

## STRENGTHENING THE POLITICAL BASE IN VIET NAM

### A Proposal that U.S. Political Parties Establish Liaison with Vietnamese and Other Asian Political-Legislative Bodies

It is widely recognized that Viet Nam's internal political situation is the primary factor in resolving the "Viet Nam dilemma"; and that, to date, the U.S. has not found adequate means to assist in this critical area.

As one major step to fill this gap, it is proposed that the Democratic and Republican parties assign carefully selected international representatives as liaison with Vietnamese and other Asian country political parties and legislative bodies.

#### The Political Problems--the Needs

Inter-related political problems and needs in Viet Nam include:

Building a political foundation for the government through improving the Government's political relationship with the people; and through helping weld the numerous and diverse political splinter parties.

Improving the functioning of the political parties and the National Assembly.

Designing economic and social development programs to help develop institutions with broad public representation and support.

Developing strong political ties with other Asian parties and legislative bodies, including with the Asian Parliamentary Union.

Insuring more rapid, and politically accurate, communications between the Vietnamese and U.S. political leadership.

#### A Proposal: U.S. Party Liaisons

The U.S. Embassy, AID, and other agencies are advising on certain aspects of the political problem. It is widely recognized, however, that there is a large relatively untouched area in political development. It is proposed that the Democratic and Republican parties appoint "field liaisons" to spend most of their time in Viet Nam and other countries in Southeast Asia; but who would commute frequently to Washington. These liaisons would:

Help Vietnamese leadership crystallize the determining factors in the country's internal political situation; and provide a "hot line," so to speak, to facilitate communications and understanding between Viet Nam and the United States.

With the attractions that such channels to U.S. political leadership

should hold for the Vietnamese, it should be possible for the U.S. party representatives to develop a close relationship with various Vietnamese political factions. Through these associations, it should be possible for the U.S. party representatives to have an important catalytic influence among the "splinter groups"; and to offer professional counsel on technical party and legislative questions such as those cited by a group of Vietnamese political leaders who recently visited the United States. These questions ranged from fund-raising to technical questions in implementing the new Constitution.

Help the Vietnamese maintain liaison with parties and legislative leadership in other Asian countries, including with the Asian Parliamentary Union, to help build political-economic-social cooperation and support among these countries and Viet Nam in future development; and to help tap useful political experience of the other Asian countries.

Counsel U.S. development agencies in Viet Nam and Washington on the political impact of U.S. assistance policies and programs.

The men selected for these positions should have extensive experience in political and civic life; and empathy and maturity in dealing with people; and, preferably, international experience. They also should have a great deal of tact and finesse in situations with highly complex relationships. For example, they must be able to cooperate constructively with the Ambassador and the Country Team; with Congressional Committees and individual Congressmen; with the Executive Branch; and with each other.

With such qualifications, the appointment of these political liaisons could be one of the most important single U.S. contributions toward resolving the political-civilian side of the Vietnamese problem.

Lacking such qualifications, these men might simply make a very bad situation worse.

#### Relationships to Other Programs

The proposal for political party liaisons would complement other types of direct and indirect assistance in the general political area, such as:

The proposal to establish more direct communications between committees in the Vietnamese National Assembly, and the U.S. Congress; and to exchange committee staff personnel.

The efforts of the AFL-CIO and other groups to help build political constituencies.

The assistance in communications, public administration, and other fields.

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