

small units and detachments scattered over a very large part of the country. There may be communications difficulties on both sides, and there may be some irregularities which will have to be ironed out. We are hopeful that the cease-fire will in fact prove to come into being. There have been public pronouncements on both sides that indicate that that is their hope. We also, however, hope that political questions will not become enmeshed with the cease-fire on the ground, because it is hardly the circumstance under which to talk about political issues.

The next step presumably will be that the ICC [International Control Commission], with India as chairman, would move promptly into Laos to be in a position to report on the effectiveness of the cease-fire and that there would then be convened the 14-nation conference to talk about the international aspects of the Laotian problem.

The Laotians themselves, meanwhile, presumably will be discussing the possibilities of forming a Laotian government. Our general approach has been that the constitution of a government is not a matter which can be effectively dealt with through international negotiations or at a conference but that this is a matter to be worked out among the Laotians themselves. The leaders are in touch with each other, and we suppose that there will be a considerable amount of talk among them in the days and weeks ahead on that subject. But the entire situation is somewhat unpredictable, and the impressions which I might have at the moment could be changed by particulars which might come in in the next few hours or the next few days. It is something which is in flux and will have to be watched very closely.

I am very pleased to be able to announce that Senator [John J.] Sparkman of Alabama has agreed to represent the United States at the Regional Community Development Conference sponsored by the ICA [International Cooperation Administration] in Seoul from May 6 to May 12. Senator Sparkman will also stop over in Tokyo for discussions on matters of mutual interest with officials of the Japanese Government. It is particularly fortunate that Senator Sparkman will be able to represent the United States both in Tokyo and Seoul. He has long been a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, as you know, and has been active in the formula-

tion of foreign policy for the United States. He has served on a number of our international delegations, including our delegation to the United Nations. His presence there will not only demonstrate the great interest that the new administration has in community development but will serve to establish useful contacts between us and the Governments of Korea and Japan.

Situation in Viet-Nam

I thought that it might be useful if I were to make some comments on the background of the situation in Viet-Nam—that is, not background comments but comments on the background.

Since late in 1959 organized Communist activity in the form of guerrilla raids against army and security units of the Government of Viet-Nam, terrorist acts against local officials and civilians, and other subversive activities in the Republic of Viet-Nam have increased to levels unprecedented since the Geneva agreements of 1954.² During this period the organized armed strength of the Viet Cong, the Communist apparatus operating in the Republic of Viet-Nam, has grown from about 3,000 to over 12,000 personnel. This armed strength has been supplemented by an increase in the numbers of political and propaganda agents in the area.

During 1960 alone, Communist armed units and terrorists assassinated or kidnaped over 3,000 local officials, military personnel, and civilians. Their activities took the form of armed attacks against isolated garrisons, attacks on newly established townships, ambushes on roads and canals, destruction of bridges, and well-planned sabotage against public works and communication lines. Because of Communist guerrilla activity 200 elementary schools had to be closed at various times, affecting over 25,000 students and 800 teachers.

This upsurge of Communist guerrilla activity apparently stemmed from a decision made in May 1959 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of north Viet-Nam which called for the reunification of Viet-Nam by all "appropriate means." In July of the same year the Central Committee was reorganized and charged with intelligence duties and the "liberation" of south Viet-Nam. In retrospect this decision to step up

² For texts, see *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents*, vol. I, Department of State publication 6446, p. 750.

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guerrilla activity was made to reverse the remarkable success which the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam under President Ngo Dinh Diem had achieved in consolidating its political position and in attaining significant economic recovery in the 5 years between 1954 and 1959.

Remarkably coincidental with the renewed Communist activity in Laos, the Communist Party of north Viet-Nam at its Third Congress on September 10, 1960, adopted a resolution which declared that the Vietnamese revolution has as a major strategic task the liberation of the south from the "rule of U.S. imperialists and their henchmen." This resolution called for the direct overthrow of the government of the Republic of Viet-Nam.

The most recent gains by the Pathet Lao in the southern part of Laos have given added seriousness to the security situation in Viet-Nam. Communist control over Lao territory bordering Viet-Nam south of the 17th parallel makes more secure one of the three principal routes by which north Vietnamese armed units have been able to infiltrate the Republic of Viet-Nam. The other two routes are, as is well known, directly across the 17th parallel and by sea along the coastline of the Republic of Viet-Nam. In addition to the obvious fact that the strength of the Pathet Lao has been tremendously increased by the importation of light and heavy arms from the outside, we have no reason to doubt that the north Vietnamese armed units not operating in Laos have been similarly reequipped and strengthened from the same outside source.

The increased Communist activity in the Republic of Viet-Nam and countermeasures to meet this threat have been matters of urgent and recent discussion, both by the officials of Viet-Nam and the United States. In connection with these the President has authorized an increase in the amount of military assistance, and a number of other measures have been determined upon. Furthermore the United States has undertaken training and advisory measures which are designed to strengthen both materially and militarily the ability of the Viet-Nam armed forces to overcome this increased Communist threat. A part of the effort, of course, must include in a situation of this sort a vigorous civil program as well in the economic and social field. As you may recall, the members of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organiza-

tion expressed their concern about the situation in Viet-Nam in our recent conference in Bangkok,^{*} and it is perfectly apparent that we must all give very serious attention to developments in that country.

Now, I think I will be able to take a few questions.

Q. In your remarks on south Viet-Nam are you, in fact, suggesting that, as the war in Laos draws to a close, the Communists are simply opening up a new theater in southeast Asia?

A. I don't believe this is a shift from one theater to another. I think both of these countries have been under pressure from the Communists from the north, and the pressures in Laos have served to increase the pressures somewhat in Viet-Nam. The most active part of Communist efforts in Viet-Nam is occurring not in the north actually but in the south, the far south, in the Saigon area. But a considerable number of the personnel and also some of the supplies undoubtedly have been coming in from the north by infiltration—some of it through Laos.

Inter-American Consultations

Q. Mr. Secretary, in your opening remarks, you mentioned that you have just come back from a CENTO meeting and were on your way to a meeting of NATO. This brings to mind the itinerary of your predecessors and the frustration of many of your colleagues in Latin America. This criticism has gone on for many years—that we only consult about Latin American governments in times of grave crisis. I wonder if the administration does not consider the present developments in Latin America as critical and also if you could tell us why, at this time, for instance, we still don't have a United States Ambassador to the Organization of American States nor an Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs.

A. On the last point—both the Ambassador to the Organization of American States and the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs left their posts only recently—that is, early this month—and we have been working very hard to get their replacements. The search for talent is a continuous search, and it is not something which

^{*} BULLETIN of Apr. 17, 1961, p. 547.

happens overnight. We are working on that very hard at the present time.

On the matter of consulting with our inter-American friends, we are in very intense consultation with them at the present time about Cuba and other matters, about problems in the hemisphere arising from the penetration of the Sino-Soviet bloc into Cuba.

We expect to be moving shortly in the OAS to call a meeting of the IA-ECOSOC [Inter-American Economic and Social Council] to get into the Alliance for Progress program.⁴ We are not, in any sense, out of contact with our Latin American friends. I think that you must bear in mind that, in connection with any special meetings that might be called, particularly where there are highly complicated and difficult questions to come up, such meetings are useful only on the basis of a great deal of consultation ahead of time.

Q. Mr. Secretary, in your speech last night on foreign aid⁵ you said that too often in the past our aid has been governed less by the priority of a well-planned program than by the needs and pressures of the moment. There is a report from India that the United States Government is considering financing a nuclear power plant for India. Is that one of the projects that would contribute most to India's self-sustaining growth at this time?

A. I would not want to get into that at the moment. The discussions of aid to India, both short-term and long-term, are going on at the present time. As you know, a consortium has recently met to get into that general question. Questions of [research] assistance [under] the atoms-for-peace program are somewhat separate from the broad question of economic development, and I would prefer not to comment specifically on the question right now.

The Laotian Question

Q. There seems to be a feeling of disappointment in the Philippines and in some other areas in southeast Asia because the United States and the SEATO powers did not intervene in Laos to stop the piecemeal advance of the Communists. They seem to fear that perhaps this indicates a

lack of will on our part to take military action, if necessary, in the event that the Communists turn their full attention on south Viet-Nam. What can you say in this regard?

A. These are questions which were thoroughly discussed at the SEATO Conference in Bangkok, and if you will go back and look at the communiqués or the resolutions which were issued from that Conference, you will see that that Conference agreed that an effort should be made to settle this Laotian question by negotiation, if possible. Failing that, the SEATO countries would be prepared to take appropriate measures.

Now, since early January we have been on that double track, in a sense, that is, the British and the Soviet Union, as cochairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954, have been discussing between themselves the possibility of a cease-fire, followed by a convening of the ICC and a conference to take up that question.⁶

That is the track on which we are at the present time. I suppose that there would be differences in shading among governments, when a particular track runs out and when another track has to be adopted. But the present effort on the part of all those who are deeply involved in this is to settle this question without a major escalation of the fighting if possible.

Q. The charge has been made publicly that the south Vietnamese Government is both reactionary and corrupt and that one of the first priorities to shore that area up would be to encourage political reform. Would you care to comment on that?

A. I think that some of the remarks that I made last evening on foreign aid have some application; that is, questions of defense in a situation such as Viet-Nam cannot be dealt with solely in military terms. The quality of society, the interest of the people, the mobilization of the energies of the people, the satisfaction of the people in their own system, have a great deal to do with problems of security and the ability to withstand assault and attack and penetration and subversion from the outside.

I have no doubt that a broad program of civil action, improved administration, economic development in Viet-Nam ought to be continued and

⁴ See p. 768.

⁵ See p. 747.

⁶ For texts of the U.K.-U.S.S.R. proposals on Laos, see BULLETIN of May 15, 1961, p. 710.