

★★★★ The Robert Maynard Hutchins  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF  
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

October 5, 1987

October 12, 1987

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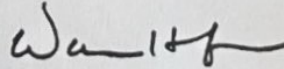
Dear Mr. McKeen:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful response to the CBS "60 Minutes" segment that focused on the class that I teach.

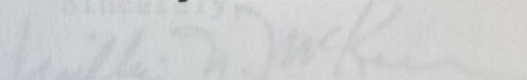
I appreciated so much your sending me the editorial you presented in 1967. I will make use of it in the class.

Many thanks for writing.

Sincerely,



Walter H. Capps  
Acting Director



William N. McKeen

October 5, 1987

Professor Walter Kapps  
University of California  
Santa Barbara, California

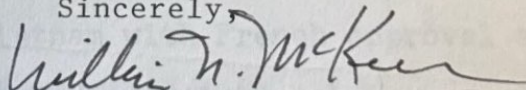
Dear Professor Kapps:

I saw your interesting segment on "60 Minutes" and thought that the enclosed might be of interest. This was the first editorial ever presented on radio in this country against the Vietnam war. I presented this while general Manager of WCME in Brunswick, Maine.

Edmund Muskie (D) Maine asked for and got equal time to defend the government. I might point out that a year later he was a dove. I received many requests for this at the time and one NYU professor who was in the area at the time asked if he could introduce it into his political science class.

If you think it is relevant please use it as you will, if not may throw it away. I hope I spelled your name correctly and have the right zip.

Sincerely,



William N. McKeen

The war in Vietnam has become the most controversial, confusing and complicated foreign policy issue ever to face the United States. Many of us do not know how we got into this war. Now we will endeavor to explain how we got into this ridiculous slaughter of American men.

The present war is a sequel to an earlier war between the French and the forces of Ho Chi Minh, the present leader of North Vietnam. At the end of World War II, Vietnamese Nationalists and Communist groups, determined to achieve independence in Indo China, announced on Sept. 2nd, 1945, independence for Vietnam. This was the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The French recognized the DRVN as a free state within the French Union. However, a series of blunders and misunderstandings by both sides led to armed conflict and the beginning of the French Vietnamese War, December 19, 1946.

As the war progressed, the French enlisted non communist support by turning to ex-Emperor Bao Dai. Bao Dai had abdicated power to Ho Chi Minh earlier. Unknown to most of us is that in 1946 the Vietnam held a national election, openly in the North and secretly in the French part of the country and Ho Chi Minh was elected in the first general popular election in the history of Indo China. Now lets continue...

Bao Dai formed the State of Vietnam with French approval and set up its capital in Saigon. The U. S. recognized this new state and President Truman announced on June 27th, 1950 that the United States would send a 35 man military assistance advisory group to Indo China to advise troops in the use of American weapons. Other assistance measures followed and on December 23rd, we signed a mutual defense agreement and on September 7th, 1951, we agreed to send direct economic assistance to Vietnam. Our aid was offset by aid sent the North by the Red Chinese. In 1954 the Geneva Conference started while the French were being defeated at Dienbienphu. Terms finally agreed upon signed by the

French and the North Vietnamese as we know them today, were the division of Vietnam along the 17th parallel, a ban on the introduction of new arms, and, get this one, a scheduling of new reunification elections and the creation of an International Control Commission with India as Chairman along with Canada and Poland. Neither the United States government or the government of Bao Dai signed the agreement but Walter Bedell Smith, the American representative, stated the United States would refrain from threat or the use of force, but would view any renewal of the aggression with grave concern as threatening international peace and security. The South Vietnamese delegate, objecting to the division of his country, would not consider himself bound by the agreement. He wanted the United Nations to administer to the whole country until a general election could be held with the people of the country deciding what type of government they wanted. The French and the North were against this. Here is where the United Nations should have taken the bull by the horns.

While the Geneva Conference was going on the United States organized SEATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. Membership consisted of three nations not even in Southeast Asia, namely the United States, France and England, two Western type organizations, Australia and New Zealand and three Asian countries largely dependent upon our economic and military aid, Thailand, the Phillipines and Pakistan.

This would indicate that we would not sit by and watch South Vietnam go communistic even perhaps as a result of free elections. On February 12th, 1955, President Eisenhower agreed to train the Vietnam army and a SEATO protocol February 19th extended the protective cover of that organization to Vietnam. A second major commitment of the United States to aid South Vietnam.

The United States threw its support to Ngo Dinh Diem, a former official in the colonial government of France. A national referendum in South

Vietnam October 23rd, 1955 deposed head of state Bao Dai and Vietnam became a Republic with Ngo Dinh Diem as the first president. Diem's regime refused to participate in the 1956 reunification elections as set forth by the Geneva Conference. Diem asserted that free elections would not be possible until such time as conditions in the North precluded intimidation or coercion of the electorate. French historian Philip Devillers wrote in his book "The Struggle for the Unification of Vietnam", North Vietnam from 1956 to 1960 suggested to Diem a conference to plan elections on the basis of free general elections by secret ballot but was rebuffed by Diem with United States approval on six different occasions. After 1956, guerilla attacks by the Vietcong, a name given to Vietnamese Communists and applied to all guerillas in the South, increased. On May 5, 1960 our advisors increased from 327 to 685. After that guerilla attacks became stronger and so did our aid. The Kennedy Administration sent more troops to aid Diem's government but, unfortunately for us, Diem was assassinated and in succeeding coups the government changed hands regularly. American aid grew from 4,000 in 1962 to 15,000 in 1963 to 23,000 in 1964, and now we are heading to 500,000. Nguyen Cao Ky is now the premier and he has fought elections and is still fighting elections. Ky, by the way, took over power - he was not elected. How do we get out of this? Haven't we learned our lesson? The French did even as the French Messiah, Charles DeGualle screeched, he is simply the pot calling the kettle black. We can get out and save the face everyone seems so concerned with. Personally, I'm more concerned with lives than faces. We never should have gotten into this and we all know it, or we need a course in history. Lets make sure the upcoming elections are held and whoever wins can have all the marbles. If these people want to be communists or isolationists, I believe it's their business and none of ours. We have enough problems here without settling the problems for the whole world. We can't

settle our own problems, how can we settle the world's? We control the welfare of Nuyen Coa Ky and he had better be told that we intend having these elections and we will withdraw our troops within six months after the elections. Some will say we will loose face in the diplomatic world. Well, we say we have already lost face as it were in every country in the world because of our involvement in Vietnam. We believe we will gain prestige in the world community and, if we don't, who cares? We are not thought well of now in the international set. Perhaps our withdrawl in Vietnam may help us live up to our principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but it can only be so when we recognize the others rights for the same.

#### Conclusions:

1. We should never have entered this Civil War.
2. We are not backing the people of Vietnam, we are backing only the rulers.
3. Neither South Vietnam or the United States signed the Geneva agreements.
4. SEATO has only one South Asian country in it and that is Thailand. South Vietnam was included after President Eisenhower agreed to train South Vietnam forces.
5. We have lost prestige all over the world because of Vietnam.
6. The war is too costly in money and men.
7. We can't win this so called war and we certainly can't afford to occupy as in Korea.
8. These elections are our key to withdrawl. We should police them and make sure that every person in Vietnam who wants to vote votes.
9. We should be out of Vietnam within 6 months after these elections.
10. We should start paying more attention to our own affairs and not try to settle the problems of the whole world. We goofed in

Vietnam and the quicker we realize it and get out of there - the better it will be. I believe some Vietnam money should be set aside to start a college for diplomats, because ours sure can use a refresher course, and perhaps this college could turn out some future diplomats who wouldn't get us into these ridiculous situations.

11. Finally, let's hope that we have finally learned our diplomatic lesson from Vietnam. Damon Runyan wrote a poem entitled "They Never Boo a Bum". I would like to borrow that for a closing and say we should learn that "we should never back a bum".