

1964

1. The Internal Situation in Vietnam:

The internal situation in Vietnam has considerably worsened during the past few weeks. Militarily, Viet Cong attacks appear to be on the increase as North Vietnamese infiltrators and local recruits add to Communist strength. This would not, however, be cause for great alarm, had not the political situation also taken a sharp turn for the worse. The ~~inability~~ <sup>incapacity</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>mobility</sup> achieve unity (and a consensus) either among the various Vietnamese political and military elements, or among Vietnamese and American leaders, has made the position of the Vietnamese administration an extremely precarious ~~difficult and~~ <sup>Contested</sup> one. General Khanh's authority is continually challenged by members of the various military and political factions. The recent public disagreement between General Khanh and Ambassador Taylor over the "March North" <sup>indicates an even more disturbing conflict</sup> issue (is clear evidence of a serious lack of understanding amounting to a challenge of authority) between Vietnamese and Americans. General Khanh clearly can maintain his position only by a continuing concessions and compromises.

2. Immediate Dangers:

As seen through Vietnamese eyes, this situation cannot persist for ~~risking~~ even a few short months without an unacceptable risk of sudden collapse.

Sudden disintegration of the present structure of authority could ~~be~~ come about

~~initiated, and could proceed,~~ in many different ways, each entailing

dire consequences for both Vietnam and the United States. For instance,

~~a deadlock over some important~~

a deadlock over some important issue might provoke demonstrations in Saigon which would develop into uncontrollable mob violence. (Alternatively,) VC terrorism or attacks organized on a large scale, to which the present government would be unable to respond adequately because of its lack of unity, could occasion the disintegration of the structure and facade of authority. A coup d'etat, or a secession move similar to that of Kong Le, (which might be led either by neutralists, or by patriots convinced that the present government was incapable of winning without attacks on VC supply routes in Laos) would immediately cause a chaos/which neither the United States nor Vietnam could propose an effective remedy, except, perhaps, <sup>military</sup> outright US/intervention. Far from being remote possibilities, one or another of these situations is the most likely consequence if the present unstable situation is allowed to continue.

### 3. The Basis for a Solution:

To solve the problems of internal political stability and to avoid the imminent danger of a collapse, we must understand and attack the root causes of the present situation. <sup>We</sup> Vietnamese (at least those of us who are knowledgeable and reasonable) realize that ours is the primary responsibility for uniting to establish a stable government. But the fact is that Vietnam is now in very special circumstances, and so are we on whom the responsibility for action would seem to devolve. Our country has just emerged from a century of French colonial rule, and has

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suffered from twenty years of war and ~~the~~ of dictatorship. Under these circumstances, disunity, mutual distrust, and conspiratorial thinking must be expected to be, as it is, the rule rather than the exception among both leaders and followers. The only exception, and this too is present in a measurable degree, is war-wearyness and apathy. Only the help of an understanding, influential polarizing force from outside, such as some Americans can provide, can make it possible for us to get together under any conditions short of the ultimate catastrophe of a Viet Cong victory, with our consequent flight to the maquis. So far the American effort has not been directed to this most urgent and essential goal of creating real unity (rather than the facade of unity of a dictatorship) among our leaders. All truly patriotic Vietnamese are grateful for the material massive and unstinting support ~~which~~ the United States has given, without which Vietnam would long ago have ceased to exist as an independent country. But the truth is that this aid, under present conditions can never bring about the stable, unified, popularly accepted Vietnamese government which is the sine qua non for that material aid to be effective. More money, men, and materials will not solve Vietnamese political problems. What is needed is a selective, concentrated, American effort to assist, informally and discreetly, the Vietnamese leaders to achieve political unity, to establish ~~a~~ political framework acceptable to our leaders, and to implement a political program to which all can subscribe.

3. The People and the Problem:

This is a war for the people. The rural population of Vietnam, more than threequarters of our people, are little concerned about who is in the government, or even what the system of government is called. They want a chance to realize their legitimate aspirations, to have reasonable security, and reasonable treatment from those in government. They must <sup>helped</sup> be made to realize that they must participate, if they are to achieve ~~thick~~ these goals, but arousing their participation is not the immediate problem. Given effective leadership, a government which acts, and is seen to act for their welfare, and their participation in the war will be achieved.

The urban population and the intelligenstia are another problem. They too need motivation to act, and the motivation of fear of losing the war is not enough. They need to participate, in ways which they themselves will find meaningful.

#### 4. Proposed Solution:

Useful help to the Vietnamese government in achieving political stability will avoid encouraging either initiation of another game of "musical chairs", or endorsing a dictatorship of a single individual. What is required is ~~xxxxxx~~ assistance in the establishment of a political framework, the preparation of a program, ~~xxxx~~ in the implementation of this program, and most of all, in insuring that these receive the support and best efforts of all sincere Vietnamese leaders, whether military or civilian. To achieve this we need a new concept of relations, a new kind of "partnership" between Vietnamese and Americans. This means the efforts of a joint team of Vietnamese and Americans who know and understand, respect and trust, one another working together in ~~building~~ designing the political framework, the program, and the implementation. Such a partnership, if it is to be real and effective, means that we Vietnamese must put away notions of old-fashioned, obsolete, ultra-nationalism and jealous national sovereignty. It means that Americans must put away the rigid formalities of traditional diplomacy, the jealousies of position which would have a man in the partnership because of his rank rather than his ability to contribute, and, most of all, put away any tendency to wish to command or direct his partners. If this partnership concept is to be meaningful and successful, rather than

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mechanical  
formalistic and futile, skillful, understanding, and knowledgeable  
American help is essential.

Within the framework of a government constituted on such a basis  
useful work can be found, on Constitutional Committees, Advisory Councils,  
and other bodies for all the civilian politicians who are now causing  
so much trouble because they have no way in which they can contribute to  
the effort. And within such a framework, stable and viable Vietnamese  
leadership will emerge, leadership which will provide the inspiration and  
the honest, effective, administration needed to win the war.