

speech, Jaycee, St Paul

It is indeed a very great honor for me to address the twenty eighth Congress of America's Ten Outstanding Young Men, at a time when so many young men from America and from VietNam are called upon for excellence in the defense of freedom. I take great pride in this distinguished company, and I believe that the most appropriate contribution which I could make to our gathering today is to speak about a young VietNameese who would have deservedly taken his place among the outstanding young men of the world, had he not lost his life in combat. His story is not an uncommon one, because everyday, hundreds of young VietNameese men and women are making the supreme sacrifice in their search for liberty, for dignity, for a better world. Rather, I have selected his case because only a few months ago he came to this country and had the opportunity to speak to his American friends and colleagues : his dreams are still near to us, his death has ended his life but not <sup>its</sup> their significance. And by telling you about him, I hope to convey to you, to some extent, an idea of the very painful trials which we <sup>VietNameese</sup> have to endure, and of the price which we never hesitate to pay.

Around noontime, on the thirtieth of December, two communist gunmen waited in front of the home of Tu Chung, the editor of Chinh Luan, a leading newspaper of Saigon- and as Chung alighted from his car, they fired five pistol bullets at his back. Prior to the murder, the VietCong had publicly issued <sup>the</sup> a threat to Tu Chung and to his publisher Dr Dang Van Sung/that/ unless the newspaper adopts a less staunchly anti-communist line, death would soon visit. Chung and his friends did not yield to the menace, nor had they yielded in other difficult times under menace from various quarters. In competition with the communists, the police of the Diem regime had

applied constant pressure on them between 1956 and 1963, hoping to break their resistance to personal dictatorship. Some of them were jailed, others died: how many times writers like Chung had to run away from home, how many times their heartbeats came close to a stop as boot heels clicked on the city's pavements ~~in~~ in the wee hours, just because they had, in the day time, written things in which they believed?

Thus, TuChung's life and death was an illustration of the difficult lot of free men in VietNam: <sup>total</sup> devotion to resist oppression, and a perennial "in between" position. To fight and to die for an ideal is indeed a relatively simple matter; <sup>but</sup> for the Vietnamese people, that ideal has not always been a ready made proposition, they had to go on a long and painful search for it, they had to struggle against a great many deal of things before they could even claim to have something to struggle for. Let me briefly describe that sequence of tattered illusions and of betrayed expectations and of renewed hopes which constitutes our search for a concept of nationhood <sup>a concept of Nationhood</sup> which could answer all the expectations following a century of foreign domination and of utmost social injustice.

We had to get out from under the French rule, and for several blood stained decades young men and women rushed their way to certain death without the slightest chance of success for their enterprise: yet, waves after waves they kept coming. En route, they embraced ephemereal ~~causes~~ causes and joined allies who would soon turn away from them. There were the unsatisfied dreams kindled in the Wilsonian era which vibrated back into life with the upheavals of World War Two, there was the short lived walk along with the Japanese "co prosperity sphere" which revealed to be little else than another imperialist scheme, and there were the inconsequential dalliances with the Chinese Kuomintang, ~~the opportunistic character of which became evident soon~~. During all those trials and errors, the communists, with rich experience in professional revolutionary techniques and solid international organization to back them, kept bidding for time

and taking advantage of the shortcomings of the national revolution.

They applied well-known tactics for the liquidation of the nationalist leaders, from simple assassination to disparagement, to connivence with the forces of colonialism ~~to those ends~~. Thus they almost eliminated from national leadership a few generations of non-communist contenders. But one cannot silence for ever the aspirations of a nation, and when the communist experience had been lived through long enough, we came to the end of a demonstration by the absurd in 1954: following Dien Bien Phu, following victory over the colonialists, one million people, close to one tenth of the total population of North Vietnam, at that time, left for the South within one hundred days. Several other million would have followed, had the moratorium been extended. The trains and ships running in the opposite direction were rather empty. In a more fortunate society, one expresses a political choice with a ballot, or with a raised hand...for us, and on the very rare occasions we are able to do so, political choice amounts to almost total sacrifice. Yet, we did it, leaving behind generations of memories and the few treasures which are all that we had, and we headed for a future of which we did not know anything.

Then the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem brought about hopes for a brief moment, before it turned into a personal dictatorship. On this terribly difficult road, the attitude of the Vietnamese was also an unequivocal, but painful choice. They gave unfailing support as long as the government served the interests of the Nation; then with the insurrection of November 1963, they came to the end of another demonstration by the absurd, another rejection of dictatorship.

Of course, rejection of dictatorship is but a negative step. But because of the natural connivence between the forces of communism

colonialism, and dictatorship, the Vietnamese people have not had the opportunity to proceed to the kind of dialogue from which consensus would emerge on a concept of nationhood. Tu Chung was not a hero in the muscular sense of the term, nor was he a vociferous mouthpiece for the government or for any active political group - the kind of courage that he offered his country was of a much more difficult nature: he promoted that dialogue, and by doing so, he hurt the communists - as he did the colonialist and the dictator where they are the most sensitive.

Before Tu Chung, scores of Vietnamese leaders and intellectuals had been liquidated - and <sup>unfortunately</sup> scores of others will be after him.

But Tu Chung was certainly happy <sup>for some time</sup> even though he had received his death notice <sup>not</sup> ~~for some time~~ during the last few months of his short but <sup>rich</sup> life, he had witnessed an encouraging turning point for the destiny of his country. At present, despite the concurrent difficulties, the war, the pressures, the Vietnamese are no longer squeezed in between two forms of dictatorship, and they <sup>have</sup> can start the dialogue that he had wished to see. Now, a non communist revolution <sup>is taking</sup> ~~can take~~ place, which will bring to VietNam a solid sense of national cohesion, a proper order of social justice and respect of human dignity.

And no sacrifice is ever made in vain, especially the accepted death of that soft spoken, quiet, outstanding young Vietnamese.

Thank you