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Growing Cooperation Seen

Bunker: Regionalism to Prop Asia

SAIGON (UPI) — Ellsworth Bunker, U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, believes that the next decade in Asia will see a growing regional cooperation which will be strong enough to "discourage any adventurism" by mainland China.

He added that peace in Asia is possible but it will only come about when the Communist regimes in North Korea, North Vietnam and mainland China realize it is not to their advantage to promote terror and aggression in neighboring areas.

Bunker gave written answers to questions submitted to him by UPI on the military and political future of Indochina and Asia shortly before he left for the United States Sunday for White House-State Department consultations. Bunker has been Ambassador in Saigon since 1967.

The questions and answers follow:

Q: What do you foresee in the next decade politically and militarily for Vietnam and Indochina as a whole?

BUNKER: Much will depend on how the war in Indochina ends — whether by a negotiated settlement or by gradually reducing in scale and scope as North Vietnam finds it increasingly difficult and costly to them to carry on. In either event, I think there will be a continuing development on political and economic institutions in these countries and a trend toward regional cooperation. The extent of military cooperation in Indochina will be directly related to the behavior of North Vietnam and Communist China. If the latter believes we would not stand by our commitments in this area, they might well increase their pressure, by direct or indirect methods.

Q: Do you foresee a kind of "third world" in Asia, neither hardline Communist or anti-Communist?

BUNKER: Perhaps. . . although I would hesitate to apply that label. There is an increasing recognition among the Asian countries of the need for further regional cooperation — particularly in economic and military areas.

Cooperation is already under way and regional organizations are making good beginning. If this regionalism is permitted to evolve we can expect an Asia which would not necessarily be a "third world" but one which would not be inimical to Communist China yet at the same time would be cohesive enough

to discourage any adventurism by mainland China.

Q: Do you think there can be peace with so many sub-regional disputes (India-Pakistan, Indochina?)

BUNKER: Yes, there can be peace in this area but it will only come about when the Communists regime in North Korea, North Vietnam and mainland China realize it is not to their advantage to promote terror and aggression in neighboring area. I don't want to comment on the relations between India and Pakistan except to say that both sides undoubtedly see obvious advantages in coming to a peaceful solution to their differences and I hope they will make early progress toward this goal.

Q: What role do you see for the big powers? Possibly a con-

tinental peacekeeping force to guarantee security and non-aggression pact.

BUNKER: Some sort of continental peacekeeping force in Asia might discourage aggression by the Communists, but it remains to be seen whether we could have the conditions where such a force could operate effectively. The history of peacekeeping forces in the past has been a spotty one, and I do not underestimate the problems that such a presence in this part of the world would entail. On the other hand, we believe some form of international supervision is desirable and perhaps an essential element of a peace settlement. Looking further ahead, I would hope the major powers could reach some degree of understanding that would per-

mit the countries in the region to develop and prosper in accordance with their own desires and needs.

Q: Will the big powers always have to be around to stop Asians fighting Asians or to keep an eye out for their own self-interest?

BUNKER: Well, first of all, your phrase Asians fighting Asians does not convey the complete picture. What you see in Indochina today is North Vietnamese Communist aggression against non-Communist Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Whether the big powers will always have to be around depends on the behavior of the Communists. President Nixon has made it very clear that we do not intend to abandon our commitments in this part of the world. He has also made clear our support of the principle of self-determination as it applies to South Vietnam and other countries of the area.

Q: What of the role of the smaller, but more developed nations such as Japan, India or Australia? Do you feel they will try to fill a vacuum and will their interests always coincide with each other and with the "protected?"

BUNKER: Certainly all the countries in this area have a role to play. Australia and Japan are very much aware of the importance of this area, of the necessity to have peace in Indochina. So is India, but India has other preoccupations at the moment. The countries in this area are already on the road to forming an effective partnership in development. The nature and extent of development assistance which might be offered by Japan and Australia will vary, of course, according to their particular capabilities. I don't know whether these countries will try to fill a vacuum or even whether a vacuum will exist. Certainly, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia will need outside assistance for some time to come and I trust the more developed countries will continue to recognize — and will help fulfill — this need. As to the last part of your question: No, the individual interests of the more developed nations will not always coincide with each other and with the countries they are aiding, the "protected" as you term them. The problems and priorities will vary from nation to nation. But this is not an obstacle to their working together. In fact, the diversity of their interests puts them in a better position to provide coherence in development aid, and I have confidence they will all share a fundamental interest in maintaining peace in Asia.

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