

linquishing even the small chance we have with Diem for some unknown and untried combination.³⁴

In the second discussion, Mansfield reiterated what he had said in the earlier session, but added that the U.S. would have to consider withdrawal "If Diem and Vietnamese cannot with our support create reasonably effective setup in Vietnam, or if French are *sub rosa* manipulating deal with Viet Minh at expense Free Vietnam. . . ."³⁵

On December 19, Dulles talked in Paris to Mendès-France (and Ely) and Eden. He told Mendès-France that despite Diem's failings, he was still the best hope, and, "we must indeed be desperate" to think of bringing back Bao Dai (as the French also had proposed). He urged that support for Diem be continued, but that more pressure be exerted on him "to make changes we consider necessary." Mendès-France and Ely agreed, but said, among other things, "we must now prepare in our minds for alternative."

Dulles added that if Diem failed, and there was no good alternative, the U.S. would have to reassess the situation. This, he said, would require consulting the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees, both of which had "strong feelings."³⁶

After the Paris meeting, Radford went to Saigon to brief Collins on the talks and on Dulles' reaffirmation of U.S. support for Diem, which Dulles himself also addressed in a cable to Collins on December 24 in which he said, "Under present circumstances and unless situation Free Viet-Nam clearly appears hopeless and rapidly disintegrating, we have no choice but continue our aid Viet-Nam and support of Diem."³⁷

Collins' pessimistic reports prompted Secretary of Defense Wilson to ask the JCS in early January 1955 for recommendations concerning the effects of various contingencies, including a cut-off of aid to Vietnam, and the "possible loss of South Vietnam to the Communists." The JCS replied on January 21, saying, among other things, that if South Vietnam fell, it would be necessary to increase U.S. forces to support American policy in the Far East. The Chiefs added that, because it was still unclear how far the U.S. would go, "a firm decision at national level as to implementation of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia is mandatory."³⁸

On January 20, 1955, as requested in December, Collins submitted a report on his mission to the NSC, which the Council discussed and generally approved on January 27.³⁹

In his report, Collins said that the situation had improved somewhat since December, but that the outlook still was "not bright."

³⁴Mansfield was also strongly opposed to having Bao Dai return to Vietnam. See his further statement on this on December 17, in *ibid.*, pp. 2393-2394.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 2378. Mansfield also told Robertson, ". . . Dr. Fishel would probably be the best person to work out with Diem the problem of delegation and political adjustments." "It was clear that the Senator had great confidence in Dr. Fishel." Robertson added. *Ibid.*, p. 2352.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 2400-2405. Former Ambassador Heath agreed with Dulles, and thought that Collins did not have an adequate perspective on the situation, and thus was advocating precipitous action. See the excerpt of his memo of December 17, 1954, to Assistant Secretary Robertson, in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. I, p. 227.

³⁷*FRUS*, 1952-1954, vol. XIII, p. 2419. Note: The State Department historical series presently terminates at the end of 1954, thus ending the use of this invaluable source at this point in the study.

³⁸For the two memos see *PP*, DOD ed., book 10, pp. 860-863.

³⁹For the text of the Collins report see *ibid.*, pp. 865-882.

Nevertheless, he thought Diem was the "best available" leader, and that with U.S. and French support he could succeed. Diem's major problems, Collins said, continued to be his failure to broaden his government and to control the sects. But another serious problem affecting U.S. relations with Vietnam, Collins said, was the ". . . real intentions and objectives of the French in Indochina. There is strong evidence that the French favor a new Vietnamese Government which will offer no serious resistance to the Viet Minh or to French direction. Without French support, and that support is far from assured, the survival of Free Vietnam is problematical." Collins recommended that ". . . our government should have this matter out with the French Government once and for all" in order to assure French support for Diem. (On this point the State Department and the NSC Planning Board disagreed with Collins, saying that this had already been done, and that the French should now implement their agreement to support Diem.)⁴⁰ Collins concluded that the game was worth the candle, and that the U.S. had no choice but to continue supporting South Vietnam. A U.S. withdrawal, he said, ". . . would hasten the rate of Communist advances in the Far East as a whole and could result in the loss of Southeast Asia to Communism."

Collins estimated that the cost of U.S. support for Vietnam would be approximately \$350-\$400 million a year, most of it military aid, compared to about twice that amount previously. He added that one specific contingency cost would be incurred when the Vietnamese Government increased its existing payments to the sects after the French terminated their traditional payments (an action which took place as scheduled on January 31, 1955). Collins estimated that until Diem was able to control the sects and cut off these subsidies, this would cost approximately \$5 million a year, which would require increasing U.S. aid by that amount.

Diem Clashes with the Sects and Washington Agrees to Seek a New Government

With the end of French subsidies to the sects, Diem, with advice and support from his brothers, Nhu and Luyen, and the Americans, led by Lansdale, began the process of bringing the sects under further control. (By January 1955 at least two Hoa Hao and Cao Dai leaders had been persuaded to support Diem. One of these was the notorious Cao Dai leader, Trinh Minh Thé, who was first contacted at his jungle headquarters in the fall of 1954 by Lansdale, at Diem's suggestion, and was subsequently persuaded by Lansdale to join forces with Diem, allegedly with the help of U.S. funds.)⁴¹

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 883-884.

⁴¹For Lansdale's fascinating account of the Thé episode, see *In the Midst of Wars*, ch. 11. Lansdale denied that any funds were involved, but according to the *Pentagon Papers*, DOD ed., fn. 131 of IV. A. 3, ". . . the SMM did secretly reimburse Thé's Lien Minh forces who moved into Saigon and acted as Diem's palace guard in October." According to Bernard Fall, "Diem bought the Cao-Dai 'General' Trinh Minh—the mastermind of the messy Saigon street bombings of 1952 so well described in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (New York: Viking, 1955)—for \$2 million; another Cao-Dai general, Nguyen Thanh Phuong, for \$3.6 million (plus monthly payments for his troops); and a Hoa-Hao warlord Tran Van Soai for \$3 million more. In all likelihood, the total amount of American dollars spent on bribes during March and April 1955, by Diem may well have gone beyond \$12 million." *The Two Viet-Nams*, pp. 245-246. Ellen Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, pp. 360-361, commented that "The use of American aid money

Continued

Early in March, 1955, however, for reasons that continue to be somewhat obscure, the sects turned against Diem, even including those leaders who had agreed to support him, and organized a United Front of Nationalist Forces, also called the United Sects Nationalist Front. On March 21, the Front issued an ultimatum to Diem to form a "government of national union," which purportedly would be more broadly-based and representative, but which, in reality, the sects would be able to control. (It should be noted, however, that a number of respected nationalist leaders joined in this demand, including Tran Van Do, the esteemed former Foreign Minister and the uncle of Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu.) The U.S. urged Diem to resist this action by the sects, and U.S. representatives in Vietnam worked feverishly to appraise the situation and to try to dissuade some of those who had joined the Front.⁴²

What was the attitude of Congress at this point toward what was happening in Vietnam? Judging by the discussion at a bipartisan congressional luncheon held by Eisenhower on March 31, 1955, for selected Senate leaders,⁴³ there was very little interest or concern, at least in comparison to other issues. Dulles told the group ". . . how precarious the situation is in Vietnam and indicated that if Diem survives the present crisis, the chances will be good, but if he loses in this crisis the chances will be quite bad." Based on the summary of the meeting, however, it appears that there were no questions on Vietnam from the Senators present, and that most of the discussion concerned China and the Quemoy-Matsu problem.⁴⁴

Dulles was continuing to work closely with Mansfield. The next day (April 1), he asked Mansfield to come to his office to discuss the Vietnam situation.⁴⁵

On March 29, fighting had broken out between Diem's troops and Binh Xuyen forces. The French interceded and a truce was called, but Collins had decided, reluctantly, that Diem would have to be replaced, and on April 7 he cabled this decision to Washington. (That day, Ely had told Collins that he had reached the same conclusion.)

Dulles replied that he had conferred with the President, and that while they were "disposed to back" Collins' final decision, they wanted to make sure he understood their position. What had been happening in Vietnam, Dulles said, resulted from "a basic and dangerous misunderstanding" between the U.S. and France, and the replacement of Diem would not solve that problem. Rather ". . . the ouster of Diem on the present conditions mean that from now on we will be merely paying the bill and the French will be calling the tune."

to buy political support was merely a repetition of the American experience with the Chiang Kai-shek regime in China, for which the United States is still paying a heavy price. It was the same method—directed at the same groups—which the French had already used with such a marked lack of success in southern Viet-Nam. This time, too, it failed."

⁴²See Collins, *Lightning Joe*, pp. 400-401, and Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, pp. 244 ff. One of these was Thé, who then reversed his position, allegedly after he was "bought" again. See Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, vol. II (New York: Praeger, 1968), pp. 869, 1105.

⁴³Republicans Knowland, Bridges, Millikin, Saltonstall, Wiley, H. Alexander Smith, and Democrats Lyndon Johnson, Clements, Thomas C. Hennings (Mo.), Green, George, Carl T. Hayden, and Russell.

⁴⁴Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, Legislative Meetings Series.

⁴⁵Dulles Telephone Calls Series. There is no record of their conversation.

Dulles added that a second factor from the Washington perspective was ". . . that there will be very strong opposition in the Congress to supporting the situation in Indochina generally and Vietnam in particular if Diem is replaced under existing circumstances. We do not say that this opposition may not in the last instance be overcome, particularly if you personally can make a case before the Congressional committees but Mansfield who is looked upon with great respect by his colleagues with reference to this matter, is adamantly opposed to abandonment of Diem under present conditions."⁴⁶

By at least April 11, 1955, Washington policymakers had generally concluded that Diem would have to be replaced. In a telephone conversation that day with his brother Allen, Director of the CIA, Secretary Dulles said, "it looks like the rug is coming out from under the fellow in Southeast Asia [Diem]." He added that he was having lunch with the President, and "that would be it. Probably it [Diem's successor] will be Q or B [Quat or Buu Loc]."⁴⁷

Later that day, after Eisenhower apparently agreed that the change should be made, Secretary Dulles talked with Walter Robertson.⁴⁸ He told Robertson that in view of the impending change, "now is the time to get any commitments we want from the French." They also talked about consulting Members of Congress. Robertson said he would talk to Mansfield and Judd. Dulles said he would call Walter George (who had become the new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after the Democrats regained control of the Senate in the 1954 election).

Dulles then called George, who was in Georgia at the time:⁴⁹

The Sec. said things are not going well in Vietnam. G. judged that. The Sec. said we may have to make some changes which he is extremely reluctant to do. He can't talk about it on the telephone but wanted G. to know things are boiling there. G. asked if Collins is concerned. The Sec. said he and Ely feel we have to make changes. We are talking with Mansfield though the Sec. does not know that he agrees but we may have to do it at any rate. The Sec. is not asking for a commitment on the phone but didn't want G. to be surprised.

On April 17, Collins was recalled to Washington for a discussion of the situation. He first met with Eisenhower, who apparently agreed that Diem would have to be replaced. He then met several times with Dulles and the members of the Vietnam Working Group, (headed by Young), as well as with a State-CIA-DOD group, and after considerable discussion the Working Group proposed a compromise under which Phan Huy Quat and Tran Van Do would become President and Vice President. Diem would become chairman of a consultative council, which would continue until a permanent structure of government was created by a provisional national assembly. Dulles first opposed but then accepted this proposal, and it was also supported by Allen Dulles, Mansfield, and Collins himself.

⁴⁶See *PP. DOD* ed. book 10, pp. 894-906 for Collins' cable of April 7 and pp. 907-909 for Dulles' cable of the same date.

⁴⁷Dulles Telephone Calls Series.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Thus, on April 27, a cable was sent to Paris and Saigon outlining the new U.S. position.⁵⁰ This cable is of considerable interest not only for what it reveals about the way in which the U.S. was seeking to manipulate and control events in supposedly "independent" Vietnam, but also as a "point" against which another famous cable, that of August 1963 giving the green light for the coup against Diem, was an ironic and tragic "counterpoint."

The April 27 cable explained that the U.S. would officially maintain support for Diem "... until and unless Vietnamese leaders develop alternate proposal which Bao Dai would support." But this was only to be the official U.S. posture, as the cable acknowledged: "While the Vietnamese in Saigon should appear to be the framers of a new government, Collins and Ely will probably have to be in practice the catalysts. This may result in stories regarding a new Collins-Ely 'formula' but we should make every attempt to keep the Vietnamese label." Accordingly, if the Vietnamese were unable to agree on a candidate, "... then Ely and Collins will have to recommend a name for Bao Dai to designate to form a new government under the proper terms and conditions."

Collins and Ely should also "... urge Diem to serve in a new capacity, if he will, and provide full support for the new government. If Diem refuses, the program should nevertheless be carried out anyway."

These proposals were agreed to by some officials in the State Department only when it appeared to be the only available compromise. As Kenneth Young said in a memo to Walter Robertson on April 30, 1955, "None of us [Vietnam Working Group] believed in them but we were faced with Collins' strong recommendations, and the fact that he had been to the White House the first day after his arrival."⁵¹

On April 26, at the regular weekly meeting with Republican congressional leaders, Eisenhower reported that Diem was losing public support and that General Collins was discouraged about the situation. (The President did not reveal to the leaders why Collins was in Washington, or the fact that a decision to replace Diem was nearing completion. He told them that Collins had come back to testify before Congress.)⁵²

On the night of April 27, Secretary Dulles discussed the cable on the new U.S. position with Republicans on the Far East Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Knowland, Hickenlooper and Smith). They met at his house because, as he told Knowland, if they met at the State Department or at the Capitol, "it would be in the press."⁵³

While these events were taking place in Washington, fighting erupted again in Saigon (Cholon), where Diem's troops, with continuing assistance from Lansdale and the CIA, successfully attacked the Binh Xuyen forces. Lansdale took the position that the Diem forces were winning, and urged skeptical U.S. Embassy per-

⁵⁰PP, DOD ed., book 10, pp. 941-944.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 945. For one interesting report on Collins' views, summarizing his "debriefing" at the Department of State on April 25, 1955, see *ibid.*, pp. 937-940.

⁵²Eisenhower Library, Summary of Legislative Leadership Meeting, Supplementary Notes, Apr 26, 1955. Whitman File, Legislative Meetings Series.

⁵³Dulles Telephone Calls Series

sonnel to go out in the streets and see for themselves.⁵⁴ He insisted on sending his own cable to Washington, and said in his memoirs, "It must have been this particular message that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles mentioned to me months later. His staff had brought him my message while he was at a dinner party. After reading it, he had excused himself and gone to the White House to see the President and inform him. President Eisenhower had then made the decision to support Diem, as far as the U.S. could."⁵⁵

Although Lansdale is not entirely correct about the timing of the decision, it appears that after receiving word of the renewed fighting, including Lansdale's version of the situation, Secretary Dulles ordered a cable to be sent to Saigon and Paris suspending action on the earlier cable. In a telephone conversation with his brother Allen on the morning of April 28,⁵⁶ however, he said that the renewal of the conflict did not mean that "we should hold up our planning. AWD said it takes us off the hook. It is better to make a change in the light of a civil war situation." (Judging by this conversation, Secretary Dulles was not, at that time at least, as strong a supporter of Diem as he might appear to have been.)

There was also a strong reaction from Congress, as described by Young in his April 30 memo to Robertson: "Senator Mansfield issued a long statement in support of Diem on April 29. If Diem is forced out Mansfield would have us stop all aid to Viet-Nam except of a humanitarian nature. Senators Knowland and Humphrey have also backed Diem. A large number of members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee after hearing Collins have informed the department through Congresswoman Edna F. Kelly (D/N.Y.) that they would not favor the State Department withdrawing support from Diem. Collins met with the Far East Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, separately with Senator Mansfield, and with about a dozen of the House Committee." Young added that while Collins and Sturm (who attended the congressional meetings with Collins) had said that "these legislators would give no trouble, Sturm informing us after seeing Senator Mansfield that there was nothing to it," he (Young) and others in the Philippine and Southeast Asia staff felt that ". . . there is [sic] going to be real difficulties on the Hill if Diem is forced out by what appears to be French-Bao Dai action."⁵⁷

Faced with these reactions, and with the success of Diem's forces, the executive branch reversed itself in a cable on May 1 cancelling the April 27 cable. The uncertainty in Washington was comparable

⁵⁴Iron Mike O'Daniel needed little encouragement. "He rode past the Vietnamese troops in his sedan, flying the American flag, and though he wasn't supposed to take sides, he leaned out and gave them the thumbs-up sign, shouting, 'Give 'em hell, boys!'" Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution*, p. 123. See also Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, p. 288.

⁵⁵In the *Midst of Wars*, p. 300.

⁵⁶Dulles Telephone Calls Series.

⁵⁷PP, DOD ed., book 10, p. 946. For statements by Mansfield and Humphrey see CR, vol. 101, pp. 5288-5291. There is no mention of these committee meetings in the historical series of either committee, which would suggest that they were either held at the State Department or were completely off-the-record.

On May 3, 1955, the President held a bipartisan legislative leaders conference at which Dulles discussed several foreign policy problems, including Vietnam, but his presentation of that issue was very brief, and in the discussion that followed there were no questions or discussion of it by the leaders who were present. (The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss the administration's proposed 1955 foreign aid legislation.) Eisenhower Library, Summary of Bipartisan Legislative Leadership Meeting, May 3, 1955, Whitman File, Legislative Meetings Series.

to that in August 1963. "We are," said Young, "in a bewildering, fluid situation."⁵⁸ The intelligence community correctly predicted in an SIE on May 2, 1955, however, that although the situation was fluid, Diem had the upper hand, and that with continued U.S. help he would stabilize the situation.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, Diem's brother Nhu, with the help of the CIA (Lansdale was not directly involved), had organized in late April 1955 a countergroup to the United Front of Nationalist Forces. This new group, the National Revolutionary Congress of the Vietnamese People (also called the National Revolutionary Movement), was backed by the labor federation and other elements in the earlier coalitions that Nhu had organized in 1953 and again in 1954.

The Revolutionary Congress met in Saigon on May 4, 1955, and announced its support for Diem. Prior to the May 4 meeting, however, a number of other nationalist leaders, saying they wanted a more dynamic plan, broke away from Nhu's group and formed one of their own. Led by the Hoa Hao and by General Thé's faction of the Cao Dai, they organized the Revolutionary Committee (formally called the General Assembly of Democratic Revolutionary Forces), which demanded that Bao Dai be removed and Diem become head of a new government. The group also demanded the complete withdrawal of the French.

After meeting with Lansdale, however, the leaders of the Revolutionary Committee were persuaded to work more closely with Nhu's group.⁶⁰

These developments were very troubling to the French, who responded at a tripartite Foreign Ministers' meeting in Paris May 8-11, 1955, with the suggestion that they withdraw their forces from Vietnam. French Prime Minister Edgar Faure (who replaced Mendès-France in February 1955) said that Diem was ". . . not only incapable but mad (*fou*). He ruined our chances for a possible solution just when it was in the offing. France can no longer take risks with him." Faure warned that Diem would "yield to the revolutionary groups," which were under the influence of the Viet Minh—"a fact," he said, referring especially to Lansdale, "that certain Americans do not seem sufficiently aware of. . . ."⁶¹

Dulles replied that the only choice for the U.S. at that point was to support Diem or to withdraw. "US does not agree with French opinion of Diem. If he had been a non-entity he would have collapsed but he did not. He showed so much ability that US fails to see how he can be got [sic] rid of now. It is assumed that France would not wish to do so by force."⁶²

The meeting failed to produce a joint position, and it was obvious that the two powers had finally come to a breaking point over Vietnam policy. The U.S. no longer felt, as Dulles had said in the fall of

⁵⁸PP, DOD ed., book 10, p. 946.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 955-958. At this point (May 3, 1955) there was an intriguing phone conversation between Secretary Dulles and former Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York (Dulles Telephone Calls Series), during which Dewey said he had received a cable from Diem, and Dulles told him to call Young in the State Department and to "do what he says to about it." There is no further information as to what this involved, but it was probably related to the effort then being made to give Diem renewed support, including domestic support in the U.S.

⁶⁰See Lansdale's description of these events, *In the Midst of Wars*, pp. 301-304.

⁶¹From State Department cables in PP, DOD ed., book 10, pp. 959-963.

⁶²Ibid., p. 965.

1954, that it did not want to be "saddled" with the entire responsibility for Vietnam. Propelled by Diem's success against the sects, and by the momentum toward intervention being generated by the responsibilities already assumed, the U.S. leadership decided that the time had come to take over completely from the French. As expressed in a memorandum by General Bonesteel (the Defense member of the NSC Planning Board), "M. Faure's proposal to Mr. Dulles that the French withdraw their forces from Vietnam may, if properly played, permit a real reversal of the trend toward Communism in Southeast Asia. If the U.S. can and will make a deal with Diem, in which he pledges to protect French citizens remaining after French troops leave, in return for our assurances of increased aid and the rapid and effective training of his army, we should be happy to see the French leave."

Bonesteel added that this would ". . . clearly disengage us from the taint of Colonialism derived from our support of the French and Bao Dai which has plagued us throughout Asia. It would put us clearly in our traditional role of supporting the 'independence and legitimate national aspirations' of people."

U.S. support of Vietnam, he said, ". . . might, of course, eventually involve us in a substantial commitment. However, this is by no means certain, and there is a real likelihood training, technical assistance and moderate aid will be all that is required. We should not forget that we are *already* committed under SEATO to defend Viet Nam against overt attack. The new situation would permit, in psychological terms, the all-out use of 'Militant Liberty' to help build free Viet Nam resolve."⁶³

In January 1956, the Diem government asked France to withdraw its remaining 35,000 troops from Vietnam, and on April 26, 1956, the French military command in Vietnam was dissolved and the last French Union forces left the country. Between 1945 and the end of fighting in 1954, when fighting stopped, about 75,000 soldiers of the French Expeditionary Corps died in Vietnam, including about 20,700 Frenchmen, many of them officers, 11,600 members of the French Foreign Legion, 15,200 Africans recruited from French colonies and 26,700 indigenous regulars. An estimated 1 million Vietnamese, most of them civilians, had also perished.

Diem Consolidates His Power

Following his initial success against the Binh Xuyen, coupled with the success of Nhu and Lansdale in bringing the various nationalist groups into the general framework of the National Revolutionary Movement, Diem moved to consolidate his power. First, with complete support from the U.S., he announced that he would not meet with the North Vietnamese to discuss the 1956 elections as provided by the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 975 (emphasis in original) During testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee on May 17, 1955, Dulles commented on his meeting with Faure. See *SFRC His. Ser.*, vol. VII, p. 496.

The term "militant liberty" was coined by John Broger, then a Defense Department civilian employee, based on Lansdale's work in the Philippines. According to Lansdale, Broger "sold the idea to Radford." CRS Interview with Edward Lansdale, Apr. 29, 1983.

and that those elections would not be held.⁶⁴ His explanation, and that of the U.S., was that his government had not been a party to the Geneva Declaration in which the election was stipulated (nor had the U.S.), and that elections were not possible unless they could be genuinely free.

He then announced (July 7, 1955) that there would be a national referendum in October at which voters could choose between Bao Dai's monarchy or a republic, which he (Diem) would head.

Despite U.S. advice that this referendum should not appear to be too one-sided, and that something like a 60 percent margin would be adequate, as well as more politic, Diem won the October 23 referendum by 98.2 percent of the vote, and designated himself as President of the Republic. "There is not the slightest doubt that this plebiscite," Bernard Fall commented, "was only a shade more fraudulent than most electoral tests under a dictatorship. In nearly all electoral areas, there were thousands more 'Yes' votes than voters. . . . Thus, contrary to many official statements on the subject, the South Vietnamese Government must indeed be considered a revolutionary government and not one that is, in a phrase cherished by many Americans, 'legally constituted.'"⁶⁵

The U.S. Government, however, hailed the results of the referendum. In the words of the State Department, "We are glad to see the evolution of orderly and effective democratic processes in an area of Southeast Asia which has been and continues to be threatened by Communist efforts to impose totalitarian control."⁶⁶

There was very little reaction from Congress, which was not in session at the time, but a few weeks earlier Senator Mansfield, reporting on his trip to Indochina in September, declared that during the year since his last trip to Vietnam the situation had improved considerably, "largely through the dedication and courage of Ngo Dinh Diem."⁶⁷ "In the Diem government," he added, "there now exists for the first time a genuine alternative to the authoritarian regime of Ho Chi Minh." In order for the Diem alternative to succeed however, Diem, in Mansfield's opinion, would need to accomplish these objectives:

1. To hold elections for a constituent assembly in south Vietnam at the earliest possible time as a first step in developing representative and responsible government;
2. To complete the political unification of south Viet Nam by a final resolution of the problem of the sects and other dissidents;

⁶⁴The U.S. position on the question of all-Vietnam elections was decided at an NSC meeting on June 13, 1955, the records of which are still classified. In preparation for this decision, the State Department had undertaken various studies on the subject during the spring of 1955, especially how Communist gains could be minimized if an election were held.

⁶⁵Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, pp. 257-258. The October referendum was followed by the election of a Constituent Assembly in March 1956, which also was said to have been marked by many irregularities. Cf. Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, vol. II, pp. 942-943. For one analysis of the consequences of the decision not to hold elections, see Franklin B. Weinstein, *Vietnam's Unheld Elections: The Failure to Carry Out the 1956 Reunification Elections and the Effect on Hanoi's Present Outlook*, Data Paper No. 60 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1966).

⁶⁶Department of State Bulletin, Nov. 7, 1955.

⁶⁷U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos*, Report by Senator Mike Mansfield, October 6, 1955, 84th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1955). For similar views see Mansfield's article, "Reprise in Viet Nam," *Harpers*, (January 1956).

3. To strengthen and improve the armed forces;
4. To work for the unification of Viet Nam by peaceful means, in accord with the free and accurate expression of the wishes of the Vietnamese people;
5. To deal promptly with the problems of economic reconstruction and development, particularly those involving the farmers and their families who constitute the great preponderance of the population;
6. To reduce reliance on foreign aid as rapidly as possible by vigorous measures of self-help; and
7. To encourage free countries and their nationals who accept the political changes in Viet Nam and who have a constructive contribution to make to cooperate in the work of reconstruction and development.

Two other congressional study missions in the fall of 1955 also voiced support for Diem. Both Senator Theodore Francis Green, and a House Foreign Affairs Committee delegation consisting of Democrats Zablocki, John Jarman (Okla.), Robert C. Byrd (W. Va.), and Republicans Judd, Church and Adair, found, in the words of Green, that ". . . the government of Ngo Dinh Diem is demonstrating really admirable and remarkable courage in facing problems which would cause lesser men to throw up their hands in despair."⁶⁸

Another important development with respect to U.S. support for Vietnam and for Diem occurred in the fall of 1955 with the creation of an organization called the American Friends of Vietnam (AFV), a citizens' lobby supported by leaders in Congress, business, labor, the churches, universities, and by former executive branch officials. Origins of this group are somewhat unclear, but it is reasonable to assume that the U.S. Government was indirectly if not directly involved, as it was in a number of similar citizens' groups during the 1950s and 1960s. Even more directly involved was the International Rescue Committee (IRC), another group which worked very closely with the U.S. Government, particularly its President, Leo Cherne, as well as Cherne's associate, Joseph Buttinger, both of whom were founding members of the AFV.⁶⁹

As of 1956, the chairman of the AFV was Gen. John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, who had just returned from Vietnam and had retired from active duty. The co-chairman was William J. Donovan, former head of the OSS, who had just completed a tour of duty as

⁶⁸U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Technical Assistance in the Far East, South Asia, and Middle East*, Report of Senator Theodore Francis Green, January 13, 1956, 84th Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1956). The report of the Zablocki group was H. Rept. 84-2147, May 10, 1956. On January 25, 1956, the House group gave an oral report to the full Foreign Affairs Committee meeting in executive session, (HFRCS H. Ser. vol. XVII, pp. 361 ff.), but this was mainly a repetition of the information in the report itself.

⁶⁹Cherne visited Vietnam in early August 1954 in connection with studying possible IRC assistance to "intellectuals" among the refugees, during which he met (probably through Fishel) and became an advocate of Diem. See Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 131. Buttinger was then sent to Vietnam to carry out the IRC program, and Lansdale introduced him to Diem and a number of others in the government. During the several months he was there, Buttinger met with Diem a number of times. In 1956, Buttinger became vice chairman and chairman of the Executive Committee of the AFV, but later became disillusioned and left the organization in 1965. Subsequently he wrote the two-volume work, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, which has been cited herein, in which he stated (vol. II, p. 1129), that the influence of the AFV "has been highly overestimated by its critics."

See also Aaron Levenstein, *Escape to Freedom: The Story of the International Rescue Committee* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983).

U.S. Ambassador to Thailand. Among its members were such notables as Justice William O. Douglas, Henry R. Luce (publisher of *Time* and *Life*), William Randolph Hearst, Jr., and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. And so it went. Obviously, this was not an ordinary, run-of-the-mill citizens' group. Also listed as members in 1956 were 32 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, including several members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and five Senators, including John F. Kennedy. A later listing in 1961 still showed "Pres. Kennedy" as a member, as well as Mansfield and House Majority Leader McCormack.⁷⁰

Although there were a number of Democrats and "liberals" among the membership of the AFV, there were also a number of Republicans and "conservatives." Their common bond appeared to be their support for a strong U.S. role in Vietnam.

The close connection of the AFV with the Government of Vietnam (and of the U.S.) is suggested by the following description of the cross-organizational relationships of some of its leaders:⁷¹

Another member of the executive committee [American Friends of Vietnam] was Elliot Newcomb, who was later to become treasurer of the organization. Newcomb and Harold Oram . . . were partners in a public relations firm, Newcomb-Oram, which two months before the formation of the American Friends of Vietnam had signed a contract with Diem's government to handle its public relations in the United States. Newcomb subsequently left the firm, but Oram continued to be registered with the Justice Department as a foreign agent acting for the Diem government until June 30, 1961. The Diem government paid the Oram firm a \$3,000 monthly fee plus expenses, with a third of it earmarked for a full-time campaign director. This position was held from 1956 to the end of the contract in 1961 by Gilbert Jonas, who had been executive secretary of the American Friends of Vietnam and later became its secretary and assistant treasurer.

During Diem's 1957 trip to the United States, it was the Oram firm, together with the AFV, that handled public relations, and many of Diem's speeches during the trip were written by Buttlinger.⁷²

An example of the political dynamics and influence of those associated with the activities of the AFV was the following incident:⁷³

The telephone operator in the Chancery was used to such things, but even she blinked a little when Cardinal Spellman picked up the telephone and said: "Get me Joe Kennedy." When these two powerful men got on the line together, one winter afternoon in 1955, they settled quickly, as men of decision do, the steps that had to be taken to swing the wavering Eisenhower Administration solidly behind the young regime of Premier Ngo Dinh Diem. The report of this extraordinary con-

⁷⁰The 1956 list is contained in the printed proceedings of a 1956 symposium on *America's Stake in Vietnam*, published by the American Friends of Vietnam in 1956, and the 1961 list on the letterhead of the AFV in a mailing that year.

⁷¹Robert Scheer, *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam. A Report to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions* (Santa Barbara, Calif., 1965), pp. 32-33.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷³Robert Scheer and Warren Hinckle "The 'Vietnam Lobby,'" *Ramparts*, 4 (July 1965), p. 19.

versation comes from Joseph Buttinger, an official of the International Rescue Committee, who was sitting in Spellman's office. Buttinger had just returned from Saigon, and he brought bad news. Diem's administration was in trouble.

Kennedy arranged for Buttinger to meet with Senator Mansfield and some key State Department personnel in Washington. His son, Senator John F. Kennedy, was in California, but Buttinger had a long conversation with the Senator's assistant, Ted Sorenson. Spellman took care of the press. He set up meetings for Buttinger with editors of the *New York Times*, the editorial board of the *Herald-Tribune*, and key editors of both *Time* and *Life*. Two days later the *Times* printed an editorial containing the Buttinger thesis. Buttinger himself took pen in hand and wrote an article for the *Reporter* praising Diem as democracy's "alternative" in Southeast Asia.

The principal speaker at an AFV symposium on Vietnam in early June 1956 was Senator John F. Kennedy. He spoke on the theme of the meeting, "America's Stake in Vietnam," and it is of interest to read some of what he said:

(1) *First*, Vietnam represents the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone to the arch, the finger in the dike. Burma, Thailand, India, Japan, the Philippines and obviously Laos and Cambodia are among those whose security would be threatened if the red tide of Communism overflowed into Vietnam. In the past, our policy-makers have sometimes issued contradictory statements on this point—but the long history of Chinese invasions of Southeast Asia being stopped by Vietnamese warriors should have removed all doubt on this subject.

Moreover, the independence of Free Vietnam is crucial to the free world in fields other than the military. Her economy is essential to the economy of all of Southeast Asia; and her political liberty is an inspiration to those seeking to obtain or maintain their liberty in all parts of Asia—and indeed the world. The fundamental tenets of this nation's foreign policy, in short, depend in considerable measure upon a strong and free Vietnamese nation.

(2) *Secondly*, Vietnam represents a proving ground of democracy in Asia. However we may choose to ignore it or deprecate it, the rising prestige and influence of Communist China in Asia are unchallengeable facts. Vietnam represents the alternative to Communist dictatorship. If this democratic experiment fails, if some one million refugees have fled the totalitarianism of the North only to find neither freedom nor security in the South, then weakness, not strength, will characterize the meaning of democracy in the minds of still more Asians. The United States is directly responsible for this experiment—it is playing an important role in the laboratory where it is being conducted. We cannot afford to permit that experiment to fail.

(3) *Third* and in somewhat similar fashion, Vietnam represents a test of American responsibility and determination in

Asia. If we are not the parents of little Vietnam, then surely we are the godparents. We presided at its birth, we gave assistance to its life, we have helped to shape its future. As French influence in the political, economic and military spheres has declined in Vietnam, American influence has steadily grown. This is our offspring—we cannot abandon it, we cannot ignore its needs. And if it falls victim to any of the perils that threaten its existence—Communism, political anarchy, poverty and the rest—then the United States, with some justification, will be held responsible; and our prestige in Asia will sink to a new low.

(4) *Fourth* and finally, America's stake in Vietnam, in her strength and in her security, is a very selfish one—for it can be measured, in the last analysis, in terms of American lives and American dollars. It is now well known that we were at one time on the brink of war in Indo-China—a war which could well have been more costly, more exhausting and less conclusive than any war we have ever known. The threat of such war is not now altogether removed from the horizon. Military weakness, political instability or economic failure in the new state of Vietnam could change almost overnight the apparent security which has increasingly characterized that area under the leadership of President Diem. And the key position of Vietnam in Southeast Asia, as already discussed, makes inevitable the involvement of this nation's security in any new outbreak of trouble.

Although the Diem government had made considerable progress, Kennedy said, there was much more to be done. He proposed that the U.S. "offer" Vietnam a non-Communist "revolution," which he described as follows:⁷⁴

... We should not attempt to buy the friendship of the Vietnamese. Nor can we win their hearts by making them dependent upon our handouts. What we must offer them is a revolution—a political, economic and social revolution far superior to anything the Communists can offer—far more peaceful, far more democratic and far more locally controlled. Such a revolution will require much from the United States and much from Vietnam. We must supply capital to replace that drained by the centuries of colonial exploitation; technicians to train those handicapped by deliberate policies of illiteracy; guidance to assist a nation taking those first feeble steps toward the complexities of a republican form of government. We must assist the inspiring growth of Vietnamese democracy and economy, including the complete integration of those refugees who gave up their homes and their belongings to seek freedom. We

⁷⁴The text of Kennedy's speech is in *America's Stake in Vietnam*, and is reprinted in Wesley R. Fishel (ed.), *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict* (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock, 1968), pp. 142-147. Portions of the speech also appear in Kennedy, *The Strategy of Peace*, pp. 62-65. Allan Nevins, the Columbia University historian who edited *The Strategy of Peace*, was unstinting in his praise for Diem. In a footnote (p. 62) Nevins said, "The little republic truly became what Mr. Kennedy calls it, a proving ground of democracy. It has produced in its President, Ngo Dinh Diem, one of the true statesmen of the new Asia. Peace and order have been restored, food is abundant, the economic life is troubled only by inflation, and education is improving. With current economic aid of about \$185 million, Vietnam is a country of which the West can feel proud, and which it should continue to protect."

must provide military assistance to rebuild the new Vietnamese Army, which every day faces the growing peril of Vietminh armies across the border.

This is the revolution we can, we should, we must offer to the people of Vietnam—not as charity, not as a business proposition, not as a political maneuver, nor simply to enlist them as soldiers against Communism or as chattels of American foreign policy—but a revolution of their own making, for their own welfare, and for the security of freedom everywhere.

Kennedy concluded his speech by urging that the U.S. "never give its approval" to the election stipulated by the Geneva Declaration, which, he said, would be an "election obviously stacked and subverted in advance, urged upon us by those who have already broken their own pledges under the agreement they now seek to enforce."

At a much later date there apparently was some interest in the Foreign Relations Committee as to the possible connection of the AFV with elements of the U.S. Government (a question that remains unanswered). On March 13, 1967, Chairman Fulbright wrote to CIA Director Richard Helms to request information on whether U.S. Government funds had been made available, directly or indirectly, to the AFV.

In his reply to Fulbright on March 22, 1967, Helms declined to answer the question:⁷⁵

This is the type of query to which I would normally respond fully to either the CIA Subcommittee of Senate Appropriations or Senate Armed Services, whether the answers given were in the affirmative or negative.

The U.S. and the "New Vietnam": Waging the Counterrevolution

During 1955, the representatives and role of the United States began changing as the situation in Vietnam became more stable. In May 1955, Collins left, and a Foreign Service officer, G. Frederick Reinhardt, was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam. General O'Daniel was then replaced in November by Lt. Gen. Samuel T. Williams.

Although Lansdale continued to operate rather independently of the bureaucracy, and got along well with General Williams, he was losing his influence.⁷⁶ Despite a personal appeal to the Dulles brothers, he was told to refrain from any further involvement in Vietnam politics, and he subsequently requested and was given reassignment, leaving Vietnam at the end of 1956. (He continued, however, to work on Vietnam activities.)

In 1955, under the new team of Reinhardt and Williams, with Leland Barrows (and, beginning in 1958, Arthur Z. Gardiner) in charge of the aid program (USOM), and Nicholas Natsios as Chief

⁷⁵National Archives, RG 46.

⁷⁶The identification of those who opposed Lansdale is not clear, but it is reasonable to assume that they consisted of Far East personnel of the State Department and some elements of the CIA. See *In the Midst of Wars*, pp. 339 ff. for Lansdale's explanation. According to him, the U.S. Government had decided to support the creation of a political party, the Can Lao, directed by Nhu, to support Diem. Lansdale thought this would have a very divisive and repressive effect on the political system, as, indeed, it did. See also Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution*, pp. 129 ff.

of the CIA Station, the United States launched a large and ambitious program to keep South Vietnam free from control by the Communists.

The new U.S. program in Vietnam reflected official perceptions of the international situation, and was an attribute of the U.S. response to that situation. By the mid-1950s the Eisenhower administration, supported by prestigious American leaders, was moving toward what Eisenhower hoped would be a lessening of tension if not a détente between the United States and the Soviet Union. While warning against the continued threat of communism, he and others who took this position argued that the U.S. should be "advancing beyond a merely anti-Soviet attitude," in the words of one of these leaders, John J. McCloy. In his foreword to a 1956 report of a 1953-55 study by a group of prominent Americans,⁷⁷ sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, McCloy said, ". . . it seems to me that the struggle with Soviet Russia now extends beyond the military to the political, economic and social areas. . . . Moreover, the new leaders of the Kremlin appear to understand what Stalin failed to see—that their influence in the world increases as they decrease their bellicosity (though not their military capabilities). Accordingly, it seems, for the time being at least, that they are unlikely to jeopardize their considerable gains and influence by resorting to open war." McCloy added that he did not believe the Russians had abandoned long-term Communist goals, and it was essential, therefore, for the U.S. to remain militarily strong. But the nature of the struggle was changing, and "though our strong deterrent power may prevent Soviet aggression, we could lose the struggle for freedom because of failures in the non-military area."

These perceptions were officially expressed in a National Security Council document, NSC 5501, "The Basic National Security Policy," January 6, 1955, (an update of the October 1953 "New Look" document, NSC 162/2), which concluded that the Russians would continue to support the international Communist movement and the expansion of Russian power and influence, but that their primary goal was to defend the security of Russia and to protect its Communist regime. (In the NSC document, "The spread of communism throughout the world" was ranked last in a list of six objectives of the Russians.) As long as the Russians were "uncertain of their ability to neutralize the U.S. nuclear-air retaliatory power," this situation, the document also concluded, would continue to prevail. Thus, while maintaining its military advantage, the U.S. might be in a position to negotiate with the Russians, (and possibly also with the Chinese), and to seek some accommodation with respect to various international problems in which the two superpowers had a stake.⁷⁸

In July 1955, in keeping with this position, Eisenhower met with Russian leaders at a "summit conference" in Geneva, where he felt

⁷⁷Henry L. Roberts, *Russia and America* (New York: Harper and Bros., for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1956). The study group included, among others, Dean Rusk, W. Averell Harriman, and John D. Rockefeller III. McGeorge Bundy, Walt W. Rostow, Robert Amory, Jr., Gen. Charles H. Bonesteel III, Robert Bowie, and Gen. L. L. Lemnitzer, were also involved.

⁷⁸See Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 142-161. NSC 5501 has been declassified and is located at the National Archives, RG 273.

progress was made toward strengthening peaceful relations and co-operation.

At the same time, in keeping with their shift of emphasis, the Russians were showing a greater interest in the less-developed countries, and in providing them with economic and other forms of assistance by which to increase Russian influence.

These international developments affected the U.S. approach to the less-developed countries, including Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, in the period after 1955. Thus, while preparing against possible invasion of South Vietnam, the emphasis in the new U.S. program in Vietnam was on nonmilitary programs to compete with and to contain, if not to defeat, the Communists through the strengthened resources of local leaders supported by the United States.

The new U.S. program was also based on the assumption that there was a limit to the effectiveness of such outside help, as Eisenhower consistently maintained, and that the U.S. could not successfully substitute its will and power for those of the indigenous population. That assumption, in addition to discouraging the use of U.S. forces, also provided a built-in limitation on the number of Americans assigned to Vietnam, and on the roles they played, that tended to control the expansion of the U.S. program during the entire latter half of the 1950s. The result was that when John F. Kennedy became President in 1961, there was about the same number of U.S. personnel in Vietnam as there had been in 1956-57.

The success of the Eisenhower administration's approach to the situation in countries like Vietnam, however, depended not only on whether such a program could succeed in establishing the necessary indigenous strength to prevent Communist subversion, but also on the validity of U.S. deterrence strategy—on the ability of the U.S. to ensure the defense of such countries, should the Communists threaten to gain control through internal and/or external pressure. This was the point at which the "New Look" was potentially weak, as critics of the administration's reliance on nuclear deterrence soon began to suggest.

One of these critics was Henry A. Kissinger, an associate at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.⁷⁸ Kissinger questioned the Eisenhower administration's emphasis on nuclear deterrence ("massive retaliation"), arguing, among other things, that it might prevent the United States from adequately defending the "grey areas" around the periphery of Russia and China. "If we accept an all-or-nothing military policy," he said, "we may well find ourselves paralyzed in the years ahead, when the increasing Soviet nuclear capability undermines our willingness to run the risk of a general war for anything less than to counter a direct attack on the United States."

Indochina was one of the "grey areas" which Kissinger thought should and could be defended, and where, as he said, an "all-out American effort may still save at least Laos and Cambodia." "Our

⁷⁸Henry A. Kissinger, "Military Policy and Defense of the Grey Areas," *Foreign Affairs*, 33 (April 1955), pp. 416-428. For a discussion of the ideas of other critics of the New Look, see Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), ch. 17.

immediate task in Indochina," he wrote in early 1955, "and in other important grey areas must be to shore up the indigenous will to resist, . . . [by] a political program to gain the confidence of local populations and to remove the stigma of colonialism from us, together with a measure of economic assistance and similar steps."

Eisenhower and his associates were not unaware of the problems of defending the "grey areas," and of the difficulties inherent in the application of the New Look to situations like that in Vietnam.⁸⁰ Their response, consistent with Eisenhower's belief in indigenous actions, and his opposition to the piecemeal use of U.S. forces in response to "brush-fire" wars, as well as the new efforts being made to establish more peaceful relationships with the U.S.S.R., was to launch a major new covert counterrevolutionary, counterinsurgency program aimed at combatting the Communists, especially in the grey areas and behind the "Iron Curtain." Vietnam was to become not just a "showcase" in Asia of U.S. "nation-building"; it was also to be the prototype, after the Philippines, for U.S. counterrevolutionary, counterinsurgency programs in countries threatened by internal/external Communist pressure.

Although there had been some covert U.S. operations in Indochina during Truman's administration, which had been continued by Eisenhower, the approval of NSC 5412 on March 15, 1954, marked the official recognition and sanctioning of a much larger program of anti-Communist covert activities in Indochina and throughout the world.⁸¹

NSC 5412, "National Security Council Directive on Covert Operations," which continued to be the U.S. Government's basic directive on covert activities until the Nixon administration's NSC 40 in 1970, began with this statement of purpose:

The National Security Council, taking cognizance of the vicious covert activities of the USSR and Communist China and the governments, parties and groups dominated by them . . . to discredit and defeat the aims and activities of the United States and other powers of the free world, determined, as set forth in NSC directives 10/2 and 10/5 [of the Truman administration], that, in the interests of world peace and U.S. national security, the overt foreign activities of the U.S. Government should be supplemented by covert operations. . . .

The NSC has determined that such covert operations shall to the greatest extent practicable, in the light of U.S. and Soviet capabilities and taking into account the risk of war, be designed to

a. Create and exploit troublesome problems for International Communism, impair relations between the USSR

⁸⁰ Dulles had hoped that the doctrine of 'massive retaliation' would discourage Moscow and Peking from seeking to exploit 'national liberation' movements to their own ends, but by 1955 Eisenhower was admitting what he had probably known all along: that such a strategy [here Gaddis quotes from a letter from Eisenhower to Churchill] 'offers, of itself, no defense against the losses that we incur through the enemy's political and military nibbling. So long as he abstains from doing anything that he believes would provoke the free world to an open declaration of major war, he need not fear the "deterrent." . . . Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 178. In early 1955, NSC 5501 (see above) recognized this dilemma, and the possible need to develop a limited warfare capability to avoid the choice between permitting nibbling and retaliating massively.

⁸¹ NSC 5412 was declassified in 1977, and is located at the National Archives, RG 273. It will be published in a future volume of *FRUS*.

and Communist China and between them and their satellites, complicate control within the USSR, Communist China and their satellites, and retard the growth of the military and economic potential of the Soviet bloc.

b. Discredit the prestige and ideology of International Communism, and reduce the strength of its parties and other elements.

c. Counter any threat of a party or individuals directly or indirectly responsive to Communist control to achieve dominant power in a free world country.

d. Reduce International Communist control over any areas of the world.

e. Strengthen the orientation toward the United States of the peoples and nations of the free world, accentuate, wherever possible, the identity of interest between such peoples and nations and the United States as well as favoring, where appropriate, those groups genuinely advocating or believing in the advancement of such mutual interests, and increase the capacity and will of such peoples and nations to resist International Communism.

f. In accordance with established policies and to the extent practicable in areas dominated or threatened by International Communism, develop underground resistance and facilitate covert and guerrilla operations and ensure availability of those forces in the event of war, including wherever practicable provisions of a base upon which the military may expand these forces in time of war within active theaters of operations as well as provision for stay-behind assets and escape and evasion facilities.

NSC 5412 defined "covert operations" as ". . . all activities conducted pursuant to this directive which are so planned and executed that any U.S. Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the U.S. Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them. Specifically, such operations shall include any covert activities related to: propaganda, political action; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition; escape and evasion and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states or groups including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups; support of indigenous and anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world; deceptive plans and operations; and all activities compatible with this directive necessary to accomplish the foregoing. Such operations shall not include: armed conflict by recognized military forces, espionage and counterespionage, nor cover and deception for military operations."

To approve and coordinate most covert operations (some were required to be approved by the President), NSC 5412 established what became known as the 5412 Committee, also given the nonspecific title, the "Special Group," to reduce chances of exposure. (In 1964, after the term "Special Group" became known, the Group was called the 303 Committee. In 1970, it was renamed the 40 Committee.) The 5412 Committee and its successors consisted of the Deputy Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense,

the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, and the Director of the CIA, with the latter serving as the Group's "action officer." In 1957, the Chairman of the JCS also became a member.

Under the authority of NSC 5412, the U.S. Government launched in 1954-55 a large covert and clandestine CIA program in Vietnam, as well as related programs in Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, in an effort to apply the full range of intelligence methods and operations to the defense of Southeast Asia against the Communists. Among the programs in which the CIA played a key role, in addition to the agency's political role, were paramilitary programs to arm, train and utilize various groups, especially the mountain tribes, against the Communists, and to augment and train national and local police for various security functions associated with the effort to control the insurgency and to maintain support for the Diem regime. This is the description by one former official of the CIA.⁸²

No facet of CIA's intelligence or operations functions was ignored in the fight for Indochina. Intelligence agents were dispatched by sea, air, and land into Communist-held areas. Operators worked on the Chinese target, the North Vietnamese target, the Pathet Lao target, the Vietcong target. Counterintelligence assumed a high priority: to build up a competent South Vietnamese security service, to help train the police, to infiltrate the North Vietnamese and Vietcong intelligence and security units. CIA—alone or in collaboration with South Vietnamese or other American agencies—carried out psychological warfare programs and played a serious role in the political action operations designed to advance the cause to which Washington had committed itself.

One of the most notable features of the CIA's political activities was the direct, personal support given Diem by having an American serve as his personal confidant and adviser, as Lansdale had done with Magsaysay in the Philippines. This role was first performed by Fishel, then by Lansdale, then by Lansdale and Fishel, then by Fishel and another exceptional American official, Wolf Ladejinsky, and finally by Ladejinsky.⁸³

Wolf Ladejinsky, a naturalized citizen who was born and raised in Russia, had worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture for many years. His specialty was Asian agriculture, with emphasis on the politics of rural areas. After World War II, he played a key role in agrarian reform in Japan, and then as a staff member of the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction in China and Taiwan. (Representative Walter Judd, who was a strong supporter of the commission, came to know him in that capacity, as did Senator Hubert Humphrey, and both of them supported Ladejinsky's work.) When Lansdale first began working in Vietnam in the summer of 1954 he asked that Ladejinsky be assigned to work with him, spe-

⁸²Harry Rositzke, *The CIA's Secret Operations* (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1977), p. 180.

⁸³In 1956, William Colby, then assigned to Italy, was asked by the CIA to become the U.S. political adviser to Diem, "operating under private cover." He argued that he should stay in Italy through the 1958 elections, and the CIA agreed. In 1959 Colby became Deputy Chief of the CIA Station in Saigon, and Station Chief in 1960. See William E. Colby, *Honorable Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 141.

cifically on strengthening Diem's support in rural areas. The assignment was not made, however, until early in 1955, at which point Lansdale arranged for the appointment and introduced Ladejinsky to Diem. In the spring of 1956, Ladejinsky became a personal adviser to Diem, remaining in that post until 1961.

The role of these American advisers was central to the U.S. program in Vietnam. They provided access to, influence over, and intelligence about Diem and his government that could not have been obtained in any other way. Because they lived in or near the palace, and were considered to be virtually members of Diem's own staff, they were able to give him support and guidance, while also keeping the U.S. Government informed. This enabled the United States to respond in a sensitive and forceful way to Diem's needs.

Ladejinsky was especially valuable in connection with the agrarian reform program, a key element of U.S. strategy for defeating the Communists in Vietnam, and for developing a more "democratic" society.

Ironically, in December 1954 the Agriculture Department, to which responsibility for agricultural attachés was being transferred from the State Department, announced that Ladejinsky was not going to be continued as an agricultural attaché because he did not meet "security requirements." (Agriculture apparently did not know of Ladejinsky's work with the CIA.) This was quickly cleared up, however, by the Dulles brothers, and he was then assigned to Vietnam per Lansdale's request.⁸⁴

Overt Aid for "Nation-Building"

In addition to making a determined covert effort to defend South Vietnam, the United States launched in 1955 a large overt program of economic, military, and governmental (public administration) assistance to Vietnam, as well as a substantial program, primarily economic, in Laos and to a lesser extent in Cambodia. (Both Laos and Cambodia were still being assisted by the French.)

This new U.S. aid program was spurred and aided by the interest then being shown by a growing number of American intellectuals (partly as a result of overt and covert U.S. Government subsidies to research institutions and publications) in "helping others help themselves," as the popular saying went, throughout the world. From the most prestigious American institutions there began to flow in the middle 1950s a series of proposals for U.S. programs to assist in the development of the "emerging" or "underdeveloped" or "less-developed" countries (later called the "Third World") in order to meet the "revolution of rising expectations." (One of these authors, who suggested a schema by which economic development could and would occur, was Walt W. Rostow, who later played a key role in the Vietnam war as a Presidential adviser in the 1960s.) The general assumption of these proposals was that the U.S. had a

⁸⁴See the *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 1954 *et seq.* In the Dulles Telephone Calls Series in 1955-56 there are various references to Ladejinsky and to the importance attached to his new role in Vietnam, especially in telephone conversations between the Dulles brothers.

For an excellent analysis and compilation of Ladejinsky's views on Asian agrarian reform, and on ways of countering the appeal of communism in rural areas, see Louis J. Walinsky (ed.), *Agrarian Reform as Unfinished Business: The Selected Papers of Wolf Ladejinsky* (New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 1977).

responsibility to assist other countries, especially those more "traditional" and "less fortunate," to "develop" or to "modernize." "Nation building" it was called by some. To the charge that this would constitute "intervention," and that such intervention could have adverse consequences, the proponents of such programs answered that there was no choice. If the U.S. did not provide assistance, and a "democratic alternative," the Communists (Russians, Chinese) would, and the end result could be some form of totalitarianism, Communist or not. Moreover, to refrain from intervening would be to intervene negatively, since in the modern world, where all countries are affected by modernizing influences, there is no nonintervention.

Because of the different needs of individual countries, of course, there would have to be a variety of forms of assistance, as well as different strategies and timetables for development. The striking feature of most of these proposals, however, and of virtually all U.S. Government foreign aid programs, was the acceptance, indeed the advocacy, of what might be called the "Western" model of development. Although there were some conceptual differences among the advocates of development assistance, most of them seemed to assume that economic growth was a necessary and desirable as well as inevitable function of "modern" life, and that, allowing for some variation from country to country, the general trend throughout the third world would and should be toward industrial/technological development. A similar Western model tended to be applied in the political realm, where it was generally assumed that the Western democratic state was the goal toward which all countries would and should move. In the case of U.S. Government planning, it was assumed that such economic and political "modernization" would tend to increase the number of America's friends in the world and slowly reduce the influence of its enemies.

Frances FitzGerald (whose father, Desmond FitzGerald, was a central figure in the Vietnam activities of the foreign aid program and the CIA during this period), commented in her study of U.S. policy in Vietnam, *Fire in the Lake*, on these aspects of the ideology of American involvement:⁶⁵

The idea that the mission of the United States was to build democracy around the world had become a convention of American politics in the 1950s. Among certain circles it was more or less assumed that democracy, that is, electoral democracy combined with private ownership and civil liberties, was what the United States had to offer the Third World. Democracy provided not only the moral basis for American opposition to Communism, but the practical methods for making that opposition work. Whether American officials actually believed that the Asians and the Africans wanted or needed democracy—and many officials definitely did not—they saw lip service to it as a necessity to selling American overseas commitments to the American people. The American officials and scholars who backed Diem adhered to this convention precisely.

⁶⁵Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 115-116.

In addition to the general support among intellectuals for an active U.S. role in assisting third world countries, there was a small group specifically devoted to the program in Vietnam. This consisted primarily of the academicians in or associated with the Michigan State University group (both in Vietnam and at the university).⁸⁶ No American member of the group was fluent in Vietnamese, however, and there were at the time only a few persons in other U.S. universities who were fluent in the language. According to Fishel,⁸⁷

... we couldn't have chosen an arena of war more alien to our national experience and knowledge if we had tried to do so. The number of American scholars expert on Vietnam and Indochina could have been numbered on one hand at the time of the Geneva Conference. More directly indicative of our national disinterest may be the fact that in the year 1967 there was as yet *no* university in the United States with a full-fledged center for the study of Vietnam, and that a group of leading U.S. "Vietnamologists" organized into a Council for Vietnamese Studies found it impossible to secure financial assistance from any major American philanthropic foundation for basic or applied research on Vietnam.

Most of the Michigan State group became advocates and apologists for the U.S. role in Vietnam, even though, as with some members of the American Friends of Vietnam, there was some disillusionment with Diem toward the end of the 1950s, and with the results of U.S. aid.⁸⁸ Most of the MSU group, led by Fishel and Robert Scigliano, also strongly defended the subsequent U.S. involvement in the war during the 1960s.⁸⁹

⁸⁶In the area of public administration (there was roughly an equal number in other areas, primarily police administration), there were about 50 of these (faculty from other universities also served as consultants), the most prominent of whom besides Wesley Fishel were Robert Scigliano, Guy H. Fox, Roy Jumper, John D. Montgomery, Ralph H. Smuckler, Jr., Milton C. Taylor, Richard W. Lindholm, Joseph J. Zasloff, Adrian Jaffe, Edward W. Weidner, Gerald C. Hickey, and Frank C. Child. Others included Luther A. Allen, Lloyd W. Woodruff, John T. Dorsey, Jr., Jason L. Finkle, Dale L. Rose, Marvin Murphy, James B. Hendry, and John D. Donoghue. For their technical reports and other writings see the bibliography in Buttinger, *Vietnam: The Dragon Embattled*, and in Scigliano's study, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), the most notable publication to result from this project. Three other such studies are worth noting: John D. Montgomery, *The Politics of Foreign Aid: American Experience in Southeast Asia* (New York: Praeger for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1962); Lindholm, *Viet-Nam: The First Five Years*; Scigliano and Fox, *Technical Assistance in Vietnam: The Michigan State University Experience*, cited earlier. Fishel also edited two books which contained contributions by some of the Michigan State Group, *Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence* which consisted of papers given at a conference in 1959 sponsored and published by the American Friends of Vietnam, and *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*, which was cited above.

⁸⁷*Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*, p. viii.

⁸⁸See, for example, Adrian Jaffe and Milton C. Taylor, "A Crumbling Bastion: Flattery and Lies Won't Save Vietnam," *New Republic*, June 19, 1961; Frank C. Child, "Vietnam—The Eleventh Hour," *New Republic*, Dec. 3, 1961; Milton C. Taylor "South Vietnam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress," *Pacific Affairs*, 34 (September 1961), pp. 242-256.

⁸⁹See, for example, Fishel's article in the June 14, 1964 *Washington Post*, "Only Choice in Asia: Stay and Fight," and Scigliano's article in the December 11, 1966 *New York Times Magazine*, "We Cannot Accept a Communist Seizure of Vietnam," both of which were reprinted in Fishel, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*.

This is Frances Fitzgerald's pertinent comment on the Michigan State public administration group, in relation to the U.S. approach to development:

"By 1963 it would have been difficult to argue that they had any influence on the Diem regime itself. Still, their studies added a new dimension to the art of international public relations. It did not much matter that a number of the social scientists turned into critics of the Diem regime on their return to the United States, it was enough that they should discuss the regime in terms of 'developing administrative structures' and 'functional integration of value

The U.S. aid program in Vietnam during the latter half of the 1950s was large and expensive, second only in size and cost to the program in Korea in the area outside Europe. Having spent \$2 billion (the estimate goes as high as \$3.6 billion) during 1950-54, the U.S. spent another \$1.5 to \$2 billion in Vietnam in 1955-61 (not including CIA funds or the costs of maintaining the military advisory group, which were paid from Defense Department funds). In terms of U.S. Government personnel, there were approximately 500 American nationals assigned to Vietnam in 1955 (including about 400 military), and by 1961 there were about 1,500 (including about 700 military). Under the Geneva agreements, the U.S. was not supposed to increase the size of its military mission. This was circumvented in the spring of 1956 by a 350-man "Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission [TERM]."⁹⁰ There were another 400 or so American nationals in Vietnam under U.S. Government contract.

Also impressive was the extent of U.S. involvement in the affairs of Government in Vietnam. Working primarily through the contract with Michigan State, but also through various other groups, such as a Brookings Institution team funded by the Ford Foundation, the United States became engaged in studying and in attempting to make improvements in almost every major facet of Vietnamese Government, from the national government in Saigon to provinces, districts, and villages. An American lawyer, aided by a Filipino lawyer who had worked with Lansdale, even drafted the Vietnamese constitution in the spring of 1956.⁹¹

Budget, finance and the police were the functional areas given greatest attention, with a good deal of work also on public personnel policies (the civil service) and on strengthening the office of the President.

Although there has been very little published on the efforts which were made to "modernize" Vietnamese governmental institutions during the latter half of the 1950s, one study by a participant in the Michigan State program provides some information on the subject, particularly on what was attempted in the area of finance.⁹² According to this source, "The most sensitive and also the most important, reforms which the United States has endeavored to introduce in Southeast Asia have concerned taxes, the civil service, and currencies. Even where there have been little or no domestic pressures for improvements in these fields, American advisers have attempted to persuade the host governments that such reforms were both just and prudent."

U.S. efforts in the fiscal field, this study reports, began in Vietnam in the fall of 1955, when, at U.S. urging, the Vietnamese agreed to establish joint teams of Vietnamese and Americans to review possible changes. Political and bureaucratic resistance among the Vietnamese, including Diem's own resistance to outside

systems. The language alone gave the American project in Vietnam an atmosphere of solidity and respectability. It implied if the authors did not make the direct assertion that the United States had certain unimpeachable designs for the development of South Vietnam which with its vast resources of technical expertise it could not fail to achieve." *Fire in the Lake*, p. 115.

⁹⁰For further details, see Spector, *Advice and Support*, pp. 259-262.

⁹¹See J. A. C. Grant, "The Vietnam Constitution of 1956," *American Political Science Review*, 52 (June 1958), pp. 437-463. See also Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, pp. 259 ff.

⁹²Montgomery, *The Politics of Foreign Aid*, p. 113. See also Scigliano and Fox, cited above, and The MSU Advisory Group, *Final Report* (Saigon: June 1962), mimeo.

influences, delayed the work of these teams, but by 1958 there was at least one completed report which suggested a number of changes in fiscal administration. This was followed by proposed changes in the tax system, as the U.S. again sought to apply American values to correct what was considered to be a situation in need of reform.⁹³

During the 1955-61 period, the principal emphasis of the U.S. in Vietnam, however, was "security," both internal security and, particularly, the defense of Vietnam against external attack. About 70 percent of all U.S. funds and personnel was allocated to this effort. Vietnamese military forces were totally dependent on the U.S. for training, equipment, strategy, and pay. In addition to transferring to the Vietnamese large stores of U.S. materiel left by the French, the U.S. spent approximately \$200 million a year between 1955 and 1961 (slightly higher in 1955 and lower by 1961) for "defense support" (as well as an additional amount, averaging about \$75 million a year, for direct military assistance). "Defense support" paid the entire cost of the military part of the Vietnamese budget, which amounted to about one-half of the annual budget of Vietnam.

Although nominally called "defense support," and used to pay for military activities, this category of funding was also supposed to serve simultaneously a very important political and to a lesser extent an economic purpose. With "defense support" dollars the U.S. financed the importation of commodities, both consumer and capital goods, through the "Commodity Import Program," or "CIP," thus presumably increasing the overall strength of South Vietnam, as well as public resistance to the appeals of communism.

A variant of the program used in Europe during the Marshall plan, the CIP⁹⁴ for Vietnam made dollar funds available to the Vietnamese Government for purchasing these goods from other countries, primarily the U.S., which the Vietnamese then resold to importers. The local currency received from those sales went into what was known as the "counterpart fund" controlled by the U.S. and Vietnamese Governments, from which funds were then disbursed by agreement between the two countries. (This was the basis for the term "budget support" in reference to this type of assistance.)

The CIP was developed as a way of injecting large amounts of U.S. aid into a country without destroying the country's economy and financial system in the process. Otherwise, especially for a country like Vietnam, whose total exports averaged only about \$50 million a year during this period, and whose total national revenues would have been consumed just by defense expenditures of the magnitude considered essential, the effects of receiving such aid would have been impossible to accommodate. (There were also secondary CIP benefits, including minimizing the effect of dollar outflow and the diversion of dollars to purchases in Communist countries.)

Unlike development programs in Europe, however, the use of commodity import programs in a country like Vietnam, or Laos,

⁹³Montgomery, pp. 113-118.

⁹⁴This should not be confused with the counterinsurgency program, developed at a later stage, which was usually referred to as CI.

which was an even more conspicuous case, led to serious problems of administration and control which resulted in considerable criticism from Congress, and this in turn affected Congress' general support for the U.S. foreign aid program. These problems also affected Congress' attitudes toward the U.S. aid program in Vietnam and Laos, and may thus have adversely affected the operation of those programs and U.S. relationships with the Vietnamese and Laotians.

Congress and Aid to Vietnam and Laos

Congressional concern about the CIP in Vietnam and Laos began to develop in 1957-58 and reached a crescendo in 1959. From that point on until the early 1970s there were continuing investigations of the CIP and of local currency uses in the two countries, spearheaded by the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations.⁹⁵ (As late as 1970, the General Accounting Office, which had also worked on these problems throughout the period of U.S. involvement, issued a report criticizing the administration of the CIP in Vietnam.)⁹⁶

In 1959, Representative Porter Hardy, Jr. (D/Va.), chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee during its consideration of the foreign aid bill, and had the following exchange with Representative Chester E. Merrow (R/N.H.).⁹⁷

Mr. Hardy. . . . The amount of money that we have spent in Laos cannot be absorbed in that economy. It made possible a diversion of tremendous quantities of dollars and of end-use items to other countries. . . .

Mr. Merrow. But Laos is free.

Mr. Hardy. Laos is free?

Mr. Merrow. We still maintain it.

Mr. Hardy. I wish I could be certain it is going to stay free. And I am not a bit sure it is free because of what we have done, it might be in spite of it.

We take credit for Laos being free and although I am perfectly willing for us publicly to take credit for it, I am not sure we weren't kidding ourselves and whistling in the dark, when the coalition of the non-Communist groups in Laos was spurred on by their own self-interests.

Mr. Merrow. But in a defense of a nation sometimes it is better to have too much than not enough; isn't this the way you win a war?

Mr. Hardy. Well, I don't know how far you can go with that. You made millionaires out of certain Laotian officials, certain Laotian army officers, and of both foreign and United States

⁹⁵For reports on these see especially H. Rept. 86-546, *U.S. Aid Operations in Laos*, June 15, 1959; H. Rept. 89-2257, *An Investigation of the U.S. Economic and Military Assistance Programs in Vietnam*, October 12, 1966; and H. Rept. 92-718, *U.S. Economic Assistance for Laos-Stabilization*, December 8, 1971.

⁹⁶U.S. General Accounting Office, *Need for Increased Control Over Local Currency Made Available to Republic of Vietnam for Support of Its Military and Civil Budgets*, July 24, 1970.

⁹⁷U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Mutual Security Act of 1959*, Hearings, 86th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1959), pp. 1720, 1724.

contractors. The extent to which our own personnel were involved, I don't know. Perhaps we shall never know.

The program in Laos was set up . . . in a manner that promoted corruption in Laos . . . and that gave the Communists issues on which to campaign against the anti-Communist elements in government.

In December 1971, only about a year before the Vietnam cease-fire agreement, the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which was still attempting to secure reforms in the CIP programs for Vietnam and Laos, summarized some of the problems in the early years of the CIP for Laos, which were quite similar to the problems with the CIP in Vietnam (except for more reliance on cash grants during the first few years in Laos):⁹⁸

In its first 3 years (1955-57) of operations, the U.S.-financed commodity import programs for Laos had cost \$20.7 million and had been subjected to large-scale abuses. Lao officials had entered into collusion with importers and suppliers. Over-charges on U.S.-financed commodities being imported into Laos resulted in the United States being billed as much as 13 times the amounts of the commodity's value. In many instances, 75 percent of the exports to Laos were delivered in Thailand or some other country and never reached Laos. In other instances, used material was substituted for new. Importers were making profits of 300 to 400 percent on U.S.-financed commodities. Claim after claim was presented to suppliers and the RLG [Royal Laotian Government]; few were paid.

The program was sharply cut from an average of \$7 million a year to less than \$3 million yearly; still the corruption and abuses continued and the claim file grew. By the end of 1960, the program was so laced with unsolvable fraud and corruption that it became necessary to suspend the U.S.-financed commodity import program for Laos. The program, which had cost the U.S. taxpayers over \$28 million, had essentially failed to accomplish its intended purpose. Refund claims against the RLG—after negotiations and renegotiations—totaled \$1,022,139 by the time we closed down our commodity import program for Laos.

The subcommittee noted that the succeeding import program (USIP) in Laos, based on a counterpart arrangement rather than direct cash grants, was not much of an improvement:

USIP, as reestablished, was—from its beginning—a heavily subsidized program. Commodities provided during 1963 were imported at the official exchange rate of 80 kip for each U.S. dollar while the dollar was bringing as much as 660 kip in the Lao currency marketplace. In 1964, the kip was artificially "pegged" at 505 kip for each dollar on the "free" Laos currency market as previously discussed in section III of this report. Nevertheless, Lao importers continued to receive commodities financed by USIP at the 240:1 rate. We had once again estab-

⁹⁸H Rept. 92-718, cited above.

lished a program which by its very nature was conducive to abuses and irregularities.

The RLG established maximum prices at which USIP commodities could be sold. It didn't take long, however, for the importers to find ways to evade the RLG pricing rules. In a period of 30 months, the United States provided \$37 million of the U.S. taxpayers money to pay for the commodities "needed" by the Lao people. What the merchants were unable to sell in Laos, they cheerfully smuggled into Thailand and Cambodia. There were huge profits to be made. Fraud and corruption once again reigned in Laos. . . .

Despite increasing criticism during the late 1950s of certain aspects of U.S. aid for Vietnam and Laos, however, Congress strongly and consistently supported such aid during the 1955-61 period, and made no significant reductions in the administration's authorization and appropriations requests. Moreover, Congress generally approved the administration's rationale for aid to the countries of Indochina, and continued during this period to endorse the containment policy on which such aid was based.

An example of such congressional acceptance was the approval given to equipping and training of the Vietnamese Army for large-scale conventional warfare. Although some members of the Foreign Relations Committee, especially Fulbright, Mansfield, Kennedy and Humphrey, as well as some members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, began in 1958-59 to criticize overemphasis in the foreign aid program on military aid at the expense of other forms of assistance,⁹⁹ there is no evidence that they or any other Members of Congress questioned the administration's development and use of the Vietnamese Army for conventional warfare, or the corresponding lack of emphasis on counterguerrilla warfare.

The same was true with respect to nonmilitary assistance. Although there was criticism of the mismanagement of programs (including considerable criticism of the low exchange rate for the CIP), and scattered comments about the "absorption" problem (how rapidly aid could be effectively used), and the appropriate scale of development (what kinds of economic projects to assist), Congress generally accepted the administration's nonmilitary aid concepts and programs for the countries of Indochina.

The only point during the last half of the 1950s at which fundamental questions were raised, although there were only a few on Vietnam, was in 1956-57, when it became apparent that the strong congressional foreign aid consensus which had originated with the Marshall plan had slowly begun to weaken in the early 1950s as other aid programs and countries were added. In 1955, the administration had announced that, with the ending of aid to Europe, the emphasis of the aid program would be on Asia. This was welcomed by many Members of Congress, but many others were growing weary of continued requests for foreign aid, as well as uneasy about the lack of a clear focus and purpose for the program. This led to the establishment in 1956 of foreign aid study groups in both the executive branch and the Senate, the first and only time there

⁹⁹For Senate action on these recommendations see the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* for 1959, pp. 182-187, and *SFRC His. Ser.*, vol. XI.

had been this kind of congressional review in the entire course of the aid program. For a year or two this strategem had the desired effect of shoring up support for foreign aid. By 1958-59, however, serious questions were again being raised in the Senate, partly out of criticism that the Executive had generally ignored the recommendations of the Senate study group.

The Senate study was made in 1956-57 by a Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program, a group designed for maximum power and influence, containing not only all members of the Foreign Relations Committee but also the chairmen and ranking minority members of the Senate Armed Services (Russell and Saltonstall) and Appropriations Committees (Carl T. Hayden [D/Ariz.] and Bridges).

The Special Committee entered into research contracts with 12 private organizations for studies of every aspect of the aid program; arranged for ten individuals to make surveys of foreign aid in every region of the world; and conducted an opinion survey of selected Americans working abroad. The committee then held 12 days of public hearings with governmental and nongovernmental witnesses, and finally, on May 13, 1957, made its report to the Senate.

One of the countries surveyed was Vietnam (along with the other countries of Southeast Asia), and the person chosen by the Special Committee to make the survey was Clement Johnston, Chairman of the Board of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.¹⁰⁰ Johnston found that U.S. aid to Vietnam and the other countries of the area had generally been successful in containing communism, and concluded, "The improvement in the security situation has brought a new phase. It is now possible to build more slowly and more soundly." He recommended, therefore, that U.S. aid to Southeast Asia be reduced by at least half in the following 2 years, and that increasing emphasis be placed on education and technical assistance. The best way to achieve economic progress, he said, was to encourage private enterprise. But the lack of understanding of a "free market" system made this difficult. "If one-tenth of the people of Asia had ever seen a Sears, Roebuck store," Johnston said, "our task of promoting a free way of life as an alternative to communism would be immeasurably easier."

Johnston also recommended reducing the size of the military establishment in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. With the protection afforded by SEATO, he said, there was no need for such forces to be so large and heavily equipped.¹⁰¹

In its very thoughtful and constructive report to the Senate on May 13, 1957, the Special Committee reaffirmed the need for foreign aid and the importance of aid in containing communism.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰Johnston's report, "Survey No. 7, Southeast Asia, (Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and Indochina)," was printed in *Foreign Aid Program, Compilation of Studies and Surveys*, prepared for the Senate Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program, Document 83-52, 85th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1957), p. 1423 ff.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, pp. 1434-1437. See also Johnston's testimony in U.S. Congress, Senate, *The Foreign Aid Program*, Hearings before the Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program, March 20, 22, 25, 29, and April 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1957), pp. 189-215.

¹⁰²S. Rept. 85-300.

"The experience of the United States in the 20th century," the report said, "provides sufficient evidence of the dangers which confront this Nation when totalitarianism is on the march. We have seen the dangers of too little, too late. The committee believes that it is in the national interest of the United States to encourage political progress in other nations and to place stumbling blocks in the path of an expanding totalitarianism which if unchecked would inevitably have serious implications for the United States." It added, however, this caveat:

At the same time, the committee recognizes that there are severe limits on the extent to which foreign aid can be used to influence either short-range or long-range political developments elsewhere. The idea of free institutions may be carried like a seed from one country to another, but the institutions themselves cannot be transplanted from one country to another. They must grow according to the history, the culture, and the environments of each country. Foreign aid may help in this process of growth, but it is only one of a multitude of factors involved.

(In its report, the Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program also warned prophetically about the dangers of U.S. involvement in countries like Vietnam resulting from aid which is used to "influence political developments." Such programs, it said, can lead to ". . . costly long-range involvement in the internal affairs of other nations. Such an involvement may not necessarily be either in our interest in the light of its costs or in theirs if it inhibits their initiative in making essential internal improvements.")

Neither the Foreign Relations nor the Foreign Affairs Committee made any real effort during this period (1955-61) to ascertain whether, in fact, U.S. foreign aid and other activities were being carried out there in accordance with this sound advice of the Special Committee concerning indigenous growth. There were only a few questions on this point from time to time, primarily in the Foreign Relations Committee's annual hearings on aid authorization bills.

From the few questions that were asked, it was clear that, simply from the standpoint of available knowledge and skills, the United States was ill-prepared for this kind of "nation building" in Vietnam. With respect only to language proficiency, a key indicator of acquaintance with a foreign culture, U.S. Government personnel, like those of U.S. universities and private institutions, were woefully undertrained for such a role. In 1958, when Senator Fulbright expressed concern about the lack of training of U.S. personnel, civilian and military, for service in Southeast Asia, the State Department representative who was present said that the Department was "very conscious" of that problem, and that there were a "great many" Foreign Service officers who were proficient in the languages of Southeast Asia. When the data were supplied to the committee, however, they revealed the opposite. FSOs proficient in the language and serving in the area numbered as follows:

Cambodian	1
Thai	—
Laotian	—
Vietnamese	1

Moreover, there were only three FSOs in Vietnamese language training (only one had been in such training in prior years), one in Cambodian language training (none previously), and none studying the Laotian language then or previously.¹⁰³

In Senate hearings in 1959, Senator Mansfield asked about language proficiency in the U.S. mission in Vietnam. The reply was that out of approximately 1500 U.S. officials, military and civilian (about 750 military, 250 State, and 400 foreign aid, plus a few from other agencies), there were, according to Elbridge Durbrow, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, four FSOs, three military officers, and one foreign aid employee who "speak Vietnamese."¹⁰⁴

The Colegrove Hearings

Although the work of the Senate Special Committee, together with major efforts by the executive branch and private organizations, had the effect of shoring up political support for the foreign aid program, there were signs in 1957-58 that the consensus had been patched but not repaired. In the House, the chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, Porter Hardy, was raising a number of difficult and disturbing questions about the administration of aid, especially in Laos and Vietnam. And in the Senate, Wayne Morse (D/Ore.), a powerful advocate, began strongly opposing the foreign aid program beginning in 1957. He wrote a stinging minority report when the aid bill was reported by the Foreign Relations Committee, following which he gave an equally strong speech in the Senate during debate on the bill.¹⁰⁵

Morse criticized the administration for ignoring the recommendations of the Senate's Special Committee. He also objected vigorously to the increasing delegation of power to the Executive, and warned of the adverse consequences of such delegation. Morse, who was very outspoken, was also capable of voicing objections that others refrained from voicing or discussed privately. Frequently he also anticipated concerns before they became more widely recognized. Thus, he was the first liberal, internationalist Democrat in the Senate to become an opponent of foreign aid, just as he was also the first Senator to oppose the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the subsequent Vietnam war. And there was a very direct connection between those two series of events.

By 1958-59, other moderate and liberal internationalist Senate Democrats began to be more critical of the aid program, notably Fulbright, (who became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in 1959), Mansfield, John Kennedy, and Ernest Gruening

¹⁰³U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Mutual Security Act of 1958*, Hearings on S. 3318, 85th Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1958), p. 128.

¹⁰⁴Hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee before the Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs on *Situation in Vietnam*, July 30 and 31, 1959, 86th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1959), p. 187. For further details on language skills of U.S. military advisers, and the problems resulting from the lack of such skills, see Spector, *Advice and Support*, pp. 286-288.

¹⁰⁵See S. Rept. 85-417, pt. 2, June 12, 1957, and CR, vol. 103, pp. 8963-8971.

(D/Alaska). Although they supported foreign aid for the countries of Indochina, they also began questioning the degree of emphasis on military aid. In 1957, both Fulbright and Mansfield asked administration witnesses to comment on the recommendation of Clement Johnston (in his survey for the Special Committee) that the armed forces of the countries of Indochina could and should be reduced.¹⁰⁶

In 1958, Kennedy said he supported military aid for Vietnam, but thought there should be increased economic aid.¹⁰⁷

In September 1958, Fulbright and seven others (Green, John Sparkman (D/Ala.), Humphrey, Mansfield, Morse, Kennedy and Langer) sent a letter to President Eisenhower requesting greater emphasis on economic as opposed to military aid.

As criticism of foreign aid mounted, both the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs Committees became more sensitive to charges of waste and misuse. In the Foreign Affairs Committee, this led to the establishment in October 1958 of a permanent Subcommittee for Review of the Mutual Security Programs, chaired by the chairman of the full committee. Its members were the three senior Democrats and the three senior Republicans on the full committee. (Beginning in 1963, there were four from each party.)¹⁰⁸ This new subcommittee, (which was discontinued in 1975), then initiated overseas field trips by its staff to survey and report on specific foreign aid operations. These were the first such staff investigations to be carried out on a regular basis by either of the two foreign policy committees.¹⁰⁹ (About ten years later the Foreign Relations Committee began sending two of its staff to conduct field studies directly related to the conduct of the Indochina war.)

In 1959, both foreign policy committees became involved in extensive studies of waste and misuse of U.S. foreign aid funds in Vietnam brought about by a series of articles on the subject which appeared in the Scripps-Howard newspapers. These were the so-called "Colegrove hearings," Albert Colegrove, a Scripps-Howard reporter, having been the author of the series. In his first of six articles, Colegrove, who had spent about three weeks in Vietnam gathering material (but may also have received some material from the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee), set the tone for the series:¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Mutual Security Act of 1957*, Hearings on the Mutual Security Program for Fiscal Year 1958, 85th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1957), pp. 219, 643.

¹⁰⁷Hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on *Mutual Security Act of 1958*, cited above, p. 181. See Morse's comments on "Overemphasis on Military Aid," in his Individual Views on the bill, S. Rept. 85-1627, pt. 2, May 26, 1958.

¹⁰⁸According to information provided by Helen Mattas of the Foreign Affairs Committee staff, "The purpose of the Review Subcommittee was to provide a focal point for the continuous oversight of foreign aid program activities with the objective of cutting out waste and abuse and of determining whether the intent of the law was being properly implemented or whether legislative changes were needed."

¹⁰⁹One of the first staff reports of the subcommittee dealt with Vietnam. U.S. Congress, House, *Staff Report on Field Survey of Selected Projects in Viet-Nam and Korea*, Subcommittee Print, May 14, 1959, 86th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1959). There were many subsequent investigative reports dealing with Indochina, most of which have not been published.

¹¹⁰The Colegrove articles, which appeared in Scripps-Howard newspapers (at that time there were 18 newspapers located all over the U.S.) between July 21-26, 1959, were reprinted in the

Following a reckless, foolish, made-in-Washington policy of noninterference, we've forked over bundles of American cash to the fledgling, inexperienced Vietnam Government, and then looked piously at the ceiling while the money melted away.

Thanks to our hands-off attitude, we've done little to guide Vietnam toward the day when she can support herself. This country has a terrible financial problem. Our solution has been to put her on the dole. She may be there 10 years, 25 years—or forever.

Why has all this happened?

It has happened because the byword of most high American officials here is: "Keep your mouth shut, smile, and don't rock the boat."

Scattered in the ranks of the 600 to 700 American civilian and military persons working for Uncle Sam in Vietnam are many sincere, frustrated, disgusted boat rockers.

I have talked with them, but shall not name them in these articles. It would be the kiss of death.

"You learn quickly," said one. "If you start criticizing the status quo, even mildly, you're gently warned your boss may consider you a troublemaker, and might so state when he writes up your next efficiency report. This could foul up your career permanently."

There is good reason for being content with things as they are.

Who wants to rock the boat when his cozy bachelor apartment or spacious family villa comes absolutely rent free?

Who wants to tilt the applecart when he draws down \$400 to \$800 a year extra to offset the fictitious "high cost of living" in Saigon, where he can buy American cigarettes tax free for 10 cents a pack and groceries for himself for \$1 a day?

Who wants to climb on the soapbox when he's permitted a 2-hour mid-day siesta, is chauffeured to and from work in a Government car—and gets up to \$319 a month in so-called hardship pay for his dauntless willingness to endure the tensions and vicissitudes of a city that's properly renowned as the Paris of the Orient?

There was a very strong negative reaction in both Congress and the executive branch to the Colegrove articles, which were the first such journalistic criticism of the U.S. aid to Vietnam. Beginning in late July 1959, subcommittees of both foreign policy committees held long public as well as executive session hearings on Colegrove's allegations.¹¹¹ The Hardy (Foreign Operations) subcommi-

Foreign Affairs Committee hearings on the articles, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Current Situation in the Far East*. Hearings before a Subcommittee on the Far East and the Pacific, July 27, August 3, 11, 14, 1959, 86th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1959), pp. 228-301.

¹¹¹ For the House hearings, see the citation above. For the Senate see *Situation in Vietnam*, cited above. See also part 2 of *Situation in Vietnam*, December 7 and 8, 1959, 86th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1960). The latter hearings were held in Saigon by Senator Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), and Hickenlooper, members of the subcommittee, who were joined by Senator Gale McGee (D-Wyo.), representing the Senate Appropriations Committee. Material deleted for security reasons in the Senate's Saigon hearings published in 1960 has since been published in the *SFRC His. Ser.*, vol. XI, pp. 843-854. Several members of the Zablocki Foreign Affairs Subcommittee also held hearings in Saigon. These were not printed and

Continued

tee, which was still busily engaged in its investigation of the foreign aid program in Laos, deferred to the foreign policy committees on the Colegrove hearings, but cooperated with them, especially in providing the Foreign Relations Committee with information and leads. It was clear that Hardy did not expect the House Foreign Affairs Committee to conduct a very critical examination of the allegations, as, indeed, it did not.

In the beginning, Fulbright and other members as well as the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee were uncertain as to what kind of action the committee should take, if any, on the Colegrove articles. Fulbright did not want to have the committee become involved in extensive hearings, partly because of the drain on committee staff time, and partly because he wanted to protect the U.S. program in Vietnam and the U.S. relationship with the Vietnamese Government. Before the decision was made to proceed with the hearings, the committee's chief of staff, Carl Marcy, sent Fulbright a memorandum stating options for the committee, in which he said that the committee could hold the first day or so of hearings and then drop the subject, or conduct a full set of hearings, which would involve sending a staff man to Vietnam, or that the committee could decide that it would "concentrate on larger, foreign policy matters, leaving to Government Operations and the Comptroller General [GAO] this administrative detail."¹¹²

There is no record of Fulbright's reaction, but the decision was made to have a full set of hearings. One of the key factors in this decision appears to have been Mansfield's feeling, which was shared by other members, that the charges needed to be investigated, and, furthermore, since Hardy was deferring to the Senate, and Foreign Affairs was not planning an extensive inquiry, that if the charges were not investigated by the Foreign Relations Committee there would be strong opposition from the Scripps-Howard organization, as well as others, to the committee's failure to do so.

By this time Mansfield had also concluded that there were basic flaws in the kind of foreign aid program being conducted by the United States in Vietnam, and wanted to use the opportunity, as he did, to expose and seek to correct those basic problems.

After the hearings in Washington in July 1959, and before the subcommittee was to hold additional hearings in Vietnam, Fulbright tried to get Mansfield to agree to a fairly mild "interim" report which would criticize the foreign aid program but would not be too severe an indictment of the program or of its operation in Vietnam. Mansfield did not agree, saying that he thought there should be a complete study of the matter.

Toward the end of 1959, after all hearings had been completed and the subcommittee was preparing to issue its report, Mansfield's

have not been made public.) The only report from the House subcommittee was the cursory trip report of the group that held hearings in Vietnam, H. Rept. 86-1385. For the Senate report see U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *United States Aid Program in Vietnam*, Report by a Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs, Committee Print, February 26, 1960, 86th Cong., 2d Sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1960). The transcripts of the executive sessions of the House subcommittee have not yet been released to the public. Those of the Senate subcommittee have been transferred to the National Archives, but remain classified.

¹¹²National Archives, RG 46, Committee on Foreign Relations, Sen 86A-F8, Marcy to JWF, July 23, 1959.

assistant, Francis Valeo, reflecting Mansfield's own views, also edited the draft report prepared by Marcy and committee staffer John Newhouse in such a way as to "substantially harden" its conclusions according to Marcy. This action drew from Marcy the rejoinder to Valeo: "you have felt there were things wrong with the program and you *knew* what they were."¹¹³ Marcy added that it was understandable that Valeo, who was writing for Mansfield's approval, should have taken a different position than he (Marcy) and Newhouse were taking in their attempt to draft a report that Hickenlooper (the senior Republican on the Far East Subcommittee) would also approve, and that could then be issued as a unanimous report by the subcommittee. In the end, however, these differences were reconciled, and the necessary compromises were made to enable the subcommittee to issue the report unanimously.

During the Senate and House hearings, administration witnesses, encouraged by the fact that the chairmen of the two subcommittees were Zablocki in the House and Mansfield in the Senate, both of whom had been strong supporters of U.S. policy in Vietnam, vehemently denounced Colegrove and the series of articles, even to the point of saying that the series served the Communist cause. Ambassador Durbrow, who had flown to Washington for the hearings along with General Williams and Arthur Z. Gardiner, Director of the U.S. foreign aid mission in Vietnam (USOM), told the Zablocki subcommittee, "The series of articles have not only given a most erroneous picture of our efforts there, but, what in my estimation is worse, they have done an inestimable amount of harm to American prestige in southeast Asia and to the prestige of Vietnam. . . ." He added that Vietnamese officials with whom he had talked had told him "that only the Communist imperialists would benefit from this series."¹¹⁴ Chairman Zablocki, who said he had read one of the six articles "and didn't intend to read the rest," asked, "Shouldn't we let the public know how Scripps-Howard organization has aided the Communists?"¹¹⁵

And so it went in both the House and Senate, particularly the House, as foreign aid supporters, Democrats and Republicans, turned their ire on Colegrove. So did the American Friends of Vietnam, which issued a long rebuttal statement.¹¹⁶ AFV Chairman General O'Daniel (Retired), said that the U.S. aid program in Vietnam was an "enormous success," and called Colegrove's articles a "disgraceful example of . . . 'yellow journalism.'" The articles, he said, quoting Durbrow, were "grist for the Communist propaganda machine."¹¹⁷ (In a letter on August 28, 1959, to O'Daniel, replying to one from O'Daniel criticizing the Colegrove articles, Fulbright said that he found O'Daniel's reaction similar to his own, and that, "I am afraid that these articles have done a great deal of damage—how much I cannot even guess—to our efforts in Viet-Nam.")¹¹⁸

Members of the Michigan State group also strongly attacked the Colegrove series, as did a scholar associated with the MSU team,

¹¹³Same location, Marcy to Valeo, Jan. 23, 1960. (emphasis in original)

¹¹⁴House hearings, p. 34.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹¹⁶For the text, see *ibid.*, pp. 328-338

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 328-329

¹¹⁸National Archives, RG 46.

John D. Montgomery. In a book entitled *The Politics of Foreign Aid*,¹¹⁹ in which he was generally critical of Congress for failing to provide adequate support for foreign aid, Montgomery said that the Colegrove articles were very disruptive, and that "The Communist radio broadcasts took up the articles with understandable glee." He even gave his own point-by-point rebuttal of the series.¹²⁰

The report of the Mansfield subcommittee, issued early in 1960, was a thoughtful and constructive critique, not just of the allegations in the Colegrove series, but of U.S. aid to Vietnam generally. Praising the progress made by the Diem government, the subcommittee, consistent with the position which Mansfield had taken earlier that year, as well as the findings of Clement Johnston, called for a "reshaping" of the aid program "to make it more efficient and effective and, eventually to bring about a termination of the need for it as Vietnam achieves a reasonable means of economic self-sufficiency."

Interestingly enough, the subcommittee, which found that the military aid program was more effective than the economic program, reported that, based on General Williams' testimony, and "barring unforeseen developments," the U.S. military assistance mission (MAAG) "can be phased out of Vietnam in the foreseeable future." The subcommittee recommended that a similar plan be developed for encouraging Vietnamese economic self-reliance and for phasing out economic aid. The low rate of exchange for the CIP was specifically criticized, as was the general practice of budget support: "The continued derivation of a large part of the Vietnamese revenues directly or indirectly from grants of aid," the report said, "constitutes a form of dependence on outside rather than indigenous sources which, in the long run, is in the interests neither of the Vietnamese nor this Nation."

Among its recommendations, the subcommittee urged the State Department to study ways of improving language and cultural training for all U.S. Government personnel assigned to Vietnam.

Unlike the House subcommittee, the Mansfield subcommittee also confirmed a number of Colegrove's criticisms of the aid program, and recommended a general tightening in the administration of nonproject and project assistance.

In an interview, former Ambassador Durbrow later explained that while Zablocki continued to be a strong supporter of the U.S. program in Vietnam, Mansfield had begun to have serious doubts. When he came back to Washington to testify in the hearings on the Colegrove articles, Durbrow said he talked personally to Mans-

¹¹⁹John D. Montgomery, *The Politics of Foreign Aid*, cited above.

¹²⁰Montgomery's book was published as a study sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, and had been discussed and reviewed by a distinguished Council study group of about 30 people which included some of the most stalwart members or former members of the Michigan State University group, as well as former or current State Department and U.S. military personnel. Among those included were Leland Barrows, Joseph Buttinger, Wesley Fishel, John Ohly, Ralph Smuckler, Jr., Kenneth Young, Jr. The list is on p. xi of *ibid*.

Note should also be taken of the publication by Michigan State in 1959 of the symposium, cited above, on Vietnam's progress during its first five years, and the two conferences of the American Friends of Vietnam, the first on "Aid to Vietnam—An American Success Story," papers from which were published by the AFV and the second, on "Social Development and Welfare," papers from which were edited by Wesley Fishel and published in 1959 jointly by the Bureau of Social and Political Research of MSU and the Free Press of Glencoe, Ill., under the title, *Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence*, also cited above.

field, and ". . . whether it was the Colegrove articles or something else, or an accumulation of things, he was as cold as ice. To me personally he was polite, nothing rude, but he was cold, and he had been fairly warm before, particularly about Diem. He talked to me personally about Diem's lack of democracy and alleged corruption and all of that. As far as I was concerned, he was turned off to Diem by that time."¹²¹

Despite the substantial effort made (including holding hearings in Vietnam—the only time this was done during the entire period of U.S. involvement), there is no evidence that the Colegrove hearings and the subsequent recommendations of the Mansfield subcommittee, as well as related hearings of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, had any significant effect on U.S. activities in Vietnam. If anything, they appear to have been a diversion of the energies of the foreign policy committees, especially those of the Foreign Relations Committee, at the very time when events in Vietnam warranted a general inquiry into U.S. policy and operations, rather than specific inquiries into charges of waste. While Congress was investigating misuse and malfeasance, the Communists were beginning again to instigate revolution.

Why did Congress pay so little attention to Vietnam in the latter 1950s? Why did the foreign policy committees virtually ignore the situation in all of the countries of Indochina during this time, becoming active and concerned only when embarrassing questions were raised about the U.S. program by the Colegrove articles? To answer these questions fully would require a discussion extending beyond the purview of this study, but there are some proximate answers that may help in understanding Congress' role during this period.

One basic reason for Congress' lack of attention to Vietnam was, of course, the relatively minor foreign policy importance of Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia for U.S. policymakers during the latter 1950s and even into the early 1960s. For the Executive and the Congress, there were many more important and urgent foreign policy problems. These included the Suez Crisis of 1956, when the Egyptians nationalized and restricted the use of the Suez Canal after the U.S. cancelled its agreement to help the Egyptians build the Aswan dam, and the British, French and Israelis then invaded Egypt; the Hungarian revolution, which occurred at about the same time, and was put down by Russian forces; the launching by the Russians in 1957 of the first earth satellite, which resulted in a top-level study (the Gaither committee) recommending steps to increase U.S. strategic forces; the renewed conflict over the offshore islands (Quemoy, Matsu) in 1958; new tensions over Berlin in 1959, to mention only a few. By comparison, partly because it appeared at the time to be under control, the Vietnam problem was a back-water issue during this period.

Another indicator of the relatively minor importance of Vietnam during this time, and one that had substantial influence in Congress' response, was the fact that in the late 1950s there were only two or three resident U.S. media correspondents in Vietnam. No major American newspaper was represented locally, although vari-

¹²¹ CRS Interview with Elbridge Durbrow, Oct. 25, 1978.

ous newspaper correspondents visited from time to time; some, like Tillman Durdin of the *New York Times*, from a resident post elsewhere in Asia.¹²²

The lack of congressional staff also continued to be a limiting factor. Although both of the foreign policy committees had eight or ten professional staff members by the late 1950s, they were still spread very thin, with one professional on each staff handling Southeast Asia along with other responsibilities. (Staff with investigative skills were borrowed by the Foreign Affairs Committee from the General Accounting Office, a common practice with the House Appropriations Committee, to enable Foreign Affairs to make audit-type reviews of foreign aid.)

Lack of staff was not, however, the key factor in Congress' lack of attention to Vietnam. Southeast Asia—Vietnam—simply was not, partly for reasons indicated above, an important priority for either foreign policy committees during this time, despite the fact that Mansfield, Knowland and H. Alexander Smith (through 1958) in the Senate, and Zablocki, Judd and Vorys in the House, continued to maintain strong interest in the area. (In a sense, the fact that these members, partly by action of the Executive in cultivating and encouraging their interest and involvement, were known as the committees' "experts" on the subject, combined with the rather specialized nature of the subject, made it less likely that other members of the committees would put Southeast Asia very high on their own agendas or that of either of the full committees.)¹²³

According to John Newhouse, who handled Vietnam for the Foreign Relations Committee at the time,

The committee's interest in Vietnam at that stage was a kind of uneven function of individual interests. I would guess the committee took more testimony though on Vietnam in my

¹²²*Situation in Vietnam*, p. 26.

It is also very important to recall that at that time the U.S. press was generally quite sympathetic to the U.S. role in Vietnam, and that although there was comparatively little reporting of events, such reporting as there was tended to be uncritical and favorable. Many of the journalists covering Vietnam during the 1955-60 period were, in fact, working quite closely with the U.S. Government. Lansdale himself reported that during 1954-55, "Till and Peg Durdin of the N.Y. Times, Hank Lieberman of the N.Y. Times, Homer Bigart of the N.Y. Herald-Tribune, John Mecklin of Life-Time, and John Roderick of Associated Press, have been warm friends of SMM and worked hard to penetrate the fabric of French propaganda and give the U.S. an objective account of events in Vietnam" *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. I, p. 581.

Even in 1959, when Colegrove's articles appeared, others, such as veteran *Newsweek* reporter Ernest K. Lindley (who later became a speech writer for Secretary of State Dean Rusk), were praising the U.S. role and the Diem government. Tillman Durdin was continuing to send back glowing reports, and on May 19, 1959, when the Communist insurgency was causing growing concern, the *New York Times* lauded Diem for his work. "He is meeting the Communists on the ground of the contest for the minds and the spirit of his countrymen," the *Times* said in an editorial. "Thus far he is winning."

¹²³During the 3-year period, 1957-59, with the exception of the delegations from the foreign policy committees that went to Vietnam in the fall of 1959 in connection with hearings on the Colegrove articles, the staff study in 1959 for the Subcommittee for Review of the Mutual Security Programs (Foreign Affairs Committee), and an investigative mission of the Hardy (Foreign Operations) subcommittee in 1957, there were only 16 congressional visits to Vietnam, and of these only 5 were from either foreign policy committee, and all five occurred in 1957. There was one of 5 days by a junior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, D. S. Saund (D/Calif.). From the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Sparkman and Frank Carlson (R/Kans.) spent 2 days each in Vietnam, and Senator Hickenlooper and Committee Chief of Staff Carl Marcy spent 3 days each. During these 3 years, the longest visit by a Member of Congress was 7 days. Most visits were 2-3 days. These data were taken from information supplied to the Foreign Relations Committee in conjunction with the Colegrove hearings, located in the National Archives, RG 46, Sen. 86A-F8.

day than on any other subject, excepting the foreign aid legislation—miles of testimony, but there was never any coherent point of view.

Newhouse added: "It becomes a question of how much the committee is willing to absorb. The key variable is the committee itself. If the committee wants to buckle down and get to the bottom of something, it can do that. In my 5½ years there I can count on the fingers of one hand the instances in which the committee wanted to get to the bottom of anything. That wasn't Fulbright's fault. He assumed, correctly, that the majority of his colleagues didn't want to get to the bottom, either because they didn't have the time, or the attention span, or as in the case of a few members, they wanted to use their place on the Foreign Relations Committee mainly to impress people. Its very hard to get a congressional committee focused on anything for very long. If it's page one, and there's a lot of television, maybe. Otherwise, it's a sometime thing."¹²⁴

Congressional Oversight of the CIA

It is also important to note the situation during the latter part of the 1960s with respect to congressional oversight of the CIA. Although that agency's role in Indochina was and continued thereafter to be very active, there was virtually no effort made by Congress during this time to examine what the agency was doing or the consequences of its activities, or to exercise any control over those activities. According to one congressional study:¹²⁵

During the term of Allen Dulles the Congressional committee structure and the perception of the Agency as a first line defense against Communism remained the determinants in the relationship between the CIA and the Congress. Dulles himself reinforced the existing procedures through his casual, friendly approach to Congress, and he secured the absolute trust of senior ranking members. While Dulles was DCI [Director of Central Intelligence] Richard Russell continued as Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Carl Vinson remained as Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and from 1955 to 1964 Clarence Cannon held the chairmanship of the House Appropriations Committee. Dulles' appearance before a group consisted of a *tour d'horizon* on the basis of which members would ask questions. Yet the procedure was more perfunctory than rigorous. Likewise, members often preferred not knowing about Agency activities. Leverett Saltonstall, the former Massachusetts Senator and a ranking member of the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees stated candidly:

Dominated by the Committee chairmen, members would ask few questions which dealt with internal Agency matters or with specific operations. The most sensitive discuss-

¹²⁴CRS Interview with John Newhouse, Feb. 16, 1983.

¹²⁵"History of the Central Intelligence Agency," prepared by Anne Karalekas, a member of the staff of the U.S. Senate's Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, book IV, *Detailed Staff Reports on Foreign and Military Intelligence*, of the committee's final report (S. Rept. 94-755, Apr. 23, 1976), pp. 51-52.

sions were reserved for one-to-one sessions between Dulles and individual Committee chairmen.

In 1955-56, however, an effort, led by Senator Mansfield, was made to strengthen legislative oversight of the CIA. In a resolution cosponsored by 34 other Senators, Mansfield proposed the establishment of a joint oversight committee for the CIA. Mansfield's action was based on the report of a task force directed by retired Gen. Mark Clark, a part of a 1954 Hoover Commission study of the executive branch, which had recommended such a joint congressional oversight committee. At the same time a classified report on the clandestine activities of the CIA, requested by Eisenhower, "presumably in consultation with Allen Dulles," was prepared by a group headed by retired Gen. James Doolittle. Its purpose was to reaffirm the need for clandestine activities, and it did so in "chilling prose,"¹²⁶ including the following passage:

As long as it remains national policy, another important requirement is an aggressive covert psychological, political, and paramilitary organization more effective, more unique, and if necessary, more ruthless than that employed by the enemy. No one should be permitted to stand in the way of the prompt, efficient, and secure accomplishment of this mission.

It is now clear that we are facing an implacable enemy whose avowed objective is world domination by whatever means and at whatever cost. There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply. If the United States is to survive, long-standing American concepts of "fair play" must be reconsidered.

We must develop effective espionage and counter-espionage services and must learn to subvert, sabotage and destroy our enemies by more clever, more sophisticated, and more effective methods than those used against us. It may become necessary that the American people be made acquainted with, understand and support this fundamentally repugnant philosophy.¹²⁷

After over a year of occasional debate, the Senate defeated Mansfield's proposal, 59-27, with about half of the original co-sponsors voting against it, and with all of the powerful leaders of the Senate, including Lyndon Johnson, Knowland, Bridges, Russell, Hayden, Saltonstall, Symington, Stennis, Hickenlooper, and former Vice President Barkley, allied with the executive branch in opposition to the resolution. It was supported primarily by moderate and liberal Democrats and a few Republican conservatives. Among those besides Mansfield voting for it were Clements, Fulbright, Kennedy, Sam Ervin (D/N.C.), Humphrey, and Morse.¹²⁸

As a result of Mansfield's effort, which was the forerunner of the establishment of intelligence committees in both the Senate and the House following the Vietnam war, formal CIA subcommittees were established in the House and Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees.¹²⁹

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹²⁷Quoted in S. Rept. 94-755, book I, p. 50.

¹²⁸CR, vol. 102, p. 6068.

¹²⁹S. Rept. 94-755, book 1, pp. 54-55.

. . . Yet the same small group of individuals continued to be responsible for matters related to the Agency. In the Armed Services Committee Russell appointed Senators Saltonstall and Byrd, both of whom had been meeting informally with Russell on Agency activities, to a CIA subcommittee. Subsequently, Senators Lyndon Johnson and Styles Bridges were appointed to the subcommittee. In 1957 the Senate Appropriations Committee formalized a CIA subcommittee for the first time. The members of the subcommittee were, again, Russell, Bridges and Byrd. Essentially, these three men held full responsibility for Senate oversight of the CIA. They frequently conducted the business of the two subcommittees at the same meeting. Despite attempts to regularize the subcommittee meetings, the most frequent form of interchange with the CIA remained personal communications between the subcommittee's chairman, Richard Russell, and Allen Dulles. In 1961, following the Bay of Pigs, Senator Eugene McCarthy attempted to revive the idea of a formally designated CIA oversight committee, but his effort failed.

In the House, under Chairman Carl Vinson, the Armed Services Committee formally established a CIA subcommittee, chaired by Vinson. The Subcommittee reviewed the CIA's programs, budget and legislative needs. Briefings on CIA operations were more regularized than in the Senate and the House Armed Services staff maintained almost daily contact with the Agency. The House Appropriations Committee did not establish a formal subcommittee. Instead Cannon continued to rely on his special group of five members. As part of the security precautions surrounding the functioning of the special group, its membership never became public knowledge.

The Beginning of the End of Diem's "Miracle"

Congressional controversy over the U.S. aid program in Vietnam was indicative of the fact that the rapidly developing malaise in Vietnam (which began in mid-1957), had become serious by late 1959, and would soon lead to increased U.S. intervention. Diem's "miracle," which seemed to have been so successful during 1955-59, was coming to an end.

Whether there had ever really been a "miracle," or whether it had been a mirage all along, has been and continues to be debated. Few have questioned, however, that it was the combination of Diem's problems of governance and the decision of the Viet Minh in 1959 to resume the armed struggle that brought about an increasingly unstable situation, which in turn caused the regime to become more repressive, thus reinforcing the insurgency.

For the first several years after Geneva it appeared as if Diem, with U.S. help, might be able to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of gaining the necessary political strength to govern effectively. The odds were not in his favor. As the NSC Special Working Group on Indochina had said in its report on August 12, 1954, "In Free Vietnam there is political chaos. The Government of Prime Minister Diem has only one virtue—honesty—and is bereft of any practical experience in public administration." A national intelligence estimate issued at about the same time predicted that the

chances for establishing a "strong regime in South Vietnam . . . are poor. . . ." Yet, Diem had succeeded, despite the odds, and despite the problems, in consolidating his power and in organizing a government that, for a time at least, appeared to be working effectively. Although the U.S. helped, ". . . the main accomplishment," William Colby says, "was truly Diem's, the result of his toughness in crisis times, his firm use of authority amid anarchy, his monastic devotion to his mission of non-Communist nationalism and even his prickly refusal to accept counsels of caution and compromise when the situation appeared bleak." "By 1958," Colby adds, "not only had he [Diem] put down his opponents, he was well launched on an extensive development program for South Vietnam. Roads were reopened, schools proliferated in the countryside, a five-year DDT-spraying campaign was started to eliminate malaria, rice production began to climb, and light industry grew in the Saigon suburbs."¹³⁰

Despite these signs of success, however, there were growing problems toward the end of the 1950s. ". . . there were in Diem's approach," Colby says, "flaws that would prove critical in time," including his dependence on U.S. aid, which tended to compromise his nationalism; his tendency to rule through a small number of people, primarily members of his family; his repression of dissent and opposition. "Thus, Diem functioned as a Mandarin administrator," Colby concludes, "a benevolent dictator, forcing his people into development for their own good, whatever they thought of it, authoritarian and undemocratic, using but complaining about the French-trained bureaucracy he employed to do so, believing that it could gradually be reformed and replaced by the graduates of American public-administration training programs."¹³¹

In May 1957, at the height of his American popularity, Diem made a triumphal "return" to the United States, where he was met at the airport by President Eisenhower, spoke to a joint session of Congress and to the National Press Club, was feted in New York by the American Friends of Vietnam, attended a reception at the Council on Foreign Relations, had breakfast with Cardinal Spellman, and was given a private luncheon by John D. Rockefeller III.¹³² Referring to Diem's visit, Senator Mansfield said that "President Diem is not only the savior of his own country, but in my opinion he is the savior of all Southeast Asia. . . . He is indeed a man of the people; a man whom the Vietnamese admire and

¹³⁰ *Honorable Men*, pp. 144-145. See also Scigliano, *Nation Under Stress*, pp. 107-109.

¹³¹ For a similar critique of political and economic development under Diem see Scigliano, pp. 98-100 and 115-129; Herring, *America's Longest War*, pp. 56-66, and other relevant works cited above.

¹³² During his stay in Washington Diem also met with Eisenhower, Dulles and others for a long discussion of the situation in Vietnam. He told Eisenhower that Vietnam was faced with the possibility of a Viet Minh offensive, probably through the Mekong River Valley through Laos, and that more Vietnamese ground troops were needed to meet this threat. (He mentioned increasing the army from 150,000 to 170,000.) Because of the nature of the terrain, he said, as well as the probability that the Viet Minh would use "commando methods," he did not think that SEATO's airpower deterrent would be effective. Moreover, of the SEATO countries, only Thailand and the Philippines were in a position to help Vietnam in such a situation, but neither country could provide the help that might be needed. He also discounted atomic weapons, saying that they would not be effective because of the lack of concentrated targets. (The memorandum of this discussion, now declassified except for one brief reference, is in the Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, International Meetings Series.)

trust; and a man in whom the United States has unbounded confidence and great faith."¹³³

To Vietnamese Communists, however, as well as various non-Communist nationalists, he was "My-Diem" (American-Diem), a derogatory label that appealed to an increasing number of Vietnamese in the late 1950s, as Diem's policies, in the words of the *Pentagon Papers*, ". . . alienated one after another of the key groups within South Vietnam's society until, by late 1960, his regime rested on the narrow and disintegrating base of its own bureaucracy and the northern refugees."¹³⁴

As both Communist and non-Communist opposition to his regime increased, Diem took stern countermeasures. Having broken the ancient tradition of village autonomy in 1956 by making village officials appointive rather than elective, and by this and other steps having made "the administrative system of the Republic of Vietnam . . . more centralized than it ever was under the emperors or the French, . . . surpassed only by the Communist bureaucracy created in North Vietnam,"¹³⁵ Diem steadily increased his control over the government, until, by 1960, he was exercising virtually unlimited power.

As a national intelligence estimate on May 26, 1959, concluded:¹³⁶

A facade of representative government is maintained, but the government is in fact essentially authoritarian. The legislative powers of the National Assembly are strictly circumscribed; the judiciary is undeveloped and subordinate to the executive; and the members of the executive branch are little more than the personal agents of Diem. No organized opposition, loyal or otherwise, is tolerated, and critics of the regime are often repressed. This highly centralized regime has provided resolute and stable direction to national affairs, but it has alienated many of the country's educated elite and has inhibited the growth of governmental and political institutions which could carry on in Diem's absence.

The most notable example of political repression was the case of Dr. Phan Quang Dan (who, it will be recalled, was the favorite candidate for Prime Minister on the part of some elements of the CIA at the time of Diem's appointment to that post in 1954.) In 1955, Dr. Phan had returned to Vietnam from his studies at Harvard Medical School, and became a leader of the non-Communist opposition to Diem. As a result of his efforts, he was persecuted by the Ngo family. He was arrested before the 1956 election for the National Assembly, forced to leave his medical post at the University of Saigon, and disqualified by court action from taking his newly-won seat in the 1959 National Assembly, to which he had been

¹³³CR, vol. 103, p. 6759. For Diem's address to Congress see pp. 6699-6700. Just before Diem's visit, an article on Vietnam by the Asian specialist on the staff of the Council on Foreign Relations, William Henderson, was published in *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the Council. Henderson said that Diem "has ruled virtually as a dictator," but that "History may yet adjudge Diem as one of the great figures of twentieth century Asia." See "South Viet Nam Finds Itself," pp. 283-294 of the January 1957 issue. See also Wesley Fisher's subsequent justification of one-man rule, "Vietnam's Democratic One-Man Rule," *New Leader*, Nov. 2, 1959, pp. 10-13.

¹³⁴PP, Gravel ed., vol. I, p. 258.

¹³⁵Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress*, pp. 33-34.

¹³⁶PP, DOD ed., book 10, p. 1192.

elected by the largest plurality of any candidate in the country. After associating himself with the group of dissidents who attempted to overthrow Diem in November 1960, Dr. Phan was arrested again, and, according to one source, would have been executed except for intervention by U.S. and other representatives.¹³⁷

Phan's treatment was typical of the political oppression (by Western standards) that prevailed during Diem's regime, and of the kind of control that was exercised in the case of the National Assembly elections of 1956 and 1959, as well as in the elections of 1963. In Fall's view, ". . . the South Vietnamese legislatures elected in both 1956 and 1959, in spite of their superficial multiparty character, are as homogeneous as those elected by the Viet-Minh in 1946 and 1960. . . ."¹³⁸

Resumption of the Armed Struggle

Beginning in the spring of 1959, and intensifying late that year, Communist guerrilla warfare became increasingly serious in South Vietnam, and in 1960 the formation of the National Liberation Front, the "front" organization of Communists in South Vietnam, (technically, any person or political group could join, and many did), was announced. By the end of 1959, the Communists were said to control large areas of the South Vietnamese countryside, perhaps as much as two-thirds, or, as was said, half by day and all by night.

The reaction of the Diem government, among other things, was to launch a population resettlement program in 1959 similar to the one which the French had attempted a decade earlier. This consisted of establishing "fortified" or "protected" villages in which to resettle peasants known to be supporting the Communists, (thus keeping close control over these families while also depriving the Communists of their local network of support), and, for their own protection, those who were loyal to the regime. But after very strong opposition, the plan was abandoned 2 months later in favor of an "Agroville" plan, by which entire villages would be relocated to new and more protected sites. Some relocations were carried out under this scheme, but peasant opposition to being moved from traditional homes, together with the success of the Communists in penetrating the agroville defense system, resulted in abandonment of the project in early 1961, after the plan was only 25 percent complete.¹³⁹ This was followed late in 1961 by the Strategic Hamlet plan, which the U.S. strongly supported, but it, too, soon failed.

In addition to experimenting with resettlement programs, the Government of Vietnam, in conjunction with the U.S. Government, was faced, as the 1960s began, with the problem of responding to the problem of internal security created by the increasing level of Communist violence, while maintaining adequate conventional forces to counter a possible invasion from the north, or the infiltration

¹³⁷See Scigliano, pp. 83-84. According to Wolf Ladejinsky, who was Diem's closest American adviser in the latter 1950s, and lived in the Presidential palace at the time, he and Durbrow advised Diem to let Phan take his seat in the legislature in 1959. Memorandum of conversation, Ladejinsky and John Newhouse, Nov. 30, 1959, in National Archives, RG 46.

¹³⁸Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, p. 259; see also Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, vol. II, pp. 942-944.

¹³⁹See Scigliano, pp. 178-191

tion of regular North Vietnamese military units into the south. For 5 years, South Vietnam had been developing an American-style army. (As Dennis J. Duncanson noted, "The Vietnamese soldier learnt to fight always wearing his American boots, his full pack, and his steel helmet, even when wallowing in the flooded clay of paddy nurseries. That there might one day be a greater need for swamp and jungle fighting and the tactics of patrol and ambush war not generally foreseen. . . .")¹⁴⁰ Counter guerrilla warfare was given short shrift, despite Secretary of State Dulles' conviction that this should be the primary emphasis of U.S. military assistance,¹⁴¹ and General O'Daniel, and his successor as MAAG Commander, General Williams, made defense against invasion "the cornerstone of their advisory effort."¹⁴²

U.S. intelligence estimates minimized the likelihood of an invasion from the north. As the *Pentagon Papers* concluded: ". . . in spite of insistence by Diem that invasion by the DRV was a serious possibility, U.S. estimates continued to stress that such an invasion was unlikely." ". . . at this time," the Joint Chiefs said on September 9, 1955, as the decision to maintain the 150,000 man army was being made, the "the major threat to South Vietnam continues to be that of subversion. . . ."¹⁴³

Marshall Green, a veteran State Department Far East expert and diplomat, commenting on the difficulties of providing effective assistance to another country, said later:¹⁴⁴

As we were training the South Vietnamese, and thereby making them more and more dependent upon Western arms and West Point ways of doing things, we were making the same mistake the French did in trying to teach them the ways of French military institutions. Secondly, we were making them too dependent upon modern weaponry rather than upon that elemental toughness that enables them to slug it out in the forest with all the leeches, heat and rain. So in some ways this whole development process, based on outside assistance, can be dangerously corrupting. We could be enlightening with

¹⁴⁰ Duncanson, *Government and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 291. See also Spector, *Advice and Support*, pp. 282 ff., and Robert K. G. Thompson's comments in Richard M. Pfeffer, *No More Vietnam?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 166. Thompson says, "I have always regarded, and still do, the creation of a large conventional army inside South Vietnam as the basic cause of the failure to defeat communist insurgency there."

¹⁴¹ For a good explanation of the U.S. military role in Vietnam 1955-61, see *PP*, DOD ed., book 2, IV, A. 4. This important section of the *Pentagon Papers* is not included in the Gravel edition.

It should be noted that the decision to maintain a strong conventional army was based not only on the preferences of U.S. military leaders, but also on the desire of Diem for a large standing army to guard against an invasion from the north. Some of his senior military leaders disagreed, however, believing that the major problem was internal subversion.

¹⁴² Spector, *Advice and Support*, p. 272. Apparently the Korean experience, as well as the general threat of Chinese conquest of Southeast Asia, influenced this decision to prepare against an invasion. See *In the Midst of Wars* for Lansdale's defense of Generals O'Daniel and Williams' position on the need for a large army, despite Lansdale's own feeling that subversion was the major threat.

As Spector also points out, (p. 378), in building a conventional army to resist attacks from the north, U.S. military advisers "were merely following contemporary thinking, for in the 1950s, in contrast to the 1960s, there was little interest in, or knowledge of, counterinsurgency warfare within the U.S. armed forces." See also Spector's discussion, ch. 18, of the shift in thinking in 1960 toward the development of counterinsurgency capabilities.

¹⁴³ *PP*, DOD ed., book 2, IV, A. 4, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ CRS Interview with Marshall Green, Jan. 3, 1979. Among his many posts, Green was Special Assistant to Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson and Regional Planning Adviser for East Asia, 1956-60. Later he was Ambassador to Indonesia and Australia as well as Assistant Secretary of State.

our education programs and things like that, but we could also be corrupting in the sense that they were becoming too dependent upon ways of doing things that they, themselves, could not support, and which weren't really part of their nature and culture, and particularly were no match for those who were willing to fight it out for months in the jungles with only a tube of rice hung around their necks. That is what won the war in the long run in Vietnam. So, we find this process in American foreign policy of trying to do the right thing for the right reason, but, paradoxically, it flares back on us.

The decision to maintain a large army meant that the problem of internal security had to be dealt with outside the regular military establishment by the Civil Guard, consisting of about 50,000 men stationed in small units throughout the country, and, a Self Defense Corps of about 40,000 members located in the villages. This led to the assignment of responsibility for internal security to the civilian side of the U.S. Government with the result, according to one study, that "The U.S. responsibility for improving the security of RVN was bureaucratically and artificially divided in Saigon and Washington. . . . As a consequence, the police (trained by a Michigan State contract team), the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps were all poorly trained, equipped and led. MAAG was responsible for external security and initially dealt only with RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces]. U.S. bureaucratic biases and organizational loyalties early on helped foster an unrealistic and unwise division of the conflict into separate components."¹⁴⁵

The Michigan State University group wanted the Guard to be equipped and trained as a civilian rural police force. Diem, however, wanted the Guard to serve a political function, both as a counterweight to the army, and as a way of exercising political control throughout the countryside, and he rejected the MSU proposal.¹⁴⁶ The resulting impasse between the Diem government and the U.S. Government, which supported the MSU proposal (although the MAAG wanted the Guard to be operated as a branch of the military to make it more effective against the Communists, thus also relieving the regular army from internal security duty), led to a temporary suspension of U.S. aid for the Guard during 1957-59. The matter was finally resolved in 1959, when the U.S., in the face of increasing pressure from the Communist guerrillas, agreed to provide heavier weapons to the Guard as requested by Diem, and as recommended by Lansdale and the MAAG, and responsibility for the Guard was transferred from MSU to USOM and then to the MAAG.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵BDM Corporation, *The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam* (McLean, Va.: 1980), vol. 6, book 1, p. 1-20. For information on this study, see the Notes on Sources below.

¹⁴⁶See Duncanson, *Government and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 280.

¹⁴⁷See Spector, *Advice and Support*, pp. 268-274 for further details on the position of the MAAG. See also PP, DOD ed., book 2, IV, A. 4, pp. 22-23. Thwarted in its general plan to train and equip the Guard as a rural police force, the MSU team conducted a number of specific police training programs, as well as providing, through USOM funds, police equipment and technology. These are discussed in the MSU Final Report, pp. 47 ff. During 1959 Diem wanted to form special "commando" units in the regular army, but the MAAG disagreed, saying that it would adversely affect the conventional forces. Some changes were made in 1960, however. For further details see Spector, *Advice and Support*, p. 349.

"A squad of Civil Guard policemen armed with whistles, nightsticks, and .38-cal. revolvers," as Lansdale said, "could hardly be expected to arrest a squad of guerrillas armed with submachine guns, rifles, grenades, and mortars. . . ." ¹⁴⁸ And Scigliano noted that ". . . a roadbound, mechanized, defense-minded army, supplemented by an ill-trained and under-armed bedraggled Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps—added to the enemy's advantage." ¹⁴⁹

Beginning in late 1959, the Civil Guard underwent a 2-year re-training and reequipment program, but by then the insurgency was well-advanced. In 1960 alone it was estimated that the Communists killed 1,400 local officials and civilians. ¹⁵⁰

In the spring of 1960, there was increasing pressure in the U.S. Army and elsewhere for giving greater priority to counterinsurgency, and in June U.S. Army Special Forces personnel were sent to Vietnam for the express purpose of counterguerrilla training. In September, General Williams was replaced by Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, who gave more emphasis to counterguerrilla warfare. ¹⁵¹

In a memorandum on September 13, 1960, Lansdale, (by then a brigadier general), who had continued to be heavily involved in Vietnamese matters from his post in the Office of Special Operations (a part of the Office of the Secretary of Defense), and who had been active during the discussions of counterinsurgency in the spring, recommended that the U.S. military mission in Vietnam be reoriented toward a strong emphasis on counterguerrilla warfare, and that members of the MAAG should be directed to provide Vietnamese units with "on-the-spot advice and assistance in the conduct of tactical operations against the Viet Cong." Moreover, he said, "If a large scale operation against the Viet Cong is undertaken by the Vietnamese the dispatch of Seventh Fleet vessels and Air Force patrols might be useful in deterring sea reinforcements to the Viet Cong." ¹⁵²

As the Communist insurgency gained strength, the U.S. Government continued to maintain that the situation in South Vietnam was stable, and that Diem's government was fully in control. These assurances were given not only publicly, but to Members of Congress in closed sessions of congressional committees. In March 1958, for example, during an executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee, Adm. Felix B. Stump, Commander of U.S. Forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC), told the committee that the improvement in South Vietnam ". . . has been beyond what would have been our wildest and most optimistic dreams 3 years ago. . . ." He added that Communist guerrillas were creating some problems, but

¹⁴⁸ Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, p. 353. The Scigliano-Fox evaluation of the MSU program, cited above, p. 67, reached this conclusion: "Perhaps MSUG's most serious miscalculation of Vietnamese realities was displayed in its proposals for the civil guard and the withholding of American aid that followed upon Vietnamese failure to accept them. The University group's police advisors regarded the civil guard as a civil police agency, and therefore wanted it to operate accordingly, free of military direction, equipped only with light weapons, and not living in military encampments but among the villagers its members would serve. This conception of the civil guard did not accord either with Vietnamese ideas or with the armed dissidence already existing in Vietnamese countryside even back in 1955 and 1956."

¹⁴⁹ Scigliano, *South Vietnam*, p. 164.

¹⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, *A Threat to the Peace: North Vietnam's Effort to Conquer South Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1961), p. 13.

¹⁵¹ For these developments see Spector, *Advice and Support*, pp. 349 ff.

¹⁵² PP, DOD ed., book 10, pp. 1307-1309. For additional details on Lansdale's views at the time, see Spector, *Advice and Support*, pp. 356-357.

stressed that this "police work" should be handled by the Civil Guard, ". . . so that the Army can group itself against the menace of Communist aggression from the North. . . ." ¹⁵³

In January 1959, in another executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Dulles was asked about the situation in South Vietnam, and he replied that it was satisfactory, but that there continued to be a threat of invasion from the north. Neither he nor any member of the committee mentioned the problem of internal security.¹⁵⁴ In April 1959 the committee heard testimony on the Southeast Asia portion of the mutual security bill, and Senator George Aiken (R/Vt.) asked the new U.S. commander in the Pacific, Adm. Harry D. Felt, about the "threat to . . . Vietnam," meaning the external threat. Felt responded that the Soviet bloc might decide to "probe" again in the area, but that the most likely target would be Laos. Again, there was no discussion of the problem of internal subversion.¹⁵⁵

Also in April 1959, Maj. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, who had just returned from 2½ years as Deputy Chief of the MAAG in Saigon, told a meeting of the American Friends of Vietnam that the "internal security of the nation . . . is nearly realized."¹⁵⁶

As late as July 30, 1959, when the insurgency had become so serious that the Diem government was having difficulty carrying out its rural program, Ambassador Durbrow told the Mansfield subcommittee that "the Government is becoming more and more effective in curbing these terrorist acts."¹⁵⁷

These assurances by the executive branch appear to have been accepted even by knowledgeable Members of Congress. Chester Bowles, for example (a liberal, internationalist Democrat, and then a Member of Congress), who was the keynote speaker at a 1959 conference sponsored by the American Friends of Vietnam, told the group, "Today Vietnam shows us what dedicated men can accomplish when they set their hearts and energies to the task of building an independent society."¹⁵⁸ And in the January 1960 report of the Mansfield subcommittee, as noted above, it was stated that on the basis of such assurances, the U.S. military assistance group in Vietnam could be phased out in the foreseeable future. As Fall pointed out, "This was published at a time when local officials in Viet-Nam were being killed at a rate of more than ten a day."¹⁵⁹

On May 5, 1960, after a newspaper story stating that the MAAG was being doubled in size, both Mansfield and Fulbright wrote to General Williams expressing surprise, in view of Williams' testimony (on which the subcommittee had relied for that part of its report), that the MAAG could soon be reduced, and asking for an explanation. Williams replied that the news story was incorrect. The size of the MAAG was not being doubled, he said. Rather, the 350 members of the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM) were being officially added to the MAAG. This, he said,

¹⁵³ SFRC *His. Ser.*, vol. X, p. 150.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. XI, p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 286-287.

¹⁵⁶ *Aid to Vietnam—An American Success Story*, p. 40.

¹⁵⁷ Hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on *Situation in Vietnam*, cited above, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ *Aid to Vietnam—An American Success Story*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, p. 328.

"... ends subterfuge as actually TERM has had undercover mission as logistical advisors since activation." Williams reiterated his opinion that the MAAG should "work itself out of a job," beginning with a 15 percent decrease in 1961 and 20 percent each year thereafter, "depending of course on readings taken at subsequent dates."¹⁶⁰

Leadership in Vietnam and Laos Reconsidered

By 1960, the situation in both Vietnam and Laos was becoming so critical that the United States began making a number of moves toward developing stronger leadership in both countries. (U.S. officials were also concerned that Cambodia might become "neutral," which under the current circumstances they tended to equate with "pro-communist.")

"... key members of the 'Vietnam lobby' were also becoming disillusioned with Diem. Joseph Buttinger had gone to work with Vietnam exiles in the United States preparing for Diem's overthrow. As early as February 1960, Leo Cherne had gone to Vietnam at the behest of many leaders of the American Friends of Vietnam to ask Diem to change his ways."¹⁶¹

In Vietnam, political dissidence continued to increase, and the sense of outrage of non-Communist groups, including elements of the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, became so strong that in April 1960 many of these opposition leaders joined in organizing a new political group and in issuing a Manifesto. (They made their announcement at the Caravelle Hotel, and were thereafter known as the Caravelle Group.) The 18 leaders who had signed the document, and who called their new organization the Bloc for Liberty and Progress, consisted of some of the most illustrious men of the Republic. Eleven of them were former Cabinet Ministers, including Dr. Phan Huy Quat (who, it will be recalled, had been selected by the U.S. in April 1955 to replace Diem), and Tran Van Do (former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Vietnamese chairman at the Geneva Conference, who had been selected by the U.S. in 1955 as Vice President if Diem were to be replaced). Dr. Phan Quang Dan, then in prison, did not join the Group.

The "Manifesto of the Eighteen" was a frank and compelling statement of the problems facing Vietnam, and an urgent appeal to Diem to take corrective action. It read, in part, as follows:¹⁶²

In spite of the fact that the bastard regime created and protected by colonialism has been overthrown and that many of the feudal organizations of factions and parties which oppress the population were destroyed, the people do not know a better life or more freedom under the republican regime which you have created. A constitution has been established in form only; a National Assembly exists whose deliberations always fall into line with the government; antidemocratic elections—all those are methods and "comedies" copied from the dictatorial

¹⁶⁰See *PP*, DOD ed., book 10, pp. 1276-1280, and for Fulbright's letter of May 5, 1960 to both General Williams and Secretary of State Christian Herter, see National Archives, RG 46, Sen. 86A-F8,29, Foreign Relations, Vietnam C.

¹⁶¹Scheer, *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁶²The text of the manifesto is in Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, pp. 442-447, as well as in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. I, pp. 316-321.

Communist regimes, which obviously cannot serve as terms of comparison with North Viet-Nam.

Continuous arrests fill the jails and prisons to the rafters, as at this precise moment; public opinion and the press are reduced to silence. The same applies to the popular will as translated in certain open elections, in which it is insulted and trampled (as was the case, for example, during the recent elections for the Second Legislature). All these have provoked the discouragement and resentment of the people.

Political parties and religious sects have been eliminated. "Groups" or "movements" have replaced them. But this substitution has only brought about new oppressions against the population without protecting it for that matter against Communist enterprises.

* * * * *

The size of the territory has shrunk, but the number of civil servants has increased, and still the work doesn't get done. This is because the government, like the Communists, lets the political parties control the population, separate the elite from the lower echelons, and sow distrust between those individuals who are "affiliated with the movement" and those who are "outside the group." Effective power, no longer in the hands of those who are usually responsible, is concentrated in fact in the hands of an irresponsible member of the "family," from whom emanates all orders; this slows down the administrative machinery, paralyzes all initiative, discourages good will. At the same time, not a month goes by without the press being full of stories about graft impossible to hide; this becomes an endless parade of illegal transactions involving millions of piastres.

The administrative machinery, already slowed down, is about to become completely paralyzed.

The 18 signers called on Diem to take action to correct these problems, saying, "until now, we have kept silent and preferred to let the Executive act as it wished. But now time is of the essence. . . ." And they warned that if he did not, ". . . truth shall burst forth in irresistible waves of hatred on the part of a people subjected for a long time to terrible suffering and a people who shall rise to break the bonds which hold it down. It shall sweep away the ignominy and all the injustices which surround and oppress it."

In order to prevent this from happening, the group urged, among other things, that there should be a stronger, more independent National Assembly, an easing of censorship of the press, and more liberal treatment of political opposition.

According to Buttinger, no Vietnamese newspaper published the manifesto. He explains why: "If a paper criticized the government too freely or dared to make uncomplimentary remarks about any member of the Ngo family, hoodlums hired by one of Nhu's secret services staged an outburst of popular indignation, which invariably ended with the wrecking of the paper's offices and plant. The

owner lost not only permission to publish, but also much of his property. He was usually fined and jailed as well."¹⁶³

Buttinger pointed out that the actions of the Caravelle Group also were not reported in the American press.¹⁶⁴ (There is also no indication that Congress was aware of these events, although Mansfield and a few others doubtless were informed about what was happening.)

Meanwhile the Communists continued to increase their hold over the countryside, and by March 1960 Ambassador Durbrow cabled Washington a long report on the subject in which he said that internal security had become Vietnam's "No. 1 problem,"¹⁶⁵ ". . . the government," he said, "has tended to treat the population with suspicion or to coerce it and has been rewarded with an attitude of apathy or resentment."

In August, a special national intelligence estimate concluded:¹⁶⁶

Developments within South Vietnam over the past six months indicate a trend adverse to the stability and effectiveness of President Diem's government. Criticism of Diem's leadership within urban groups and government circles has been mounting. More immediately important, the Communist Viet Cong, with support and guidance from Hanoi, has markedly increased subversive operations, terrorist activities, and guerrilla warfare.

Although Diem's personal position and that of his government are probably not now in danger, the marked deterioration since January of this year is disturbing. These adverse trends are not irreversible, but if they remain unchecked, they will almost certainly in time cause the collapse of Diem's regime.

On September 16, 1960, Ambassador Durbrow recommended to the State Department that the U.S. tell Diem "what we believe is required to preserve his government." He said that such "drastic action" was necessary because the Diem government was in "quite serious danger." If Diem failed to carry out the necessary changes, ". . . it may become necessary for US Government to begin consideration alternative courses of action and leaders in order achieve our objective."¹⁶⁷ The State Department approved, and on October 14 Durbrow met with Diem and read him the memorandum which U.S. officials in Washington and Saigon had agreed should be used for this purpose. It expressed concern about the loss of popular support for the government, and urged Diem to take steps to counteract this trend, including decentralizing decisionmaking to permit Cabinet members to assume more responsibility; appointing a Minister of National Defense (at the time, Diem held that post also) as one step in improving the morale and effectiveness of the armed

¹⁶³Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, vol. II, p. 963. For a very interesting and informative *mea culpa* statement by Buttinger, explaining why he did not speak out against the Diem regime, which includes quotations from a similar statement by Wolf Ladejinsky in 1961, see pp. 1157-1158. Of particular interest, given the events of 1963, is Ladejinsky's statement that since political reform appeared hopeless, the best alternative was to emphasize military preparedness, which might lead to political stability and change. But if this failed, the best hope was for a military take-over.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 964.

¹⁶⁵For the text see *PP*, DOD ed., book 10, pp. 1254-1272.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 1298-1301.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 1312, 1316.