

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SPEECH

BY

The Rt. Hon. SIR ROBERT MENZIES,
K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P.,

ON

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

[From the "Parliamentary Debates," 19th August 1965]

Sir ROBERT MENZIES (Kooyong—Prime Minister) [8.8].—Mr. Speaker, I must say that I listened with great interest and some pleasure to the remarks of the honorable member for Fremantle (Mr. Beazley) in relation to Malaysia, because I think that this problem requires a cool judgment and a just appreciation of what has been done, and with what he said on that point I find myself in complete agreement. We have hopes—I hope that they are well founded—for a genuine co-operation between Malaysia and the newly independent State of Singapore. We have a friendship for both. We wish them both well, but we do desire above all things that on those matters on which co-operation between them is of great importance they will find it possible to co-operate in the most effective way. I do not desire to say any more tonight about Malaysia although it could lend itself to a good deal of discussion because this debate has concentrated itself around the problem of Vietnam. Here, again, I feel under some little embarrassment because several speeches have been made in the course of this debate which state so effectively the essence of the matter that, coming as I do tonight, I must feel that I am engaging in tedious repetition. But, still, this is a matter of immense controversy. I have been challenged—I do not know why—more than once to state the Government's position. I

thought I had stated it pretty crisply. Therefore, with great respect to my colleague the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. McEwen) who made a brilliant exposition of this matter this afternoon, and others who have spoken, I will just put it in my own way tonight in the hope that I can say something reasonably comprehensive.

The debate began as a debate by the movement of an amendment by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Calwell). The terms of the amendment are before honorable members. I just want to refer to one or two aspects. The amendment reads—

"this House urges the Government—

I think this is what might be called the operative part of it—

to strive for a cease fire now, to be policed by a United Nations peace-keeping force, and for a conference of all parties directly involved, including representatives of both the Government in Saigon and the Vietcong, to seek a settlement which will both end the agony of the Vietnamese people and establish their right to choose their own government.

My friend, the honorable member for Moreton (Mr. Killen) submitted this to a somewhat devastating examination, I thought, this afternoon but I must say something on my own account. The first part of the amendment is taken, of course, from the Prime Minister's Conference. The honorable gentleman must be aware of the

terms of the resolution carried at the Prime Minister's Conference, and the setting up by that conference—a matter to which I shall refer a little later—of a mission designed to ascertain whether there was some basis upon which a conference could be held. To the extent that he adopts that resolution, of which I was one of the promoters, I welcome some bipartisan policy on this vexed matter.

He speaks about the representation of the Vietcong. I do not want to be dogmatic about a matter of this kind because, compared with some other aspects of this problem, it is not the greatest of matters. But I would have thought that there was some difficulty about having representation of the Vietcong in such a conference, if we obtained such a conference, because it would seem to present difficulties of a kind that would be inevitable in the case of guerrillas who always work under cover and are not always susceptible to conference. Such direct representation would not be necessary now, strictly speaking, because what is the Vietcong? It represents the hands which are ordered by the voice of Hanoi. Do not let us forget that. In any conference, if we were lucky enough to get one, what Hanoi said would go with the Vietcong. Make no mistake about this. Therefore, it is with Hanoi, and behind that, with Peking, that an effective conference needs to occur.

Then, finally, the Leader of the Opposition said, I thought rather piously, that the Vietnamese ought to be enabled to establish their right to choose their own government. That is, in one sense, although not in every sense, what this war is about—the right to choose their own government. They will have no right to choose their own government—none whatever—unless the aggressors are defeated, or unless they abandon their activities. I would have thought, that, in famous words, every school boy would know that to be true.

I turn from the terms of the amendment to offer a few observations on some aspects of this matter which have given me great occasion for thought and on which I have arrived, I think, at clear views, and on which I think I ought to state those views. A lot of people in Australia today—at any rate, quite a few who write letters, sign petitions, pass resolutions, or make speeches somewhere or other—have as their theme:

You must negotiate. They have a beautiful antithesis here. You either negotiate or you become involved in military operations. You cannot do both. I have been accused of over-simplification. About that one, all I can say is: "O sancta simplicitas". You either say: "We stand for negotiation", and do nothing more about it, or you say: "We want to negotiate but if the condition of getting to the point of negotiation is to have some fighting, then the fighting must be engaged in". Yet these people keep on writing letters, putting on rather anaemic looking demonstrations outside Parliament House and so on. They forget that negotiations for peace can be usefully engaged in only by the parties to the conflict.

Honorable members do not suppose, do they, that two or three countries which have nothing whatever to do with it are going to have pleasant little negotiations and say: "Now we have settled the argument."? Therefore, the willingness of Hanoi—I use Hanoi to describe the North Vietnamese—to negotiate is essential. Could anybody with his five wits, or even with four, deny that the willingness of Hanoi to negotiate is essential? If Hanoi is not willing, no negotiation can occur.

On 10th March of this year, the Commander-in-Chief of North Vietnam, a very considerable functionary, after demanding unconditional withdrawal of American forces—Hanoi was always putting it up as a condition for negotiation—said the following words which I emphasise—

The problem of the peaceful reunification of Vietnam is the affair of the Vietnamese people.

So far, if I may say so, so good. He then went on—

It will be settled by the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the South Vietnamese Liberation Front.

This is brilliant. It would be settled by the people, meaning the Communists—the parent Communist organisation and the son Communist organisation in South Vietnam. This deserves to go down in history as a classic of impudence, a classic of the denial of justice—the kind of democratic justice to which I would call the attention of my friends on the opposite benches.

Mr. Michael Stewart, not a member of my party, but a distinguished Labour Foreign Minister in Great Britain, has no ambiguities in his mind on this matter. He

made a speech on 1st April, and I think it is worthwhile to recall what he said. His comment was—

The House will notice in that statement—

He referred to the one that I have just mentioned—

not only that North Vietnam is not thinking in terms of conference and negotiation at all but that the affairs of Vietnam are subsequently to be settled exclusively by Communist organisations and that by these principles—

These are Mr. Stewart's words—

no non-Communist in Vietnam would have any chance of taking part in framing the future of his country.

This view, of course, is confirmed by North Vietnam itself. When approached by the 17 unaligned countries, several of whom to my direct knowledge as a result of conferences are heavily disposed in favour of North Vietnam, because they wanted to seek peace, the reply that they received from North Vietnam—I would hate to call it a dusty answer but it was certainly a dirty answer—was that the internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the programme of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, without any foreign interference.

I only need remind the House, because I want to put this fairly comprehensively, that the National Liberation Front is a popular Communist technique nowadays. A National Liberation Front was established in Thailand. In 1960, by order from Hanoi, the National Liberation Front, which is now a subordinate part of the central office operating from Hanoi was established in South Vietnam. Yet, in spite of having received letters—not too many, but some—in spite of having read from occasion to occasion, not too closely, some of the statements made by various people, some of them academic and some of them no doubt intelligent, and in spite of having cast my eye over these matters I have not, from first to last, been able to discover any pressure being put by any of these people on Hanoi. All the pressure has been put on the defending countries like the United States and ourselves whose great desire is to achieve a just peace, protecting the rights of all the people of South Vietnam to self determination without external or internal armed threat and, we would hope, under some form of international guarantee.

By a singular feat of mental gymnastics some vocal people in our own country have worked out some astonishing propositions. I have noted these because I have been on the receiving end of one or two rather abusive remarks by people whose works I had otherwise rather enjoyed. They put up propositions along these lines: "If you believe that Communist armed aggression in and against South Vietnam should be resisted in the common interest, including our own, by arms, then you are the enemy of peace". All honorable members have heard it stated that to us—or is it to me?—"peace" is a dirty word. The basis of the statement is that if you believe in the things that I have just mentioned you are the enemy of peace. But you have your choice. You have your way of escape. If you abandon South Vietnam and do your best to persuade other nations, and in particular the United States, to do likewise, in the result you leave all of South East Asia to its fate and then, believe it or not, you are the friend of peace. This is the new series of propositions which a lot of people, some of whom are well meaning, have been advancing. Clearly such people are prepared to secure peace by surrender or flight. In other words, they want peace at any price.

Suppose the people and the Government of Australia adopted these views. What would be involved? I want to traverse this with some care because I think that our people have a right to understand exactly what is involved. I repeat—what would be involved? In the first place, we would need to repudiate our obligations under S.E.A.T.O. and A.N.Z.U.S. since each of these pacts involves mutuality of obligations. We have not heard much for some time about S.E.A.T.O. and A.N.Z.U.S. It used to be rather a kind of parlour game in this House to argue about S.E.A.T.O. and A.N.Z.U.S. and what they mean. I hope honorable members will forgive me if I remind them and place on record consecutively what they mean. In 1954 we passed an Act of Parliament to ratify the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty. The preamble to the Act was challenged by the then Leader of the Opposition but the challenge was not carried to a vote. The challenge was that we had selected Communism and had not extended the provisions of the Bill to cover other forms of

activity. In any case, the preamble was carried unanimously by both parties in this House with no division being sought. The preamble is in these terms—

Whereas the independence and integrity of the countries and territories of South East Asia and the South West Pacific are threatened by the aggressive policies of international Communism:

And whereas those Communist policies have already shown themselves in Korea, Indo-China and elsewhere by armed aggression, by armed insurrection assisted from without and otherwise:

And whereas those Communist policies represent a common danger to the security of Australia and of the world generally and are a violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations . . .

I have read sufficient of the preamble to the Bill which was passed by this House although, as I have indicated, it was criticised by the then Leader of the Opposition because it should have included a reference to Fascism as well as to Communism. There it is, now part of an Act of this Parliament. Now let me turn to the Treaty. I do not think any honorable member dared to vote against the Treaty to which not only Australia but also New Zealand, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and France were parties. The preamble to the Treaty is as follows—

Intending to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity, so that any potential aggressor will appreciate that the Parties stand together in the area. . . .

Article II of the Treaty, a very important article, states—

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly—

Let the House mark those words "separately and jointly"—

by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and to prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.

Could there have been in anticipation a better description of what is going on in South Vietnam and what, as I will show, the Leader of the Opposition admits is going on in South Vietnam? I come now to Article IV of the Treaty. It reads—

Each Party recognises that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate—

South Vietnam was unanimously so designated—

would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it—

Meaning each party—

will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. . . .

We, like the United States, have regarded that Treaty as imposing upon us separate as well as joint responsibilities. That is what the Treaty provided expressly and clearly. Later in the Article, of course—and I say this only to complete the story—it was provided that no action on the territory of any such designated State—South Vietnam, to wit—shall be taken except at the invitation or with the consent of the Government concerned. In the case of South Vietnam, of course, this condition has been fulfilled.

So much for S.E.A.T.O. What is our position under A.N.Z.U.S., which was ratified by an Act of this Parliament in 1952? The treaty itself states in Article IV—

Each party recognises that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.

Then there is a very interesting article from our point of view, Article V, which says—

For the purpose of Article IV an armed attack on any of the parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of any of the parties—

That is, on Australia proper, to bring it right home—

or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific—

In our case, Papua and New Guinea, for instance—

or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific.

As the Pacific clearly means the Pacific area, an attack on troops, American troops, Australian troops, New Zealand troops, is of the highest significance.

I say no more about that answer to the question of what would be involved. I come now to the other answers to the question: What would be involved if we did what we are sometimes told we should do? The second result would be that we would be adopting a policy of isolation and neutrality. There is no middle course here, just the adoption of a policy of isolation and neutrality, with, as a consequence, the abandonment of any right to expect any

other nation to aid us in our own defence. If it is good enough for us to be isolated or neutral then it is good enough for the other man, so far as we are concerned, to be isolated or neutral. It would also involve the further adoption—and let us face up to this although it is a hard choice or a hard proposition—of a national policy in Australia of unarmed pacificism or a defence policy involving a provision adequate to secure our country by our own efforts against attack by any enemy, however powerful and however armed.

One has only to state these matters—at the risk of oversimplification as opposed to overcomplication—to see that each of these courses is unthinkable. Each of them would be tantamount to national suicide, and we must therefore face the facts. The facts are that we must honour our international obligation, we must refuse to desert our friends and we must pursue defence policies designed to enable us to make effective contributions to the common defence against Communist aggression. This policy, if it needs explanation, is the one pursued by my Government.

Of course we would all wish to see a genuine peace conference, but what has happened? At the risk of wearying the House I just want to elaborate what my colleague stated in admirably summary form this afternoon. The document tabled by the Minister for External Affairs (Mr. Hasluck), and which I hope will be read by all honorable members, sets out the efforts that have been made towards a peaceful settlement. I say at the very beginning that the conspicuous feature of these efforts is that none of them was made by Peking or Hanoi. Let this be remembered by every person who goes to some meeting or teach-in or some sit-in, as one honorable member described it—and wants to be gulled by a lot of theoreticians. None of these efforts was made by Hanoi or Peking.

When the United States in August 1964 took to the Security Council—and we hear a lot about the United Nations and why we should be approaching that organisation—the Tonkin Gulf incident, Hanoi refused to attend. The people in Hanoi said that they had not started the trouble, and in any event they refused to attend. They said categorically—and they have stuck to it ever since—that the matter of Vietnam was

not within the competence of the Security Council. Yet there are some honorable members who bamboozle themselves into believing that all you have to do is to take the matter to the United Nations. Hanoi had no truck with such ideas, contending that the Vietnam matter was not within the competence of the Security Council.

When the greatly respected Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, wanted to visit Peking and Hanoi—and he could not be represented as the humble obedient servant of the Western bloc—in April of this year, there was a contemptuous rejection of any United Nations intervention. Further approaches were made by the United States, which also sought to promote action by the Security Council. Peking rejected such action in advance. It did not wait for the action to be taken, but rejected it in advance. It is very interesting to recall that the United Kingdom proposed to the Soviet Union that both countries, having provided co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference—a conference which some honorable members have been saying should be resumed—should invite the parties to get busy and state their views. The Soviet reply was a condemnation of the United States and a demand for the withdrawal of the United States forces from Vietnam, a demand which I have not yet discovered has been made by the Opposition, although I will have something to say about that before I conclude.

Then the greatly respected Patrick Gordon Walker, whom many of us know, was sent out by the present British Government, which is not of my political complexion, to see whether he might bring the chance of a conference with him. Both Peking and Hanoi declined to receive him. They would have nothing to do with him, a man of the highest character and with the most high minded desire to achieve peace if possible. In April of this year President Johnson said in a famous speech that he was ready for unconditional discussion. Peking and Hanoi made a reply in their exquisite jargon, saying that this was a swindle pure and simple. In May the Canadian representative on the International Control Commission, which some people have been saying should be brought into function, wanted to talk with the Peking and Hanoi Governments. He was rebuffed.

Then at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference—and I will say more about that in a little while—a Commonwealth mission was proposed and supported. It has not succeeded in making any contact with any of the Communist countries at all. Then Mr. Harold Davis, a junior Minister, well known to be very friendly towards North Vietnam and quite receivable, went off to North Vietnam, having obtained a visa through the kind instrumentality of some North Vietnamese journalists. He went to Hanoi. I have read the report that he made. He was received quite affably by the people who were not in charge, but he literally was not allowed to see any Minister or any person in authority in North Vietnam.

I have already referred to the attempt made by the 17 non-aligned nations, some of them far from unfriendly towards North Vietnam and, perhaps, far from friendly towards the United States. They met the singular fate, which must have come as a shock to some of them, of being described by the Communist authorities as the Trojan horse of American imperialism. Well, I have heard so many speeches against imperialism by some of the people who have now become described as the Trojan horse that this shocks me; but it further exhibits the fact that we are dealing with people in the north who will insult their friends in other parts of Asia or in Africa so long as it enables them to maintain their campaign to overrun, to tyrannise and to destroy.

The President of India—I do not think anybody would have suggested he was a war-monger, unlike me—

Mr. James.—How true.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—You always prefer the people of countries other than your own, therefore I am bound to say that you will agree he is not a war-monger, because he is not an Australian. But the President of India made an approach and Peking's reply was that this was preposterous in the extreme. When an unexpected combination got together, India and Yugoslavia—they are not identical politically, Tito practicing his own form of detached Communism—they were both rewarded for their pains by being described by the people whom the Opposition thinks it is simple to get a conference with as the errand boys of America.

Now Sir, all these events must surely convince all Australians, who have not been completely taken in by Communist propaganda, of three things; first, that all peaceful approaches to the aggressors are doomed to failure while the aggressors think they are winning or will win by force of arms; secondly, that invoking the United Nations in this rather febrile way is at present quite futile; and thirdly, that talk about the Geneva Accords or the International Control Commission will be non-productive. Now Sir, all that, or most of it, describes what has gone on elsewhere. But at this last Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference we had something to say and do about this matter and I think I ought to put it before the House and the people.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain, at the very commencement of our meeting, produced a plan for the setting up of a mission consisting of Prime Ministers to make contact on behalf of the Commonwealth with the parties principally concerned with the problem of Vietnam and to ascertain whether some basis could be found for a conference. Just let me emphasise this point: The mission was not to negotiate. It would have found negotiation difficult because it contained within itself an immense variety of views, some being not dissimilar from my own and some being not like my own. They were a mixture. Therefore, the whole point was that the mission was to see whether a basis for conference could be found. That was an honorable task. The mission was to go and talk to these people and, without committing itself to any particular view as to the merits, see whether there was some basis for a conference.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain took advantage of a talk that he and I were having a day or two before to explain his idea to me. He did that because, no doubt, I happen to be, nowadays, the senior Prime Minister. I considered the matter overnight and, having reflected on it, I told him that I would strongly support the proposal. In the result, with some opposition, but not much, the plan was adopted. The mission was made up of the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, of Nigeria, and of Trinidad and Tobago, and the President of Ghana. Those men represented a variety of views. The Prime Minister of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, is a very distinguished, and in my opinion, a very wise

man. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Williams, is known, no doubt, to quite a few of my colleagues, and the President of Ghana is Dr. Nkrumah. As the agreed final communique said—

We reviewed the various efforts which had been made to achieve a peaceful solution.

This statement was made on behalf of all of us—21 Prime Ministers, several of whom had feelings disposed in favour of North Vietnam. We had reviewed the various efforts which had been made to achieve a peaceful solution and I just emphasise once more that it is worthy of note that not one of those efforts had been made either by Peking or Hanoi. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Commonwealth's mission has not succeeded in making contact with either of these governments. Yet, Sir, the statement of guidance worked out by our conference exhibited a reasonableness which no nation with any real desire for peace could have refused to examine.

I do not want to trench too much on the time of the House and therefore I shall not read all these passages, but I will take the opportunity, Sir, with the permission of the House, to table the communique because the document does contain the guide lines which were worked out for this mission if the mission ever got to first base. While the aggressors are contemptuously rejecting all peaceful propositions and pressing on with their evil activities, there is an element in Australia which is, whether it realises it or not, conducting propaganda directed to the desertion of South Vietnam by the Americans and by the rest of us, the grave weakening of South Vietnam's defence, the abandonment of Thailand and Malaysia, victory for Peking and Hanoi and the dramatic encouragement of Communist influence and control even nearer to Australian shores. The propaganda is directed to these ends whether people realise it or not.

I ask the Australian people who fully realise the dangers involved for our own country to understand the conscious or unconscious objectives of much of the current agitation for the withdrawal of Australian troops and therefore, presumably of American troops, since to urge the withdrawal of Australian troops and the retention of American troops would be a shock-

ing incident in Australia's history. If that agitation succeeded and South Vietnam were abandoned, North Vietnam and its Communist terrorists, the Vietcong, would of course be vastly encouraged and aided; the last lingering hope of peace negotiations except on the basis of surrender to military conquest would disappear; S.E.A.T.O. would have failed, since the obligations under it would have been repudiated and other South Asian countries would be left to fend for themselves against overwhelming odds, and the defence position of Australia would be immeasurably weakened.

Dr. J. F. Cairns.—We have still got you.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—Yes, but you almost cancel me out. Two other matters, Sir, must be remembered. First of all, if it is wrong for Australia to take an active part in the defence of South Vietnam against aggression, I wonder how it can be right for us to take an active part in the defence of Malaysia against aggression. Is there some lack of virtue in Indonesian aggressors which does not apply to the Communist aggressors? Where do the present agitators stand on that matter? Perhaps they will say that there is no aggression against South Vietnam. All I can say—in a homely phrase—is that they can tell that to the American Marines.

In the second place, victory for Communism in South East Asia would not only spell disaster and degradation to the millions of people in that area who desire to be left alone to live in peace and, with the aid of more fortunate countries, develop their resources and raise their own living standards; it would, in world terms, represent an alteration in the world balance of power in favour of the Communist powers and it would so increase the risks of world war. Sir, this needs great emphasis: As the democracies have learned, retreat and appeasement do not produce a true or lasting peace. They give aid and comfort to the aggressors. They hasten the day when the aggressor feels able to strike on the grand scale successfully. They encourage future wars. They do grievous harm to that cause—the cause of peace—which their advocates delude themselves into believing that they are supporting. On any reasoned view of this grim problem it is of course not possible to attack the presence of Australian forces without attacking the presence

of the United States and of other non-Vietnamese forces. But does the Australian Labour Party attack the United States presence and actions? This is interesting to me. It is very difficult to keep up with the Labour Party because it is—as you might say—here today and gone tomorrow on these matters of policy and, indeed, on all other matters. But at least, I hope that occasionally one must be able to read something that the Labour Party says, and think: This is it.

The honorable member for Bendigo (Mr. Beaton) is interjecting. Listen to this; it will do you the world of good. This may not have reached you in the fastnesses of Bendigo. A Labour Party information release was issued on 18th February 1965. I have the one I got. Optimistically it says, on the last page: "Additional copies of this statement may be obtained from the Australian Labour Party's Federal Secretariat on request". If the honorable member has not had one I will pay the postage to have it sent to him. I just want to quote what this Labour Party, now so ambiguous, now so defeatist, now so unreal, had to say only in February of this year. I cannot read all of the document, but it professes to be the complete text of the resolution unanimously adopted by the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party Executive at its meeting in Sydney on Thursday, 18th February 1965; and the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party's Executive had before it the unanimous recommendation of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Party. When you have unanimity piled on unanimity I suppose one may hope: "Roughly, this is what they believe". The first thing that I want to refer to is this statement—

In its statement to the Security Council on February 7th, reporting the air strikes against military installations in the south of North Vietnam, America insisted that its object in South Vietnam, while resisting aggression, is to achieve a peaceful settlement maintained by the presence of international peacekeeping machinery and that it would not allow the situation to be changed by terror and violence.

This statement—
said this unanimous body—

—of American purposes is unexceptionable and the case for the American action of recent days, as based on the aim of shortening the war and achieving a negotiated settlement, which would establish and maintain the rights of the South Vietnamese people, deserves sympathetic Australian understanding.

Nothing could be better. Later in the course of the same document the same people, unanimously, I suppose, unless unanimity had faded away halfway through the page, say this—and let everybody remember this, because I think that really if a lot of this is true we are almost on a bi-partisan policy—

The demand of the Soviet Government for the immediate departure of all American and other foreign forces from South Vietnam would be in the interests neither of the people of South Vietnam nor the people of Australia. Its immediate consequence must be a Communist takeover of South Vietnam, snuffing out the hope of freedom and the democratic independence of that country and extending the area of Communist control closer to this country.

I say to honorable members opposite: This is not a lot of reactionary Tories speaking. This is your crowd speaking—at least, last February. The document continues—

The presence of those forces is necessary and justified as a holding operation provided that efforts are bent towards the objects set out by the American Government in its message to the Security Council. In other words, the presence of these forces is justified as a temporary means to an end and not an end in itself.

The object must be, at a proper time and in circumstances enabling the people of South Vietnam a free choice, to allow them to decide by their own votes on their own government and to ensure the physical independence of that government.

Sir, this is, I think, remarkable and worthy of applause. I will undertake to say that it is in the teeth of the views that will be heard from one or two honorable members sitting opposite, if there is any importance to be placed on consistency. The Leader of the Opposition who, I know, believes all that himself—twisted and distorted by recent events, but in his heart, of course, he believes those things to be true—earlier this year when we had a debate said two things that are very accurate and memorable. He said—

That there has long been and still is aggression from the north and subversion inspired from the north, I do not for one moment deny.

Later on he said—

The object of the Vietcong in the war—this guerrilla war—is to avoid, as far as possible, direct entanglement with massed troops in order that by infiltration, subversion and terrorism, they may control villages, hamlets, outposts and small communities wherever these are most vulnerable.

These are brilliant and descriptive words. I do not know how they disappeared from the Labour Party's vocabulary, because in

the current debate my honorable friend the Leader of the Opposition, under the most terrible pressures, undoubtedly and obviously, instead of repeating these statements, or anything like them, said of my Government that we proposed to send conscripts to fight in a foreign land—that sounds exactly like the United States of America because we are defending certain Vietnamese from certain other Vietnamese. O what a fall was there, my countrymen, from the robust statement that here was aggression from the North and subversion in the South, fomented from the North; to this watery statement that, after all, all we are doing is to defend some Vietnamese from other Vietnamese.

Then he made the most remarkable statement I have listened to for years. He said that we are driving North Vietnam right into the arms of China because we are resisting the power of China. Of all the pusillanimous statements ever made in the House, it must be the all time high. I do not believe he thought of it. I do not believe he meant it. No man who said what he said before could possibly produce such utter nonsense. The moral is: Do not resist China and then you will not drive North Vietnam into their arms; and do not resist North Vietnam because it will save you a lot of trouble, and who are the South Vietnamese anyway? I suppose this astonishing proposition would apply also to the United States of America. That would be a reasonable inference. On the basis that we want to leave it all to the United States, it would be a reasonable inference. But the Leader of the Opposition, coming back from this excursion into fancy, goes on to say in this very speech—

The British presence in Asia is essential to India, Malaysia, and Australia, just as the United States presence in this area is essential to the security of the area.

Where do they stand? What is the policy or position of this Party?

Before I conclude, I want to say a word about the position of the United States. I am satisfied—and I was confirmed in this in my talks in Washington at one time or another—that the American approach to this problem is in reality just the same as ours. No sane person—I emphasise the word "sane"—could say that American forces are being used in Vietnam for the preservation of interests peculiar to

America. Does any honorable member opposite say that? Speak up. Now is your chance. Well, you do not say it. So far we are in agreement. I repeat: No sane person could say that American forces are being used in Vietnam for the preservation of interests peculiar to America; for the protection of American trade, or in pursuance of some other sinister imperialist plot to take over a South East Asian country. Clearly, the Americans are there to defend a world order, the defence of which is the prime purpose of the creation of the United Nations, and imposes duties upon every member nation.

In Washington, on the 10th of this month, Mr. Dean Rusk, the distinguished Secretary of State, was being interviewed. He was asked what the commitment was to South Vietnam. I will not read out in full what he said. But he began by saying—

We have a very simple commitment to South Vietnam.

The first point he mentioned was—

It derives out of the South East Asia Treaty—

It is exactly the same view, honorable members will observe, as I have indicated tonight about the separate as well as joint responsibilities. Mr. Dean Rusk mentioned other matters. He went on to say—

Now, there is no need to parse these commitments in great detail. The fact is that we know we have a commitment—

This is the United States—

The South Vietnamese know we have a commitment. The communist world knows we have a commitment.

Mr. Rusk continued—

Now, this means that the integrity of the American commitment is at the heart of this problem. I believe that the integrity of the American commitment is the principal structure of peace throughout the world.

But, Sir, true as that is, such defence cannot be left to the United States alone. Let me remind honorable members that the American people, living at peace in a vast and thickly populated country geographically remote from South East Asia would probably resent the notion that the United States of America is the world's policeman, and that countries like our own can leave it to the Americans. The free world has become so accustomed to massive aid going out from the United States of America to a score of countries that it

may sometimes be tempted to regard it as commonplace and inevitable. But it is neither. The United States has had its own long periods of isolationism, twice shattered in this century by world wars. It is to the immeasurable advantage of world peace—peace without surrender—that ever since the Second World War, the United States has not only been the greatest world power but also has handsomely accepted the responsibilities which flow from great power.

The real enemies of world peace are those who ignore or reject this central truth of modern history and promote hatred or distrust of America at every opportunity. Sir, there are some such in Australia, who talk of peace as if the mere wish for it is sufficient, and then attack its active protectors as if they were the enemies of the

very element which many of them are shedding their blood and expending their resources to defend.

This does not mean that Governments like our own, which understand and appreciate the American policy and action, are mere puppets moved by strings under American control. We occupy a respectable place in American thinking. We are, and they so regard us, an adult community with notable achievements and a great future. We are quite capable of offering our views, critical or otherwise, to Washington, and we do it every week. But we make no apologies to our own people for never losing sight of the basic truths to which I have referred, or allowing to be clouded the common elements which lead us, as in Vietnam, to common action.