong isn't sufficiently defined from time to time. It's really a slang word and it means Communist. So, if you read the daily press and see what's going on out there in Asia and you encounter that word Viet Cong, well, what it means in slang is that it is a Communist force and nothing else. So, you see, it doesn't actually speak for a country as such--it's a military force, but it's strictly Communist in character.

Now, they were marauding down in the Southern end of this country way back when the French were there; they were killing off and assassinating local officials like chiefs of police and mayors and others and this has been going on for a long time. That's why you find those pockets of Communists and Communism in Viet Nam, meaning the South Viet area where the Viet people live and that probably adds to the difficulties we have over there at the present time. Now, we said that we would help the Vietnamese people and there are reasons for

it too because they needed all kinds of help. First, they needed economic help. The country had been ravaged by war for so many years and its economy was undone. There was inflation; they had to raise an army. But, you couldn't take a hundred and twenty-five thousand young men, put them in an army and take them out of the productive force of Viet Nam. So we had to shore them up with economic aid; we had to reconstitute their whole money system after the French moved out and we had to send in supplies in order to sustain them and we said we would help and we have helped in that respect. Now, they said they needed military help and they certainly did and they need military help ne. There were no factories over there to manufacture weapons and ammunition--if there was I never saw them. And so, they couldn't fight and they couldn't preserve their freedom without ammunition and guns and so we had to supply equipment. They needed also our stabilizing political hand. Why imagine a country were they had nobody trained to take over the reins of government. The only people the French trained were doctors and mainly because of the incidents of tropical diseases like elephantiasis where legs and arms will swell up like that or in other broad incidents over there. So, that's how we got there; that's how Viet Nam got into this difficulty; that's why we responded with help on the economic, military, and political front and then we were ready for negotiation at any time. Within reason it had to come from them of course. But, Britain and the Soviet Union explored this; the United Nations explored it as late as April of this year; this fellow Gordon Walker who is in the

British State Department went over there; the Chinese and the Viet Minh wouldn't even see him so nothing happened. India made a proposition for peace and that fell by the wayside and was absolutely fruitless. There is a Canadian member on the International Control Commission and he came with a proposition which I think was related to us by the Dominion government but that has fallen by the wayside.

So all along the line we have been ready to listen provided we didn't have to initiate the talks and make it appear that we were being defeated or were retreating or that we had surrendered because we didn't. And so, there is the story of Viet Nam in a capsule and at the moment this show has got to go on unless the world's greatest power is going to have to confess that he was humbled by a little country made up of Communists that we refer to as the Viet Minh under the lead of Ho Chi Minh their Russian trained leader. That's the story.