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VIET NAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

REPORT OF

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TO THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE



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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Hon. J. W. FULBRIGHT,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Transmitted herewith is a report pursuant to a study mission abroad undertaken by Senators Boggs and Pell, former Senator Smith and myself last fall in compliance with a request of the President.¹ The enclosed report which follows deals with the situation in Viet Nam and Southeast Asia. I should note that the group was in India at the height of the Sino-Indian military crisis and in the Southeast Asian region when the revolt in Brunei erupted. We were afforded, thereby, an unusual opportunity to familiarize ourselves with both situations.

This is the fifth report growing out of the mission. As I wrote you in forwarding the group's first report to the committee,² I communicated directly to the President on December 26 our findings on the Berlin-European situation, the Sino-Indian dispute and Vietnamese-Southeast Asian developments. Additional observations pertaining largely to the administration of policies overseas were transmitted to the Secretary of State on January 7. With reference to the Peace Corps, the Director, Mr. Sargent Shriver was apprised orally of certain findings on January 17.

The focus of the enclosed report is south Viet Nam. In that nation the commitment of the United States is the most direct and deepest in Southeast Asia, involving as it does about 12,000 Americans on dangerous assignment and public expenditures at an annual level of hundreds of millions of dollars. What transpires in Viet Nam inevitably colors the course of U.S. policy throughout Southeast Asia.

Writing in an individual vein, I should note that my recent visit to Viet Nam was the fourth in a decade. I had previously traveled to that country in 1953, 1954, and 1955 and have watched, with interest, developments in that country in subsequent years.

I have a great admiration for President Ngo Dinh Diem which dates from his exceptional achievements in the transition to independence (1954-55). In that period his personal courage, integrity, determination, and authentic nationalism were essential factors in forestalling a total collapse in south Viet Nam and in bringing a measure of order and hope out of the chaos, intrigue, and widespread corruption.

Nevertheless, it would be a disservice to my country not to voice a deep concern over the trend of events in Viet Nam in the 7 years which have elapsed since my last visit. What is most disturbing is

¹ See appended copy of a letter from the President, dated Oct. 22, 1962.

² "Berlin in a Changing Europe," report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, January 1963.

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that Viet Nam now appears to be, as it was then, only at the beginning of a beginning in coping with its grave inner problems. All of the current difficulties existed in 1955, along with hope and energy to meet them. But it is 7 years later and \$2 billion of U.S. aid later. Yet, substantially the same difficulties remain if, indeed, they have not been compounded.

I wish to note in closing the exceptional contribution of the other members of the group to the work of the mission. Although not of the Committee on Foreign Relations, their participation was full, energetic, and indispensable. The report which follows is the product of our joint observations and effort.

Sincerely yours,

MIKE MANSFIELD.

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VIET NAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. INTRODUCTORY

In the fall of 1962, Chinese forces moved out of Tibet in an assault on the Indian Army in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The Chinese action was unexpected, militant, and relentless, and it carried deep into Indian territory, almost to the banks of the Brahmaputra River. Then the advance halted as suddenly as it had begun and the Chinese staged a unilateral withdrawal.

Ostensibly the action arose from a border dispute which for some time had been the subject of negotiations between Delhi and Peking. But it also constituted the first unabashed use of Chinese military power in strength against an independent southern Asian neighbor in modern times.¹ The power was employed, moreover, in a most humiliating fashion against India, with which Peking had assiduously cultivated friendly relations for some years. These unusual factors suggested that, beyond border considerations, there were other implications in the affair. It might well have been designed, as many observers believed, to discredit Indian leadership and to demonstrate to nations of Southeast Asia that the new China could be ruthless or magnanimous but, either way, it was the power to be reckoned with in Asia.

A short time after the Sino-Indian clash, a second outbreak of violence occurred 2,000 miles to the south in Brunei. By contrast this incident was associated not with a projection of outside power toward Southeast Asia but with its recession from the region. To be sure, the Brunei revolt contained obscure inner regional implications, involving Malaya, Indonesia, and perhaps even the Philippines. The violence, however, came only after it was clear that the British intended to withdraw from remaining political responsibilities in Southeast Asia by fostering a Malaysian federation of Malaya, Singapore, Brunei, Sarawak, and North Borneo.

These two contrasting incidents underscore the basic problem which Southeast Asia has posed for U.S. policies for more than a decade. On the one hand, the Brunei incident foreshadows the completion of Western European political and military withdrawal from the region. On the other hand, the Sino-Indian clash points clearly to the possibility of a deeper projection of Chinese power into Southeast Asia.

This latter possibility has existed, of course, for some time. Considerable Chinese Communist influence already is present, quite in addition to the large Chinese commercial communities which have long been established in Southeast Asia. Heretofore, however, Peking's

¹ Although it caused deep concern, it is doubtful that the Chinese suppression of the Tibetan revolt was generally regarded in this fashion in India and in most of Asia.

influence has been diplomatic, ideological, economic, and only indirectly military, as in the case of aid to north Viet Nam. But the Sino-Indian clash makes clear that it is now necessary for the Southeast Asian nations to reckon with the enlargement of the Chinese role at any time to include the direct use of military power in a full modern revival of the classic pattern of Chinese imperial techniques in Southeast Asia.

That such is the possibility serves to emphasize the hiatus of power and responsibility which has been left in Southeast Asia by the Western European withdrawal. The small independent states, mostly successors to colonial regimes, have been unable to fill the breach out of their present capabilities. While these states have immense potential, they are still weak and much of their social structure is inadequate to the demands of stable and independent survival in the world of the second half of the 20th century.

It has been largely in compensation for this weakness that U.S. policies for Southeast Asia have formed over the past decade. From the most limited and casual interest scarcely a dozen years ago, we have plunged heavily into the affairs of that region. It would be more accurate to say, perhaps, that we have backed into the involvement. For it was the bitter conflict with the Chinese in Korea at the other end of Asia which directed our attention sharply to the southern flank of the continent. And it was largely out of the estimates of the military necessities of that conflict that we became immersed in Southeast Asia.

Whatever the impetus, the commitment has already been very costly. In terms of aid, military and other, to Southeast Asia since 1950, the volume has been in the neighborhood of \$5 billion through 1962.² The commitment has also involved the building of large aid and information structures and other administrative machinery in virtually every nation in the region. There was, for example, a total of about 180 U.S. military and civilian personnel in all of Southeast Asia in 1950. Today the figure is in the neighborhood of 18,000.³

Further, the involvement led to our assuming the initiative in devising the Southeast Asia Treaty of 1954, which, in effect, pitted U.S. prestige against a Chinese advance into the region. This treaty, in turn, has led to our underwriting much of the cost of building and maintaining the SEATO defense structure.

The deepening involvement in Southeast Asia carried us to the brink of war in north Viet Nam in 1954 and again in Laos in 1961. More recently, it has included the assignment of substantial U.S. military forces to Thailand as well as to south Viet Nam.

These facts are cited to stress the key position which the United States has come to occupy in the present situation in Southeast Asia. For it is well to note the obvious at the outset: Any sudden withdrawal from this position—as, for example, by the sudden termination of aid programs—would open the region to upheaval and chaos. What would eventually emerge is uncertain but there is little doubt that, in present circumstances, the Chinese shadow on the northern periphery would lengthen over Southeast Asia.

² The figures include Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, and Indonesia. They exclude the Philippines for which the total is \$525 million.

³ Figures exclude the Philippines where, of course, there has long been a special and close relationship.

2. VIET NAM

Introductory

The deepening involvement of the United States has brought with it an accumulation of problems of foreign policy throughout Southeast Asia. The critical focus, however, is Viet Nam. It was in that country, while it was still under the control of France, that the first major U.S. commitment, largely of military aid, was made on the South Asian mainland.

Estimates of U.S. aid of all kinds to French Indochina through 1954 place the figure at about \$1.2 billion. In that year there occurred the French military disaster at Dien Bien Phu. The French then undertook a drastic reduction of their commitment in Viet Nam, and the United States stepped into the breach. We entered, not as a replacement for France, but in support of indigenous Vietnamese nationalists who came to the fore in south Viet Nam in the wake of the French withdrawal. From that time on, our policies became an indispensable factor in preventing the southern half of the country from falling to the Communist-led and Chinese-supported Vietminh revolutionary movement under Ho Chi Minh.

When Ngo Dinh Diem became President in 1955, the United States assumed the preponderant burden of outside support for the new Republic in south Viet Nam. That relationship has continued to the present day. French influence is now largely confined to the spheres of commerce, investment, and culture. Other nations and international organizations make contributions of various kinds to Vietnamese development. But in matters of defense, internal stability, and economic support, the Vietnamese Government has come to depend almost wholly on the United States for outside assistance.

In terms of aid, the assumption of this preponderant responsibility has meant U.S. outlays of \$1.4 billion for economic assistance during the period of 1955-62. This economic aid has had some effect on Vietnamese development, but its primary purpose has been to sustain the Vietnamese economy so that it, in turn, could maintain the burden of a military establishment which has been upward of 150,000 men for the past half decade. On top of economic aid, there has also been provided large amounts of military equipment and supplies and training for the Vietnamese Army, Navy, and Air Force and for other defense purposes. For the period 1955-62 the total of aid of all kinds to Viet Nam stands at more than \$2 billion.

In spite of this great commitment, the responsibility of the United States in south Viet Nam has never been and is not now full, in the sense that the French once exercised that responsibility. Despite Communist propaganda to the contrary, ultimate responsibility reposes, not in Washington but in the Vietnamese Government in Saigon. The role of the United States is supplementary, advisory, and perhaps exhortatory, but it is not, in the end, controlling. U.S. assistance is, of course, of the greatest significance in Viet Nam, but the power of decision and, hence, responsibility, resides in the Vietnamese Government. The point is stressed because the distinction between ultimate responsibility and heavy but supplemental responsibility is not an academic one. Rather it is central to an understanding of what is transpiring in Viet Nam, and it controls both the possibilities and limitations of American policy.

Background

The distinction takes on particular importance at this time because military conflict has now become, once again, the predominant accent of the situation in Viet Nam as it has not been since 1954. In that earlier time, the armed guerrilla struggle of the Vietminh was directed against France. It included Vietnamese of many political complexions, not merely the Vietcong (the Communists), and it spread throughout Viet Nam, north and south. However, the point of concentrated conflict was in the Red River region of north Viet Nam.

In an attempt to crush the Vietminh guerrillas of that period, the French built up their own forces in Indochina to 200,000 men, including a large contingent of foreign legionnaires. They also developed a Vietnamese Army of about 200,000 and supporting forces in excess of 150,000 men.⁴

After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, which was a defeat of will and spirit as well as a military reverse, the war was brought to a halt by agreements signed at Geneva, and a cease-fire came into effect under the supervision of a truce team of Indians, Poles, and Canadians. Viet Nam was also divided by the Geneva accords into what was supposed to have been temporary zones of a Communist-controlled territory north of the 17th parallel and a non-Communist-controlled region in the south.

Since the division of Viet Nam, there have been sporadic and local uprisings in the north, but as a practical matter, guerrilla warfare on a major scale has been confined to the south. It has been directed against the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam and, more recently, also against U.S. support forces.

Even in the south there was a lull in the struggle from 1955 until 1959. During that time, a considerable amount of constructive work was undertaken. Agricultural production increased under the impetus of peace and land reform. A modest beginning was made in industrialization. Communications were reopened and enlarged. Education expanded, as did other social services. The authority of the central government was extended outward from Saigon and other major cities as travel by road and rail once again became safe throughout much of the south.

In the past 3 years, however, these constructive achievements have been overshadowed by the resumption of guerrilla warfare on a large scale. Once again, a large part of south Viet Nam has become unsafe a short distance outside the cities. Attacks occur in the night just a few miles from Saigon. And from time to time bombs again explode within the capital itself. In short, the war of the rice paddies, the jungle paths, and the mountain trails, the war of terror has resumed and grown to the proportions of major conflict. In 1962, about 25,000 Vietnamese were killed in this conflict. The attacks of the Vietcong guerrillas averaged over 100 per week during the year and ranged in size from squad to battalion level.

The numerical strength of the Vietcong guerrillas has increased steadily until it is now at the highest point since the cease-fire in 1954. At that time, an estimated 10,000 Vietcong faded into the peas-

⁴ Another source lists these totals as 88,000 French, 230,000 French legionnaires, north Africans, and Senegalese, and 180,000 Vietnamese, 1954 *Britannica Book of the Year*, p. 60.

ant population. These men became the nucleus of the new force which the Communists have built. The number has expanded by local recruitment as well as by infiltration from the north until it has reached an estimated 22,000 to 24,000 regulars with a supplement of local irregulars of over 100,000. The force is equipped largely with primitive, antiquated, and captured weapons. In recent months, some sophisticated equipment has been employed in battle against the government forces.

Against the guerrillas, the Government of the Republic has a regular military establishment of over 200,000 men in the army, navy, air force, and marine services. There is also a supplemental self-defense corps and a civil guard which, together, contain about 170,000 men. And, reportedly, 25,000 montagnards have also been trained in an irregular civil defense group.⁵ The equipment of these forces varies, of course, but it is modern and vastly superior in terms of what is available to the guerrilla forces.

It has been demonstrated time and again, however, that superiority in numbers and in equipment is not a guarantor of quick success in the kind of conflict which confronts the Vietnamese Government. Contemporary analogies are to be found in Malaya, north Africa, Laos, and even in the earlier guerrilla conflict in Viet Nam against France. In the only one of these conflicts, in Malaya, was substantial success achieved by the defender and, even in that situation, it was not achieved until the principal political slogan of the guerrilla forces—*independence from colonial control*—was usurped by the tangible political actions of the defender.

The new strategy

In south Viet Nam, superiority of numbers and equipment was not effective in preventing a progressive weakening of the Government's position. This process which began in 1958-59 has continued at least until very recent months.

By 1961 it was apparent that the prospects for a total collapse in south Viet Nam had begun to come dangerously close. A joint re-evaluation of the situation was undertaken in that year by the Vietnamese Government and the United States. The Vietnamese themselves devised new strategic theories for meeting the situation. After special political, military, and economic missions had examined the situation, the United States enlarged its aid program—military and other—to the present annual level of more than \$400 million. The United States also agreed to put about 10,000 men into south Viet Nam in direct support of the Vietnamese armed forces in addition to the large military aid group which was already functioning in the country.

The new U.S.-support forces were designed to provide tactical advice on counter guerrilla operations and logistical and other specialized services, notably those of rapid mobility and communications. The forces were not intended for combat, but they have been in combat. More than 50 men have lost their lives—about half in battle—in Viet Nam since the beginning of the program of intensified assistance.

⁵ The montagnards are various non-Vietnamese tribal people numbering under 1 million who inhabit the remote mountainous areas in western Viet Nam.

In brief, the present Vietnamese strategy for resolving the guerrilla conflict is threefold. In the first place the plan calls for a major effort to win to the side of the Government the non-Vietnamese tribal montagnards. The emphasis in this aspect of the plan is on resettlement and intensified social services and, in addition, the tribal people are being trained and equipped for self-defense. If this objective is achieved it would serve to render extremely hazardous major supply lines of the guerrillas from the north. The second aspect of the plan involves the additional U.S. military assistance and support which is expected to enable the regular Vietnamese forces to seize the initiative and place the guerrillas on the run before they can hit, thus reversing the order which has heretofore largely prevailed in south Viet Nam.

Finally, the plan calls for a major regrouping of the rural Vietnamese population into so-called strategic hamlets, a kind of fortified center, defended largely by the inhabitants themselves. It is hoped that this regroupment will deny to the guerrillas the ability to extort or cajole support from the peasants. The hamlets are also expected to serve as a funnel through which the U.S. aid supported programs of development can reach the rural populace. In this fashion and by the introduction of democratic practices of self-government in the villages, it is hoped that the great bulk of the Vietnamese people will be won to the active support of the Republic.

The new strategic plan has been in operation for about a year. During that time about 4,000 of the planned 11,200 strategic hamlets have been constructed. Considerable progress has apparently been made in developing friendly contact with the montagnards. The Vietnamese armed forces and other defense elements, greatly strengthened by new equipment—notably helicopters—as well as by the additional support of the special U.S. forces, have been giving a better account of themselves than heretofore.

Concluding comments

Those who bear responsibility for directing operations under the new strategy are optimistic over the prospects for success. Indeed, success was predicted to the group almost without exception by responsible Americans and Vietnamese, in terms of a year or two hence.⁶ The word "success" is not easy to define in a situation such as exists in south Viet Nam.⁷ It would mean, at the least, reduction of the guerrillas to the point where they would no longer be a serious threat to the stability of the Republic. If that point is reached, road and rail communications would once again become reasonably safe. Local officials would no longer live in constant fear of assassination. Rice and other major commodities would again move in volume to the cities. Development throughout the nation would be feasible. In short, the situation in south Viet Nam would become roughly similar to that which eventually emerged in Malaya, and it is significant that a good deal of the present planning in south Viet Nam is based upon the Malayan experience.

While such a situation would fall far short of the development of a "bastion" in south Viet Nam, as the objective has been described

⁶ More recent estimates as, for example, that of Adm. Harry Felt on Jan. 30, 1963, speak in terms of 3 years.

⁷ Admiral Felt defines victory as government control of at least 90 percent of the rural population.

on occasion, it would, nevertheless, be adequate to the survival of free Viet Nam. It would not necessarily permit any great reduction in U.S. aid to the Vietnamese Government for some years but it would, at least, allow for a substantial reduction in the direct support which American forces are now providing to Vietnamese defense.

Great weight must be given to the views of those who have direct responsibility in the conduct of the new strategy. But even if success is envisioned in the limited sense described above, experience in Viet Nam going back at least a decade recommends caution in predicting its rapid achievement. The new strategy is not entirely new. Elements of it have appeared over the past decade or more in various unsuccessful plans for resolving the guerrilla problem in Viet Nam. What makes it new, perhaps, is that these elements have been interwoven, along with certain Malayan counter guerrilla tactics into a cohesive pattern which is supported more heavily than ever by the United States.

At this time, experience under the plan does not appear adequate for drawing the kind of optimistic conclusions with respect to it which have been drawn. The reported number of Vietcong casualties has gone up but, so too, has the estimated total of active Vietcong guerrillas. There are indications of improvements in the security of travel and in the movement of rice and other commodities through the countryside, but they are not yet conclusive. The newly strengthened armed services of the Republic, supported by U.S. forces, have scored some striking victories, but the Vietcong have recently shown a capacity to devise new tactics to counter the increased mobility and firepower of the Government's forces. Most frequently pointed to, has been the success in winning over the montagnards to the Government. This could be an achievement of great importance in terms of its effect on Vietcong supply lines from north to south through the western mountains, but there are other supply lines by land and by sea. Moreover, the winning over of these scattered and quite primitive tribal peoples who, incidentally, were also won over in Laos, is not to be confused with the winning over of the Vietnamese peasants. The attitudes of the 15 million of Vietnamese in city and countryside, not those of the relatively small group of montagnards, will ultimately determine the future of the Republic and its Government.

It is with the Vietnamese peasant, of course, that the "strategic hamlet" concept is primarily concerned. The concept is based on the assumptions that the Vietcong are sustained by the rural populace primarily out of fear, and in part, because the peasants are not aware of the superior social, economic, and political advantages which are offered by support of the Government and participation in its processes. *Assuming the accuracy of the assumptions* successful military action within the dimensions of the present effort is conceivable within the foreseeable future. But even to give an initial military victory meaning will require a massive job of social engineering. In the best of circumstances, outside aid in very substantial size will be necessary for many years. However large such aid may be, it will not suffice without a great mobilization of selfless Vietnamese leadership in all parts of the country and at all levels.

It is in this area that criticism and doubt of the new strategy finds most persistent expression. And it is not a service to the people of

Viet Nam or to this Nation to ignore or to make light of the existence of this criticism and doubt. The fact must be faced that the practices of political organization which have been relied upon most heavily to date in south Viet Nam are, in many respects, authoritarian. While the plans for the strategic hamlets are cast in a democratic mold, it is by no means certain at this point how they shall evolve in practice. The evolution of the practices of the Central Government, to date, are not reassuring in this connection.

There are, to be sure, extenuating circumstances in Viet Nam which counsel great patience. The situation which was inherited by the Republic in 1955 was one of great corruption, repression, and divisiveness. Apart from the relatively peaceful period 1955-58, moreover, there have been continuous guerrilla pressures designed to weaken the Government and bring about its collapse. In spite of the difficulties some significant political, economic, and social reforms have been essayed over the years. Indeed, the basic political form of the central government is democratic.

When that has been said, however, it is also necessary to note that present political practices in Viet Nam do not appear to be mobilizing the potential capacities for able and self-sacrificing leadership on a substantial scale. Yet, such a mobilization is essential for the success of the new strategy and, hence, the survival of south Viet Nam and of freedom within Viet Nam.

It is most disturbing to find that after 7 years of the Republic, south Viet Nam appears less, not more, stable than it was at the outset, that it appears more removed from, rather than closer to, the achievement of popularly responsible and responsive government. The pressures of the Vietcong guerrillas do not entirely explain this situation. In retrospect, the Government of Viet Nam and our policies, particularly in the design and administration of aid, must bear a substantial, a very substantial, share of the responsibility.

We are now reshaping the aid programs in a fashion which those responsible believe will make them of maximum utility. We have intensified our support of the Vietnamese armed forces in ways which those responsible believe will produce greater effectiveness in military operations. This intensification, however, inevitably has carried us to the start of the road which leads to the point at which the conflict in Viet Nam could become of greater concern and greater responsibility to the United States than it is to the Government and people of south Viet Nam. In present circumstances, pursuit of that course could involve an expenditure of American lives and resources on a scale which would bear little relationship to the interests of the United States or, indeed, to the interests of the people of Viet Nam.

If we are to avoid that course it must be clear to ourselves as well as to the Vietnamese where the primary responsibility lies in this situation. It must rest, as it has rested, with the Vietnamese Government and people. What further effort may be needed for the survival of the Republic of Viet Nam in present circumstances must come from that source. If it is not forthcoming, the United States can reduce its commitment or abandon it entirely, but there is no interest of the United States in Viet Nam which would justify, *in present circumstances*, the conversion of the war in that country primarily into an American war, to be fought primarily with American lives. It is

the frequent contention of Communist propaganda that such is already the case. It should remain the fact that the war in Viet Nam is not an American war in present circumstances. The words, "in present circumstances," are reiterated lest they be overlooked by those who may assume that there are no circumstances in which American interests might require even greater efforts in Southeast Asia than those which we are now making.

3. LAOS

Background

In contrast to Viet Nam, policies since 1961 have involved a lightening of commitment in Laos. As in Viet Nam, the United States began to supply aid to Laos about a decade ago. In the early years, this burden was shared with the French. The aid went to a government headed by the then Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma whose internal policy succeeded in bringing about partial integration of the dissident Pathet Lao political faction headed by his half brother Prince Souphanouvong. Various U.S. aid and other activities increased in the kingdom. At the same time the French role declined. Once again, an internal political divisiveness appeared. Souvanna Phouma was compelled to withdraw from the Government. There followed the coups and countercoups of 1959-60 which ended with an anti-Communist military government in control in the administrative capital of Vientiane. Its position, however, was challenged by two other factions, the Pathet Lao looking to the Vietminh of North Viet Nam for support and by a group under a U.S. trained military officer, Kong Le, which advocated the return of Souvanna Phouma to the Government. By that time, U.S. agencies had assumed almost total responsibility for outside assistance to the military government in power in Vientiane.

The U.S. involvement

The growth in U.S. personnel in Laos and the overall cost of military and other aid to that country is indicative of the rapid engrossment of the United States in internal Laotian affairs. From a total of two American officials permanently stationed in all of Laos in 1953,⁸ the number of U.S. personnel rose to 850 at its height in 1961, a total which has now declined to 250. Through the years 1955-62, the United States provided over \$450 million in aid of all kinds to Laos.

In relation to the size and nature of the country this aid effort has been more intense than anywhere else in the world. Laos has only 2.5 million inhabitants, most of whom live in scattered and primitive villages. The land is located in one of the most remote regions of Asia and is largely covered with inaccessible jungle. A decade ago, political leadership on a national scale was nonexistent. Politics centered on the small group of intellectuals in the administrative capital of Vientiane, with ramifications reaching to the Royal Court in Luang Prabang. In 1953, the Laotian Army had two battalions in process of formation, less than a thousand men in all. There were also several

⁸ In that year, the U.S. mission in Saigon was accredited for all three Indochinese states—Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos—and the U.S. Minister in Saigon paid only occasional visits to what was then a small legation in Vientiane.

hundred Pathet Lao dissidents under arms in the northeast. Outside its immediate neighbors and France, the existence of the Kingdom of Laos as a political entity was almost totally unknown abroad.

Yet scarcely a decade later, 100,000 Laotians were bearing arms. There were three major military factions engaged in conflict. The peaceful little Buddhist kingdom had become both a mirror reflecting the principal ideological stresses of our times and a bloody setting for international competition and intrigue on a massive scale. The transition had gone so far by the spring of 1961 that this Nation was compelled to consider seriously the possibility of a major and direct military involvement of U.S. forces in Laos, with overtones not unlike those of the Korean conflict.

There were, however, different characteristics in the Laotian situation which held some promise that a satisfactory solution to the problem could be achieved through negotiations. An international conference of 14 nations was convened in Geneva on the Laotian question in an effort to find a peaceful solution along lines which had long been advocated by Cambodia. Fourteen months later on July 23, 1962, an agreement was signed by the participating nations and a measure of peace returned to the embattled kingdom.

The current situation

The signatories of the Geneva accord of 1962 pledged themselves to respect the neutrality of Laos and not to interfere in its internal affairs. In addition, they promised to withdraw such military forces as they had in Laos and not to use the territory of Laos for interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

Concomitant with the Geneva agreement, the leaders of the three principal Laotian political factions agreed to establish a unified government and administration under the King. The key figures in the latter settlement were Prince Souvanna Phouma who, having served as the first Prime Minister of an independent Laos, became Prime Minister once again in the provisional government. He was joined in the new government by Prince Souphanouvong, his half brother and the leader of the northern dissidents and by Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, leader of a southern faction who had had close ties with Thailand and U.S. executive agencies.

It is too soon to judge the efficacy of the international and Laotian accords which have been introduced into the situation. Insofar as the larger powers are concerned, U.S. forces have been withdrawn in keeping with the agreement. On the basis of available information, there are neither Soviet Russian nor Chinese forces in Laos in violation of the agreement. But there is every likelihood that Vietminh forces are still present among the Pathet Lao, and there are allegations that foreign elements are also active in other military factions.

Responsibility for determining that all foreign forces have been withdrawn from Laos rests with an International Control Commission. But this group of Indians, Canadians, and Poles has yet to carry out the responsibility, largely because of disagreement among the factions within the provisional government.

This is but one example of the difficulties besetting the government of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, which operates on the principle of unanimity of the three factions on matters of significance. There are many others. In particular, there is the problem of mili-

tary demobilization. An agreement in principle has been reached to reduce the total of more than 100,000 men under arms in Laos to a national force of 30,000 and a police force of 6,000 drawn equally from the three major factions. As of the time of our visit, however, the agreement was still awaiting action. There have also been sporadic violations of the cease fire directed especially at Meo tribes people in Pathet Lao controlled territory. And American planes have even been shot down while carrying relief supplies to isolated troops at the request of the Prime Minister.

Present U.S. policies

It is the policy of the United States, as expressed by the President, to support fully both the Geneva agreement of 1962 and the efforts of Prime Minister Souvanna to establish a unified government in Laos. In keeping with the Geneva accords, the United States has already withdrawn its military aid mission personnel of 650 as well as 400 Filipino contract technicians.

At the same time, and at the request of the Prime Minister, the United States is supplying maintenance material to the armed forces under the control of General Phoumi and those responsive to Souvanna Phouma and has offered to assist in the orderly demobilization of the military when it becomes feasible. The United States is also continuing economic help to the Laotian Government, but the program is shifting from aid designed to permit the economy to sustain large military burdens to aid designed essentially to help in reconstruction and development, with stress on education.

In effect, U.S. Laotian policy is now acting to extricate this Nation in an orderly fashion from the position of virtually sole outside support of the Government of Laos. A substantial reduction in the cost of Laotian policy has already been achieved by the withdrawal of the military aid mission. Aid going to Laos, moreover, has been reduced from a peak annual level of \$73 million in 1962 to the present level of about \$40 million.

While this reduction has been taking place, both France and Britain have agreed to share in new programs of economic reconstruction and development. So far, however, the French have been reluctant to assume any increase in responsibilities for military aid although France is the only power permitted by the Geneva accords to maintain military personnel in Laos.

The Soviet Union is also providing economic assistance to the provisional government, largely through a new commercial payments agreement. The Russians have also given Laos 10 aircraft for transport purposes. They have offered to build a hospital and a radio station and to provide credit for the construction of a large hydroelectric station.⁹

Concluding Comments

Solution to the Laotian problem along the lines of international neutralization and national unification would be immensely difficult to achieve in the best of circumstances. Geographic and cultural factors

⁹ Other bloc countries and Communist China have also indicated interest in supplying aid. Gen. Phoumi Nosavan has visited Moscow and Peking on an economic aid mission, and a state visit by the King to the Soviet Union, the United States, and other Geneva participants is in progress.

in the situation are such as to encourage internal political fragmentation, and the sense of Laotian nationality is not widely developed among the populace. At the same time, ideological and predatory forces from without have historically tended to press in, as wedges, upon the region in which the little kingdom is located. To these obvious difficulties must be added lingering personal suspicions among the principal Laotian leaders, growing out of the experiences of the past.

What the outcome of the attempted solution will be is still very uncertain. Much hinges on the perseverance of Prince Souvanna Phouma, who as Prime Minister, has undertaken the principal responsibility. Alone among the present leaders he enjoys a stature which is larger than any faction. Much depends, too, on the willingness of France to play a significant part in providing disinterested assistance along with other outside nations. The tenuous peace, moreover, can be jeopardized if there is continued use of the facility which Laos offers for the transshipment of supplies from north Viet Nam to the guerrillas in the south.

At this point, half year after the conclusion of the agreement, it must be counted an achievement that the military conflict remains substantially in abeyance. There have been, as noted, sporadic and isolated outbreaks of hostility. In general, however, the cease fire has held. Moreover, major outside powers—notably the United States and the Soviet Union—have been giving substantial constructive aid to the provisional government of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma.

On the other hand until the removal of all foreign forces from Laos is ascertained, until the authority of the unified government is generally accepted throughout the country, until the military forces are reduced and unified, the situation is bound to continue to hang in precarious balance. Attempts by either an outside nation or a faction within Laos to take advantage of the delicate transition could readily upset the situation, and might well bring about the abandonment of the effort at unification by Souvanna Phouma.

From the point of view of the United States, the situation is improved over that which prevailed when the Geneva Conference convened in 1961. At that time it was evident that only military intervention by SEATO, and primarily by U.S. military forces in considerable strength, in a war of uncertain depth and duration, offered the hope of preventing further deterioration in the position of the Vientiane Government.¹⁰ The Geneva Conference interposed a cease fire at that point, and the accords to which it led helped to forestall a deepening of U.S. involvement. At least the prospect now exists for a peaceful solution and that alone has already permitted a reduction in both aid costs and numbers of U.S. personnel in Laos.

4. OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

Outside Laos and Viet Nam, the United States has commitments of varying depth with respect to the other countries of Southeast Asia. The ties range from those of intimate alliance with the Philippines and

¹⁰ Indications, at the time, were that only Thailand was prepared to use troops in significant numbers. The Philippines and other non-Asian members also offered small contingents. The forces of both Thailand and the Philippines, in any event, are heavily dependent on U.S. aid.

to a lesser extent with Thailand to what might be termed friendly but essentially routine relations with Malaya and Burma. Relations with Cambodia are in an intermediate stage, in which U.S. aid is still a factor but one of declining significance.¹¹

Cambodia

Cambodia has developed into one of the most stable and progressive nations in Southeast Asia. Apart from difficulties on its borders with Thailand and Viet Nam, the kingdom enjoys complete peace and has registered a remarkable degree of economic and social progress in a decade. The leadership of Prince Sihanouk has been a key factor in this achievement. Abdicating the throne in order to participate actively in political affairs, the Prince has led the kingdom with an understanding of his people, with personal dedication, and with immense energy. He has maintained cooperative relations with France on the new basis of full national independence and equality and the French, today, continue to play a major part in the development of the country. Cambodia's contacts with the rest of the world have been greatly expanded and now encompass all of the major powers, Communist and non-Communist. In international circles, Cambodia has come to occupy an influential role among the smaller nations and was a prime mover in the convening of the Geneva Conference on Laos.

Outside assistance has been supplied to Cambodia by many countries, including Soviet Russia and Communist China. The United States has provided over \$300 million in assistance from 1955 to 1962. But the level has been declining, with Cambodian encouragement and concurrence.¹²

In spite of this assistance, however, Cambodian-United States relationships have encountered repeated difficulties from the outset. In retrospect, many of these difficulties appear superficial and avoidable. Whatever the difficulties, there is not and can hardly be any legitimate basis for a direct conflict with this remote Asian kingdom. There are, on the other hand, possibilities for deepening cultural and economic contacts of mutual benefit. Indeed, Cambodia's inner progress and declining dependence on U.S.-grant aid points to a foreseeable termination of these programs, not in chaos but in a transition to an enduring relationship of mutual respect and mutual advantage. Finally, Cambodia's existence as an independent nation at peace with all of the great powers is of exemplary value if there is ever to be a durable and peaceful solution to the basic problems of Southeast Asia.

It would appear very much in order for the United States to make every effort to understand the position of the Cambodians and to use its good offices in every practicable way to encourage settlement of the border difficulties with Thailand and Viet Nam. Our military aid to these countries is undoubtedly a factor in exacerbating Cambodian fears and, hence, has intensified the difficulties which have characterized United States-Cambodian relations. However they may appear to us, these fears are very real to the Cambodians and exert a powerful influence on the course of its policies which of late have tended toward an extreme neutralism.

¹¹ Indonesia was not visited during the course of the mission.

¹² Several months ago, Prince Sihanouk stated that he was prepared for the complete termination of military aid.

As noted, there has already been a decline in the level of one-sided U.S. aid to Cambodia and apparently, the Government of that country desires a continuance of this process. We should seek to meet this desire in an orderly fashion. At the same time, far greater emphasis should be placed on expanding more mutual relationships. Educational and other exchanges and the promotion of tourism, for example, can be of great value in this connection. The possibilities of stimulating investment and enlarged trade should also be fully explored. It would appear greatly in our interest to make every reasonable effort to encourage a transition from what has been a stormy and one-sided aid relationship to a new relationship of greater understanding and mutuality.

Thailand

In Thailand, as in Cambodia, there also exists the possibility for an effective evolution of relationships toward a more mutual basis. The setting for this evolution, however, differs considerably. Thailand is an ally in SEATO and less than a year ago, the United States landed combat forces of 5,000 men in that country when the conflict in neighboring Laos threatened to spill over.

The United States is presently committed to the defense of Thailand against outside aggression and is involved indirectly through various aid and other activities in supporting the present Government against internal subversion. U.S. aid has borne the principal cost of equipping modern forces of over 130,000 men in the Thai armed services and 30,000 militarized police. U.S. economic aid has been a major factor in the very considerable economic development which has ensued in recent years.

At the present time, Thailand is stable. Its economy is beginning to grow beyond the elementary stages into more advanced forms of modern development. Private foreign investment is coming into the country from Japan and Western Europe as well as from the United States.

Economic development is uneven and its effects are still only slightly felt by the 80 percent of the population which lives on the land. Nevertheless, it is an expanding process which is fanning out from Bangkok, with encouragement from the Government.

There are no immediate discernible threats to this progress. However, it should be noted that institutions of political change in Thailand have not been firmly established.¹³ Moreover, the northeast area of the country which contains about one-third of the population is vulnerable to infiltration by militant political opposition inasmuch as its populace is extremely poor and has traditionally been isolated from the Central Government.

As noted, the United States has borne the bulk of the cost of equipping the Thai armed forces. In the period 1951-62, a total of almost \$450 million in military aid was provided. We have also supplied economic aid to Thailand of almost \$300 million during the same

¹³ The present Government and predecessors have come to power by coups d'etat. These coups have been, on the whole, quick and bloodless, but they do result in temporary and depressing confusion and can lead to new orientation of policy.

period. At first much of this economic assistance was on a grant basis. More recently, however, increasing emphasis has been given to loans. Furthermore, there has been growing international participation. The International Bank has made loans for major undertakings and Germany has made significant loans. In the near future, a coordinated aid effort is expected to be undertaken by the Development Assistance Committee which includes the United States, Western European countries, and Japan.

These trends toward diversification of the sources of assistance to Thailand, of course, are to be encouraged, inasmuch as they reduce what has heretofore been almost a complete dependence on U.S. aid. It should be noted, however, that these new efforts are for the most part those which promise tangible returns to the participants. The bulk of U.S. aid to Thailand over the years has been grant assistance for defense or defense-related purposes and continues in that form.

In view of the increasing availability of outside finance and Thailand's stable economic situation, it would appear that efforts to reduce and to phase out one-sided assistance from the United States would be in order. Here, too, as in Cambodia, possibilities may exist for a concurrent expansion of the relationships of greater mutuality; that is, in trade, investment, and cultural exchange. Certainly, such expansion should be encouraged vigorously by our Government. It should be noted in this connection that the Peace Corps is now operating, apparently, with wide acceptance and approval in Thailand. This is essentially a mutual undertaking in the sense that a substantial group of Americans—mostly young people—are helping to teach English and to impart other skills to Thais at the people-to-people level. At the same time they are afforded a unique opportunity to study closely another culture. The knowledge which the members of the Peace Corps gain in Thailand should contribute, on their return, to the pool of our national skills and to the enrichment of our own national life.

Burma

U.S. relations with Burma and Malaya are unique in Southeast Asia in that an aid mission does not function in either country. Some years ago there was a regular aid program and administrative structure in Burma but it was withdrawn at the request of the Burmese Government. From time to time there have been reports of a revival of this mission. However, such aid as has since gone to Burma has been on an irregular basis for specific finite undertakings and has not involved the stationing of a large permanent U.S.-aid group in Burma. Indeed, Burma's anxiety of late to adhere to a position of nonalignment with respect to the great powers has been so intense that it has even terminated the private assistance programs of the Asia and Ford Foundations and has curtailed educational exchanges under the Fulbright program.

Burma's position in Southeast Asia is a precarious one. It sits astride remote communications routes between two giant neighbors, India and China. With both countries, it has had difficulties over the years largely because of Indian and Chinese minority communities in Burma. With Communist China it has also had the problem

of a poorly demarcated common boundary of 1,200 miles although this problem apparently has now been resolved to the satisfaction of Burma.¹⁴

Relations with the United States while correct are subject to periodic strains. At the root of the difficulties, apparently, are the deep-seated Burmese fears of excessive foreign influence. These fears have a historic basis as well as a contemporary rationale in view of the effort which the nation is making to remain on a course of non-alignment.

The United States has not been alone in evoking these fears. The Soviet Union and other nations, from time to time, have stimulated them. It is significant that Burma is apparently more inclined to turn to a small country such as Israel for technical personnel to assist in modernization than to the larger powers.

Certainly, there is nothing in U.S. policies, and there ought not to be anything in their administration to stimulate Burmese fears of excessive foreign influence. In view of the existence of this attitude, it is fortunate that the United States does not have an aid program in operation in Burma. It is obvious that a large group of Americans actively involved in many aspects of Burma's inner situation would probably intensify the almost obsessive concern with foreign influence. Indeed, there is even a serious question as to the advisability of stationing a U.S. aid representative in Burma as is now the case. His presence would appear to be superfluous and may actually contribute to an erroneous impression that this Nation is eager to resume a regular aid program in that country. Such residual or occasional aid matters as may require attention should arise only at Burmese initiative and surely they can be handled either by the economics counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon or in Washington through the Burmese Embassy.

There is much to be said for encouraging the expansion of relationships of mutual advantage with Burma, as with other nations. Possibilities for enlarged commerce and cultural contacts on a mutual basis should be thoroughly explored, provided, of course, the Burmese are so inclined. The stress, however, ought to be on the concept of mutuality, in which aid in a one-sided pattern has no applicability.

The immediate problems which Burma faces are essentially internal. The country is one of immense natural wealth and great economic potential. If the Burmese people are to derive increasing benefit from this wealth what is needed, beyond economic modernization, is an end to the tendencies toward regional fragmentation and the development of institutions of orderly political change. Certainly it is in order for the United States to be sympathetic to efforts to solve these problems which have been in the forefront of Burmese affairs ever since the British withdrawal a decade and a half ago. But it is hardly in order for the U.S. Government or its agents to become deeply enmeshed through aid programs or other such activities in what is wholly a Burmese problem.

¹⁴ Oddly enough, the solution is along the demarcation of the historic McCarthy line, an extension eastward of the concept of the McMahon line, which China rejects for its border with India.

Malaya

The same general principle of strict noninvolvement which is indicated as a sound basis for U.S. policies on Burma would appear also to apply to the emerging Malaysian Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Brunei, Sarawak, and North Borneo. There has been, as noted, a serious outbreak of violence in Brunei in connection with this transition. Moreover, since a number of groups, conscious of racial or tribal separativeness, will have to be joined in the Federation, other inner resistances may well develop. There are also international repercussions with respect to the proposed Federation. Already a serious strain has developed in Malayan-Indonesian relations and there have been disagreements between the United Kingdom and the Philippines.

Regardless of what may develop, it would seem to be desirable for the United States to make every effort to continue to maintain the position of noninvolved cordiality which has characterized our relations with Malaya since that nation achieved independence in 1957. There are U.S.-Malayan commercial ties, mainly involving raw materials which are of great value to both countries. A U.S. Peace Corps unit is now functioning in Malaya. But there is no aid mission in the usual form. Nor does there exist any rationale for such a mission from the United States to the emergent Malaysian Federation. There are already substantial supplies of modern skills and capital available in Malaya, in Singapore, and elsewhere in the proposed Federation. What might be needed in addition can surely be drawn from other nations of the British Commonwealth, notably from the United Kingdom which retains an immensely important economic position in all parts of the proposed Federation. To be sure, there may be developmental undertakings in the region of tangible and mutual benefit to participants and the United States might find advantage in joining in such undertakings. But in Malaya or in an emergent of Malaysia there can be no justification for the kind of one-sided aid involvement which has appeared elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Nor can there be any point in direct involvement in the political complications which are developing in connection with the formation of the Federation. To the extent that these complications may involve nonregional nations, they would appear to involve, in the first instance, the Commonwealth nations and beyond it, the United Nations. If there is any responsibility at all devolving on the United States in this situation, it is a derivative responsibility arising from our membership in the United Nations and it should be discharged solely in our capacity as one nation among many in that body.

The Philippines

Our relationship with the Philippines has been and remains of key importance to the United States in the Southeast Asian region. It is a relationship of more than half a century. It is a relationship which has evolved through deep and manifold experiences. The preservation of this relationship is of fundamental importance in terms of the security of both countries, in terms of mutual economic advantages and in terms of the cultural bridge which it provides in the Western Pacific.

The United States has a treaty of mutual defense with the Philippines which includes provision for the basing of U.S. forces in the Philippines. Our economic relationships, as they are encompassed in the U.S.-Philippine trade agreement, provide preferences to nationals of both countries, with the result that U.S. investments are very heavy in the Philippines and a large share of the trade of that country is with the United States. Culturally, there has long been a considerable interchange of nationals, with each group making a contribution in the other country. Moreover, there is presently functioning throughout the islands, the largest unit of the Peace Corps. It is concerned primarily with keeping up the standards of English teaching. In the process, however, the tradition of U.S.-Philippines friendship is being reaffirmed in many helpful ways and the indications are that the Corps is gaining enthusiastic acceptance throughout the islands.

The democratic process is firmly established in the Philippines. Change via the ballot box on the basis of a two-party system is the prevailing political pattern. While there is still considerable resort to armed attack on law and order, particularly on the island of Luzon, this violence has apparently lost much of the political overtones of the postwar Huk revolutionary peasant movement.

The economic situation in the Philippines is encouraging. Standards of living are among the highest in the Far East, and the prospects are for continued improvement. The peso is stable. Foreign exchange reserves have recovered from the record low of 1961. The economy has been freed of many restrictions, and its growth has been stimulated by the Government through internal measures and the encouragement of foreign investment. Industrial production, in particular, is rising steadily. As has long been the case, the principal economic and social problems are to be found in rural areas.

Our relations with the Philippines are most satisfactory at this time. But even as the Philippine Republic is not a static nation it is to be anticipated that these relationships will not remain static. National consciousness and cohesiveness are growing in the islands along with the economic and social advance. This growth will inevitably lead to changing concepts of national interest, and there may well be repercussions on Philippine foreign policies.

There ought to be no grounds for concern to this Nation in this growth and change. It is, in fact, implicit in the enlightened pattern of our relationship with the Philippines which, after the acquisition from Spain at the end of the 19th century, evolved through the progressive extension of self-government and, after the tests of World War II, reached the full political equality of separate national entities. What is of fundamental concern in the U.S.-Philippines relationship is not change but that in the process of change there should be a preservation and extension of what is of mutual and of equal benefit. Even if the relationship is seen in this long view, there will undoubtedly be occasional difficulties and disagreements, but these will be faced frankly and can be resolved successfully against the background of the enduring value of the special tie which has long linked the two nations.

5. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This report does not deal with U.S.-Communist Chinese relations. Yet these relations are the basic factor in our present deep involvement in Southeast Asia. It was the hostility of China in Korea which first projected the United States in depth—via aid programs—into Indochina. It is Chinese hostility which evokes the continued flow of the bulk of U.S. aid and other activity into Southeast Asia. It is Chinese hostility which underlies the U.S. treaty commitment to SEATO. In short, we are involved in Southeast Asia preponderantly because of the implications of a Chinese hostility to the whole structure of our own security in the Pacific—a hostility which at this time is of unfathomable depth and uncertain duration.

To be sure, there are other factors which contribute, perhaps unduly, to the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. It should be noted, for example, that there is the reluctance of friendly nations to assume a fair share of the more burdensome forms of aid to the small and weak states of the region in order that they may make the transition to a stable independence. It should also be noted, in all frankness, that our own bureaucratic tendencies to act in uniform and enlarging patterns have resulted in an expansion of the U.S. commitment in some places to an extent which would appear to bear only the remotest relationship to what is essential or even desirable in terms of U.S. interests.

There would appear to be little that can be done about Chinese hostility at this time. But in connection with the other factors in the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, some changes may be practicable, changes which could result in savings in cost without doing violence to U.S. interests in the region. Certainly the United States should make every effort to encourage a wider participation of other free nations in aid to the region, and not merely aid in the newer patterns such as consortium-type loans which promise tangible returns to the donors. More important would be a wider participation in those programs such as military assistance or economic grants which however much they may involve an intangible long-range return to world freedom are presently burdens carried preponderantly by the United States. There are, in all frankness, few indications that exhortatory efforts by the United States to produce a greater aid effort on the part of others are likely to prove fruitful. For in the last analysis if the United States is willing to bear the preponderant burdens of freedom in Southeast Asia, out of concern with Chinese hostility, communism, or whatever, the likelihood is that other free nations will not be overly inclined to deny us the privilege. If we are to bargain effectively in this matter, therefore, there must be, first, a thorough reassessment of our own overall security requirements on the Southeast Asian mainland, a realistic reassessment of what is essential, what may be desirable, and what may be superfluous. The group is inclined to believe that it is not impossible that such an assessment will show that national security needs may be met adequately without the further extension of the U.S. commitment, notably aid programs and missions in the usual pattern, into any country

in Southeast Asia where they do not now function. Further, the group is of the belief that an *orderly* curtailment of such programs and missions in other countries where they now function need not pose a significant increase in the threat to our national security. Extreme caution, however, is indicated in this connection and the discretion of what to do and when to do it must rest with the President. For, if the attempt is made to alter these programs via a congressional meat-ax cut of foreign aid to Southeast Asia it runs the risk of not merely removing the fat but of cleaving a gap which will lay open the region to massive chaos and, hence, jeopardize the present Pacific structure of our national security.

As noted at the outset, the basic stimulant to U.S. commitment in Southeast Asia is not to be found in the region at all. Rather, it is to be found in the hostility which characterizes the relation with the Chinese mainland government and the dangerous implications of that continuing hostility to our long-range security. So long as the hostility persists, any adjustment of policy involving a significant lowering of U.S. commitment or aid costs, if it is attempted at all as it has been attempted in Laos, is bound to carry a high degree of uncertainty. Indeed, the pattern of pressure on U.S. policy for the past decade has been to increase rather than decrease the commitment and the aid costs.

It does not follow, however, that it is in the interests of the United States or that it enhances our national security to respond to this pressure in all circumstances and in every specific situation in Southeast Asia. Nor does it automatically follow that an ever-deepening total involvement of the United States on the Southeast Asian mainland is the only way or, in all circumstances, the best way to deal with the implications of the Chinese hostility.

Indeed, it is doubtful that it is the best way if our concern for the multilateral stake of free nations in Southeast Asia results in an indefinite continuance of the vast inequities which fall upon us in bearing the burdens of outside aid. It is doubtful that it is the best way in any Southeast Asian nation, if the responsibility for its independent survival were to come to rest more heavily with the United States than with indigenous leadership because of the failure or inadequacies of that leadership in meeting its own responsibilities to its people.

To sum up, it would appear to us that *in present circumstances* the interests of the United States in Southeast Asia are best served by a policy which—

1. Foregoes the extension of aid-programs in the usual pattern into any country of Southeast Asia in which they do not now operate;
2. Seeks the orderly reduction of grant-aid of all kinds in countries where such programs operate; and assigns the functions of aid-mission directors (except in south Viet Nam) to the economic counselors of the embassies wherever this practice does not now prevail;
3. Induces a more equitable contribution from other free nations to the costs of aiding freedom in Southeast Asia;

4. Encourages vigorously everywhere throughout the region relationships of mutual advantage, particularly in commerce and in cultural and educational exchange;

5. Provides vigorous support to the Geneva accord of 1962 and the effort of the present provisional government to bring about a satisfactory solution in Laos, a solution establishing a firm peace and permitting the continued reduction of our deep and costly commitment in that region;

6. Helps to bring about internal peace in Viet Nam but maintains, scrupulously, our advisory capacity, recognizing that the primary responsibility in all areas is Vietnamese;

7. Measures effectiveness not only in terms of the policy's general impact in stopping Communist aggression in Southeast Asia but also—

(a) In terms of the social, economic, and political benefits which the policy helps bring to the ordinary people of the nations concerned, and

(b) In terms of the cost and depth of the U.S. commitment in men and money to maintain that policy.

APPENDIX

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

OCTOBER 16, 1962.

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MIKE: AS YOU know, the administration keeps our foreign relations under continuous review in an effort to insure the highest degree of effectiveness of our foreign policies and the efficiency of expenditures related to their administration. While we have a constant flow of information through executive branch channels, it is useful to have a review of these matters through congressional eyes from time to time.

Might I prevail upon you, therefore, to undertake to visit selected areas of major significance to U.S. policy, prior to the next Congress. I had in mind, particularly, Berlin and Vietnam and other nations in the southeast Asian region. It would be most helpful if you were to travel in the company of several Members of the Senate from both parties and provide me with such observations on these situations and our policies and overseas administration as you and your colleagues would care to make.

I know that it has been a taxing session for you and other Members of the Senate. Nevertheless, if you see your way clear to comply with this request, please feel free to proceed at your leisure during the coming weeks. I should be happy to have the Departments of State and Defense assist in every appropriate way in facilitating a Senate study of this kind.

Sincerely,

JOHN F. KENNEDY.

