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UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD VIET-NAM, 1954-1956

BY

MARY N. DRYDEN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Originally a struggle for independence from French colonial rule, the conflict in Viet-Nam and all Indochina developed into a crisis of the cold war between the Communist and Western nations. When the Communist powers Russia and China began supplying the Viet Minh nationalist group and sponsoring its regime, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, the United States, in turn, began sponsoring and supplying the French-sponsored Government of the State of Viet-Nam. The purpose of this thesis is to study United States policy toward Viet-Nam from 1954 to 1956 and to analyze the extent of United States involvement and influence in the conflict.

The most important primary source used in the study was volume II of American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents published by the United States Department of State. The series Documents on American Foreign Relations for 1953 and 1954 provided many documents not found anywhere else. The volume for 1954 was the only available source containing the complete text of the "Agreements on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam."

Of the secondary sources used, the series of volumes on The United States in World Affairs covering the years between 1945 to 1956 were most helpful in providing a comprehensive background for the thesis. Interesting viewpoints regarding the conflict in Viet-Nam were obtained from Joseph Starobin's Eyewitness in Indochina which provided a sympathetic picture of the Viet Minh side of the conflict, and Roy Jumper's article "The Communist Challenge to South Viet Nam" which

gave a first hand analysis of the Western and south Vietnamese position. Brian Crozier's article "The Diem Regime in Southern Vietnam" gave an excellent analysis of Ngo Dinh Diem's efforts to create a strong government.

Although the main concentration of the thesis was on the years 1954 to 1956, an introductory survey of events in Viet-Nam between 1945 and 1953 was provided to show the gradual increase of American interest in that area. It was found that United States policy toward Viet-Nam between 1954 and 1956 could be divided into two phases. The initial policy, extending from early 1954 through the Geneva Conference in June-July of the same year, emphasized the possibility of armed intervention by the United States. It failed, however, because of the lack of support both at home and among American allies, and because it was based upon misinformation about the situation in Viet-Nam. At Geneva the United States took a strong position favoring the continued unity of Viet-Nam and the establishment of an International Commission composed of five Asian powers to supervise the cease-fire agreements. On both points the United States was defeated. As a result, the United States refused to sign the Final Declaration of the Conference, but it did agree not to disrupt the cease-fire agreements.

After Geneva, the United States revised its policies completely. The new goal was to establish a strong, democratic government in South Viet-Nam. A vast amount of economic and military aid was extended to achieve this goal. The hope was that a strong, democratic government in the

South would point out the weaknesses of the Communist regime to the north and the people would vote in 1956 to unite under democracy. In the middle of 1955 the United States decided that the elections to reunite Viet-Nam should not be held since they would not be genuinely free. The elections were consequently not held and Viet-Nam remained a divided country.

It was concluded that United States policy failed initially because it was late in being formulated and because it was poorly planned. The second phase, on the other hand, was successful because it was constructive, based upon the facts of the situation, and because it was begun early enough so that it had time to be effective.

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Map of the Indochina Peninsula, 1954

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

✓ The Indochinese peninsula located south of China and containing three countries Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam,¹ became in the nineteenth century the center of French colonial activities in the Far East. In 1817 France established trading privileges in the area, and between 1858 and 1862 conquered the entire peninsula. A fiercely independent people, the Vietnamese alone among the Indochinese countries resisted the conquest. Consequently, the French, employing the divide and rule maxim, separated Viet-Nam into three administrative regions: Tongking, in the north, Annam the central plain area, and Cochinchina the rich southern delta.² Despite the subjugation and division of their country, the Vietnamese retained their independent and nationalistic spirit, and in 1916 revolted against the French rule. The revolt was crushed and its leader, Emperor Duy Tan, was replaced by a French-puppet emperor. Also the position of the emperor was reduced to a symbol of the unity of the Vietnamese people; he was not allowed any political power.³

✓ Although nationalistic feelings among the Vietnamese were suppressed after 1916, they came into the open again

¹In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the area of Viet-Nam was referred to as Annam. The modern name, Viet-Nam, which is used throughout this thesis, came into usage during World War II.

²Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1954), pp. 11-12.

³Ellen J. Hammer, "Nationalism vs. Colonialism and Communism," Viet-Nam The First Five Years, ed. Richard W. Lindholm (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1959), p. 7.

during World War II and developed into full flower in subsequent years. From the fall of France in June, 1940, the Japanese virtually controlled the economy of Viet-Nam, while they allowed the colonial government of Vichy France to administer the civil government of Viet-Nam. The French colonial government was forced to allow Japanese troops into Viet-Nam and to give the Japanese free use of all ports, cities, and air fields within Viet-Nam. Thus by 1941, Japan had full control of Viet-Nam although it chose to remain behind the scenes until 1945.⁴

Recognizing that their former colonial master was weakened by the war, the Vietnamese began creating nationalistic groups. In 1941 Ho Chi Minh formed the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh, more commonly known as the Viet Minh. While anxious to assist the Allied powers in defeating the Japanese, the primary goal of the Viet Minh was to free Viet-Nam from French control.

There was also the Dong Minh Hoi, a nationalist party subsidized by the Chinese Kuomintang government.⁵ The Dong Minh Hoi and the Viet Minh worked together to some extent, but the Viet Minh was more efficiently organized with small party cells throughout Viet-Nam. Thus the Viet Minh became

⁴Joseph Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Viet-Nam (New York: Praeger, 1958), pp. 439-40.

⁵Ibid., p. 440.

ultimately the stronger of the two groups.

Because of the growing power of these nationalist groups, the Allies in 1944 were divided about the future of Viet-Nam. The United States wanted to grant Viet-Nam full independence, Britain favored a trusteeship under the United Nations, while France wanted to regain full control of her colony. The increased interest in Viet-Nam was due to its strategic position in a planned drive against the Japanese. In order to drive out the Japanese from Viet-Nam, the Allies began supporting the national resistance movements within the country. The United States contributed weapons to this effort.⁶ The Allied powers failed to foresee that by strengthening the nationalist parties in order to win the war they were also strengthening them against any renewal of their former colonial status.

To counteract this allied move, the Japanese on March 11, 1945, gave Emperor Bao Dai permission to proclaim the independence of Viet-Nam. In so doing, Bao Dai had to accept the principles of Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere".⁷ This move enabled the various Vietnamese nationalist groups to come out into the open for the first time and to attempt the formation of a national government for Viet-Nam. It was Viet-Nam's present President, Ngo Dinh Diem, who was asked by Bao Dai to become the first Prime Minister of the new government. Ngo Dinh Diem, however,

⁶Ibid., p. 442.

⁷Ibid., pp. 442-43.

never replied to the request.⁸

Combatting the Japanese move, the French Government-in-exile under General DeGaulle gave the Vietnamese a vague promise of freedom within an Indochinese Federation, in which Viet-Nam would be linked to Laos and Cambodia.

Vietnamese nationalist groups rejected the plan claiming that they already had independence, granted by the Japanese, and did not need the French offer.⁹ But the Vietnamese soon found out that their assertion of independence was premature. Their new government promised many reforms looking to tax revision, restoration of the Vietnamese language in the schools, and land distribution, but in practice it was ineffective. The war situation and the Japanese occupation hampered operations of the new government.¹⁰ o

The day following the announcement in Viet-Nam of the surrender of Japan, August 15, 1945, the national government of Viet-Nam split into two factions. The Viet Minh party drove all other nationalistic groups around Hanoi underground, while the United National Front, which included the religious sects as well as some communists, took control around Saigon.¹¹ Already there was a split within Viet-Nam. The superior organization of the Viet Minh party

⁸Ibid., p. 443.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 444.

¹¹Ibid.

soon enabled it to infiltrate the organization of the United National Front, resulting in complete Viet Minh control of Viet-Nam. It was at this point, on August 24, 1945, that Emperor Bao Dai was requested to abdicate.¹²

Had Viet-Nam been left alone to consolidate her independence and to work out her form of government, it is possible that peace in Southeast Asia would have been preserved. However, France wished to reestablish control over its former colony, and Britain, also a colonial power, promised to aid it. The United States tacitly agreed to the step because it did not wish to disrupt Allied unity so soon after the war. It was assumed that French control would be only temporary; therefore, nothing was done to prevent the return of Viet-Nam to the status of a colony. France completely ignored the existence of the Vietnamese National Government.

The Vietnamese attempted to negotiate with the French and counted on tacit support in this venture from Nationalist China, some members of the British Commonwealth, and from the United States. They soon found out that the expected support was not going to materialize and that the French were serious in the attempt to reestablish control in Viet-Nam. Led by the Viet Minh party, Vietnamese resistance deepened.¹³

The United States had not expected such deep resistance by the Vietnamese, and it became more concerned about the

¹²Ibid., p. 445.

¹³Ibid., pp. 446-47.

situation. During World War II, the United States had given military supplies to these Nationalist groups so they could aid in the war effort. Now these same weapons were being used against an American ally. Preferring to remain completely outside the situation rather than to get intimately involved and alienate its allies, the United States insisted that its allies were "not to use against the native peoples lend-lease equipment bearing labels of its American origin."¹⁴

Negotiations began in 1946 attempting to find some basis of agreement between France and Viet-Nam. On March 6, 1946, both sides agreed to a preliminary convention in which Viet-Nam was recognized as a free Republic within the newly created French Union. Subsequent negotiations to decide the details of this convention failed over the issue of Cochinchina.¹⁵ The French wanted to retain this southernmost tip of Viet-Nam under their direct control; the area was rich in resources and had been the center of past French financial development. Viet-Nam wanted Cochinchina also; it felt it was an integral part of Viet-Nam and contained the needed rich resources.

Hoping to undermine Viet Minh control of Viet-Nam, the French began to support other nationalist groups within

¹⁴John O. Campbell, The United States in World Affairs, 1945-1947, Prepared by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 301.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 302.

Viet-Nam and to advocate a Vietnamese government headed by its former Emperor Bao Dai. The French secretly hoped Bao Dai would be as amenable to their influences as he had been before the war. Accordingly on September 10, 1947, the French offered peace terms to Viet-Nam. The French suggested that Viet-Nam should be independent within the French Union, but that the French would control the Vietnamese armed forces and their foreign policy.¹⁶ To the surprise of the French, all of the nationalist groups refused the offer. Failing in this attempt, the French sponsored a Front of National Union comprising all the anti-communist nationalists. It was this group which requested Bao Dai to return to Viet-Nam and form a national government. Bao Dai did form such a government located in Cochinchina, but the French failed to grant any authority to it.¹⁷

The Vietnamese people soon recognized that their national government was only a facade for French control; they continued to support the Viet Minh as the only group working for true independence. The French had undermined their own efforts to regain control of Viet-Nam because they failed to understand the intense nationalistic feeling of the Vietnamese people.

¹⁶John C. Campbell, The United States in World Affairs, 1947-1948, Prepared by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 231.

¹⁷Buttinger, p. 459.

At the close of 1949 the United States still retained its middle-of-the-road policy. Refusing to take sides in the war, the United States did exert mild pressure occasionally on one side or the other in attempts to gain a cease-fire agreement. If there was an American preference it was for France because the United States wanted France to join an European Defense plan. Europe was still considered more important than Asia.

In 1950, the United States was forced to take a policy stand in regard to Viet-Nam. China had fallen to the Communists, which put the Viet Minh in the advantageous position of being able to receive military supplies from China. Also the two Communist powers, Russia and China, recognized the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, with Ho Chi-Minh President, as the legal government of Viet-Nam. This move strongly undercut French promises to grant independence. Now the Vietnamese had a national government in the north. Not to be outdone, the French-sponsored government of Bao Dai in Cochinchina obtained legal status through its attainment of recognition by Great Britain and later the United States. The United States at the same time authorized military and economic aid to France to help support this government.¹⁸ By this step of recognition, the United States became involved in the Indochina war.

In January, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson in

¹⁸Ibid., p. 460.

reviewing the position of the United States in Viet-Nam stated:

. . . People will do more damage and create more misrepresentation in the Far East by saying our interest is merely to stop the spread of Communism than any other way. Our real interest is in those people as people. It is because communism is hostile to that interest that we want to stop it. But it happens that the best way of doing both things is to do just exactly what the peoples of Asia want to do and what we want to help them to do, which is to develop a soundness of administration of these new governments and to develop their resources and their technical skills so that they are not subject to penetration either through ignorance, or because they believe these false promises, or because there is real distress in their areas. If we can help that development, if we can go forward with it, then we have brought about the best way that anyone knows of stopping this spread of communism.¹⁹

The United States was anxious to do all in its power to help Viet-Nam develop a strong government and a sound economy. If the United States could relieve the economic distress of Asian nations, then there would be no fear of Communism. The element of nationalism among the Asian peoples was not discussed. The United States would give only economic assistance; it would not become involved in the struggles for independence which were occurring more and more in Asia. By not taking sides, the United States hoped to remain friendly with both the former colonial powers and the new Asian nations.

¹⁹United States Secretary of State (Acheson), Address of January 12, 1950, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents, II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), pp. 2315-16.

The Secretary of State specifically stated that the United States expected to remain aloof from the struggle in Viet-Nam and endorsed the French policy of gradually granting self-government to the Vietnamese.

. . . Progress is being made in Indochina where the French, although moving slowly, are moving. There are noticeable signs of progress in transferring responsibility to a local administration and getting the adherence of the population to this local administration. We hope that the situation will be such that the French can make further progress and make it quickly.²⁰

Getting the "adherence of the population to the local administration" was going to be more difficult than either the French or the Americans realized. The French were only barely beginning to transfer authority to the local government of the State of Viet-Nam, whereas the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam in the north already had independence and full control of its own affairs. As the Secretary of State noted, the French would have to speed up the process of granting full independence. When the nationalist aspirations of the Vietnamese had been satisfied, then they would begin to fight the Communists vigorously, but not before. As of 1950, the Communist government was the only one which satisfied these aims.

On February 7, 1950, the United States extended full recognition to the State of Viet-Nam as the only legal government of that country. The American government felt the process toward independence had developed to the point

²⁰Ibid., p. 2321.

where Viet-Nam could be considered a true nation.

. . . This recognition is consistent with our fundamental policy of giving support to the peaceful and democratic evolution of dependent peoples toward self-government and independence. . .

. . . This Government is considering what steps it may take at this time to further these objectives and to assure, in collaboration with other like-minded nations, that this development shall not be hindered by internal dissension fostered from abroad.²¹

The Statement of recognition expressed more than just acknowledgement of the existence of an independent government within Viet-Nam. It also was the first indication from the United States that it was ready to take a firm stand on the repression of the Communist Viet Minh government in northern Viet-Nam. The United States, at this point, was considering steps only "in collaboration with other like-minded nations" but it was a move toward a definite position. Thus within two months the United States had moved from a position of merely supporting the French policy for Viet-Nam, to a position of recognizing an independent government for Viet-Nam along with a veiled promise of interference if the struggle with the Viet Minh continued. It was possible that the United States would not have taken a definite stand on Viet-Nam had China remained under the Kuomintang Government and had the Soviet government not recognized the legal status of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. External events forced the change of

²¹ United States Recognition of Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia: Statement, February 7, 1950, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2364-65.

policy. However, the United States was able to recognize an independent government in Viet-Nam without alienating France because the Vietnamese Government was French-sponsored.

Three months later the United States took definite steps to fulfill the promise of extending aid to Viet-Nam. On May 8, 1950, after extensive talks with France, the United States announced a program of economic and military aid.

The United States recognizes that the solution of the Indochina problem depends both upon the restoration of security and upon the development of genuine nationalism and that United States Assistance can and should contribute to these major objectives.

The United States Government, convinced that neither national independence nor democratic evolution exist in any area dominated by Soviet imperialism, considers the situation to be such as to warrant its according economic aid and military equipment to the Associated States of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development.²²

This was not only a pledge of economic assistance; it also promised to send military equipment. The United States felt enough of an obligation toward the war in Viet-Nam to send military aid. Despite the profession of working toward "genuine nationalism" and of recognizing the independence of Viet-Nam, it must be noted that the United States only extended aid after talks with France. Talks with representatives from Viet-Nam were not mentioned. In an earlier statement by the Secretary of State, he said that the United

²² Extension of Military and Economic Aid: Statement by the Secretary of State, May 8, 1950, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2365.

States wanted to help the Asian peoples satisfy their needs and desires. To achieve this it would be expected that the United States must discuss with these peoples what their wishes might be. In the case of Viet-Nam, the wishes of the Vietnamese were ignored or assumed to be the same as those of the French. Failure to discuss the situation with the Vietnamese themselves indicated that the United States did not really consider the State of Viet-Nam to be a legally independent government, and the recognition was merely a formality.

The pledges of aid were put into effect on May 24, 1950, with the establishment of the Economic Aid Program under Mr. Robert Blum. The Program was to work with the French and Vietnamese governments coordinating the United States aid with the needs of the situation. However, the aid was to be mainly supplementary to the efforts of the French and Vietnamese; the United States did not intend to assume all the responsibility.²³

In a position to view the struggle more objectively, the members of the Aid Program often disagreed with French policy in Viet-Nam. Those who openly criticized French policy were removed from their positions at the insistence of the French.²⁴ Thus the French had predominance of con-

²³Economic Aid Program: Note from the American Charge d'Affairs at Saigon to the Chiefs of State of Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia, May 24, 1950, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2365-66.

²⁴Buttinger, p. 461.

trol over the direction of affairs within Viet-Nam. If Americans could not criticize French policy, it could be safely assumed that the Vietnamese were even more effectively censored. Again, this was a reflection upon the degree of independence granted to Viet-Nam.

The French admitted they had not granted full political and economic independence to the Vietnamese.

Mr. Letourneau pointed out that the governments of the Associated States now exercise full authority except that a strictly limited number of services related to the necessities of the war now in progress remain temporarily in French hands. In the course of the examination of the Far Eastern economic and trade situation, it was noted that the Governments of the Associated States are free to negotiate trade treaties and agreements of all kinds with their neighbors subject only to whatever special arrangements may be agreed between members of the French Union.²⁵

The French conceded two exceptions to their assertions that they had given independence to Viet-Nam. They openly admitted that France retained a "limited number of services." Since earlier offers of independence had reserved for France the control of Vietnamese foreign policy and the army, these were probably the services still retained by France as of 1952. With a foreign power controlling her army, Viet-Nam could not hope to establish peace and a respected government.

The second main limitation upon Vietnamese independence was that treaties had to be approved according to

²⁵Communique Regarding Discussions Between Representatives of the United States, France, Viet-Nam, Cambodia, June 18, 1952, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2368.

standards set by the French Union. The members might have very different and even conflicting national interests, but the French insisted that all treaties be subject to the same standards. It must also be noted that Viet-Nam could only make treaties with its neighbors i.e., Laos and Cambodia.

The reluctance to give its colony greater freedom caused France to lose the struggle in Viet-Nam. At best the Vietnamese were apathetic in providing support to a government sponsored by France. The people often deserted to the Viet Minh rather than fight for Bao Dai and the French. Although the Vietnamese were not convinced that they were independent, the French were able to convince the United States that the Vietnamese were independent. It continually puzzled the United States that the Vietnamese people did not have more enthusiasm for their new government.

Insisting that the war was going well, in June, 1952, France nevertheless asked for more financial assistance from the United States to help defray the cost. Talks were instituted between the two countries in which France maintained that she needed more aid to combat the increased aid given to the Viet Minh by Communist China. As a result of these talks, the United States decided to expand its aid program to France.

It was agreed that success in this continuing struggle would entail an increase in the common effort and that the United States for its part will, therefore, within the limitations set by Congress, take steps to expand its aid to the French Union. It was further agreed that this

increased assistance over and above present U.S. aid for Indochina, which now approximates one third of the total cost of Indochina operations, would be especially devoted to assisting France in the building of the national armies of the Associated States.²⁶

As well as being fully involved in the Korean War, the United States was willing to finance over one third of the cost of the war in Viet-Nam. It is interesting to note that although the United States recognized an independent government in Viet-Nam, it did not see fit to extend aid directly to that government. Most of the Indochinese war was being carried out on Vietnamese soil, yet the United States would extend aid only to the French Union, i.e., to France as the chief member of the Union. Apparently the United States did not feel that the government of the State of Viet-Nam was able to handle its finances, hence aid was given to France to create a Vietnamese national army. With France controlling the army finances, the army would be loyal only to France. Viet-Nam would not be allowed to have a source of power independent of French control.

Four years after the initial agreement to grant independence to Viet-Nam, France again promised to grant full authority to the State of Viet-Nam.

In the four years which have elapsed since the signing of the agreements, the brotherhood of arms between the armies of the French Union and the national armies of the Associated States had been further strengthened thanks to the de-

²⁶Ibid., pp. 2367-68.

velopment of the latter, which are taking a daily increasing part in the struggle against the common enemy.

In the same period, the civil institutions of the three nations have put themselves in a position to assume all the powers incumbent upon modern States, while the voice of their Governments has been heard by the majority of countries constituting the United Nations Organization.

France considers that, under these conditions, there is every reason to complete the independence and sovereignty of the Associated States of Indochina by ensuring, in agreement with each of the three interested Governments, the transfer of the powers that she had still retained in the interests of the States themselves, because of the perilous circumstances resulting from the state of war.²⁷

The actual transfer of powers was not to occur until mid 1954 during the Geneva Conference.

In 1953, the United States began to consider the war in Viet-Nam as another phase of Communist aggression in the Far East, especially after the statement of France on July 3. The United States and France agreed that they must have frequent diplomatic and military consultations to insure that each country was successful in its sphere of defense. By linking the Korean and Indochinese wars together, the Western powers hoped to warn the Communist powers against future aggression. There was also a strategic motive behind the uniting of the two wars. Both the United States and France feared that an arrangement of peace on one war front would lead to a strengthening of the offensive on the other front.

²⁷ Declaration on Indochina Made by the French Government, July 3, 1953, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1953, ed. Peter V. Curl (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 347-48.

Obviously any armistice which might be concluded in Korea by the United Nations would be entered into in the hope that it would be a step toward peace. It was the view of both Governments, however, that should the Chinese Communist regime take advantage of such an armistice to pursue aggressive war elsewhere in the Far East, such action would have the most serious consequences for the efforts to bring about peace in the world and would conflict directly with the understanding on which any armistice in Korea would rest.²⁸

The Western governments intimated in this statement that if Communist China turned to open support of the war in Viet-Nam, the United States would consider more direct involvement in Viet-Nam, or perhaps a reopening of the Korean war. Peace in one area did not mean that the United States would withdraw from the Far East and let the Communists take over in another area. The American Secretary of State echoed the statement of the Communique in a speech on September 2, 1953.

A single Chinese-Communist aggressive front extends from Korea on the north to Indochina in the south. The armistice in Korea, even if it leads to a political settlement in Korea, does not end United States concern in the western Pacific area.²⁹

The United States was beginning to take on global responsibility for the fight against Communist aggression.

²⁸Communique Issued by Representatives of the Governments of the United States and France at the Conclusion of Talks on Measures to Promote Peace, March 28, 1953, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1953, p. 270.

²⁹Address by the Secretary of State, September 2, 1953, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2371.

It would not retire from the scene just because its part in the battle was over. It intimated more active support for France would be forthcoming if the Korean phase of the aggression reached a peaceful armistice soon. The Secretary of State went on to warn the American people against a possible second Chinese Communist intervention, this time in Viet-Nam.

Communist China has been and now is training, equipping, and supplying the Communist forces in Indochina. There is the risk that, as in Korea, Red China might send its own army into Indochina. The Chinese Communist regime should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina. I say this soberly in the interest of peace and in the hope of preventing another aggressor miscalculation.³⁰

The United States had come to the conclusion that Communist aggression in the Far East must be stopped, even if it meant extending the conflict into a global war. Viet-Nam had become of primary interest to the United States as an element in the overall struggle between the East and West. The United States hoped that by taking a firm stand against the Communists it could deter any Communist Chinese ideas about participating openly in the struggle within Viet-Nam. Also the Secretary's speech was an attempt to prepare the American public for the possibility of another limited conflict. The Secretary of State urged more public interest and support for the cause of Viet-Nam.

We Americans have too little appreciated the magnitude of the effort and sacrifice which France has made in defense of an area which is no longer a French colony but where complete independence is now in the making. This independence program

³⁰Ibid.

is along lines which the United States has encouraged and justifies increased United States aid, provided that will assure an effort there that is vigorous and decisive.³¹

More than morale support, Viet-Nam needed material aid even beyond the great amounts which the United States was sending. It was hoped that the more aid the United States sent, the more vigorous and successful the French Union troops would be against the Viet Minh. The type of aid was not specified, whether economic or military. However, it was clear that the aid would be in the form of United States troops if Communist China intervened.

In a later speech before the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary of State attempted to prove that the Communist nations were the aggressors in the Indochina war since they continued to aid the Viet Minh troops after Viet-Nam gained its independence. Therefore, the war was no longer a war against a colonial master; it was now an aggressive war.

The French Government by its declaration of July 3, 1953, has announced its intention of completing the process of transferring to the Governments of the three Associated States all those remaining powers that are needed to perfect their independence to their own satisfaction.

The Communist-dominated armies in Indochina have no shadow of a claim to be regarded as the champions of an independence movement. If the Soviet-bloc countries outside of Indochina persist in promoting war in Indochina, they cannot now be surprised if their conduct is taken as proof that they adhere to the design to extend

³¹Ibid.

their rule by methods of violence.³²

In his September speech, the Secretary of State defined Communist aggression as any overt use of Chinese Communist troops within the borders of Viet-Nam. He then warned that "a second aggression would not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina."³³ Then, two weeks later on September 17, he redefined aggression as any continuance of Communist aid to the Viet Minh troops. The Secretary reasoned that since Viet-Nam was fully independent, the Viet Minh had no basis upon which to continue the fight. By this statement, the Secretary seemed to accuse the Communist nations of an actual second aggression. If this assumption was correct, the United States was prepared to send troops into Viet-Nam immediately.

The problem of how far the United States would go in extending aid to France and Viet-Nam was to continue throughout the year 1954 up to the settlement at Geneva. There were many within the United States who felt that United States troops were the only answer to a final settlement; there were just as many opposed to this decision. At any moment between September, 1953, and July, 1954, the United States might have become actively involved in the war in Indochina.

³²Proposals for Easing World Tension Through the United Nations, Address by the Secretary of State before the United Nations General Assembly, September 17, 1953, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1953, pp. 38-39.

³³Address by the Secretary of State, September 2, 1953, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2371.

CHAPTER II
ON THE BRINK OF INTERVENTION

The extensive increase of United States aid indicates that the United States was interested in Viet-Nam primarily because she was sympathetic toward the Vietnamese struggle for independence and self-government. Vietnamese independence was threatened by Communism which was using the nationalistic feelings of the Vietnamese for its own ends. It was felt that once the Communists were successfully dominant within Viet-Nam, they would proceed to amalgamate it into the Soviet block.¹ Not only would the loss of Viet-Nam to the Communists be a blow to the United States, but it would also be a blow to all Southeast Asia. Viet-Nam was a source of rice supply for the area and this would be cut off if the Communists took over Viet-Nam. Furthermore, Viet-Nam's valuable resources such as oil, rubber and iron would be lost to the western nations. Finally, Viet-Nam was strategically placed athwart air and sea routes between the Pacific and South Asia. Communication between these points would be cut off or seriously hampered if the Communists gained control of Viet-Nam. It would be difficult for the Western nations to assist other countries in Southeast Asia should the Communists decide to expand in that area even further than Viet-Nam.²

¹U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), "Threat of a Red Asia," Speech to the Overseas Press Club, March 29, 1954, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 772, Publication 5427 (April 12, 1954), 539.

²Ibid., 539-540.

The struggle going on within Viet-Nam was of vital importance to the entire world, not just to Viet-Nam and France. The United States felt it was expressing this world interest by contributing aid to the war effort.

A small segment of the Congress and press within the United States felt the government was extending too much aid in order to carry on a useless project. There were no military gains in Viet-Nam to justify continuance of United States aid.

It is quite too late, if it was ever realistic, to think that American missions, or "Point Four" professors, or expertly conceived propaganda, all lavishly backed by dollars can change the realities in Viet-Nam.³

The majority of Congress and the press felt that aid was necessary in order to sustain the side of the free world as represented by the forces of France and the State of Viet-Nam. These states were contributing human lives in the struggle whereas the United States was only contributing money. The least the United States could do, it was felt, was to continue the aid.⁴ The debate between the supporters and non-supporters of the war in Viet-Nam intensified as the tide began to turn against the French; many advocated that the United States must actively intervene in Viet-Nam. This debate was settled only by the conclusion of peace terms at

³Joseph R. Starobin, Eyewitness in Indochina (New York: Cameron and Kahn, 1954), pp. 182-83.

⁴U.S. Under Secretary of State (Walter B. Smith), News Conference, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 773, Publication 5434 (April 19, 1954), 589.

Geneva in July, 1954.

Within the State of Viet-Nam which governed Cochinchina, the Emperor Bao Dai was the Chief of State and as such had absolute authority. Since his government was placed in power by the French, many Vietnamese felt that Bao Dai was acting solely for French interests. Such an attitude on the part of his subjects made it difficult for Bao Dai to find any Vietnamese willing to participate in the government.

However, Bao Dai persuaded Prince Buu Loc to form a government. Prince Buu Loc was of the Dai Viet party and his new government consisted entirely of men from this party. These men were experienced technicians but not experienced in the administration of a government.⁵

Other political parties in the State of Viet-Nam, such as the religious sects of the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, refused to participate in the Government of Bao Dai because they felt it was not a truly representative government. Prince Buu Loc's appointments of only his party members supported this contention. The opposition parties wanted a constitution for the State of Viet-Nam. They advocated the holding of general elections immediately in order to elect deputies to a National Assembly. This Assembly would then form a Constitution and establish a representative government for the State of Viet-Nam. The opposition parties did not specifically discuss the role which Emperor Bao Dai should

⁵New York Times, January 13, 1954, p. 9.

play in the new government. They were skeptical about his nationalism and he clearly did not have the full support of the people.⁶ Thus it could be assumed that the opposition parties would favor the abdication of Bao Dai and thereby insure the complete elimination of any possible French influence upon the government of the State of Viet-Nam.

Although the demands of the opposition parties were valid ones supported by a fairly large segment of the population, they were ignored by the government of Prince Buu Loc on orders from Emperor Bao Dai. This action had the negative effect of further separating the government of Bao Dai from the Vietnamese people. They gave less and less enthusiastic support to the war efforts of the French and Bao Dai armies. Prince Buu Loc attempted to build up confidence in his government by promising administrative reforms, but these were never carried out. He also promised France and the United States that he would increase efforts to build up the Vietnamese national army with their support.⁷

In regard to the war itself, the government of Prince Buu Loc felt the Viet Minh forces were too scattered to make possible a valid cease-fire. As for peace terms, Prince Buu Loc rejected any partitioning of Viet-Nam. Peace terms would be accepted only if they established a united Viet-Nam completely free and independent of France.⁸ The war would be used as a tool to gain independence. Apparently Prince Buu

⁶New York Times, January 7, 1954, p. 6.

⁷New York Times, January 12, 1954, p. 5.

⁸New York Times, March 2, 1954, p. 7.

Loc felt the communist element could be easily dealt with once independence had been gained.

Aware of the fears of the Vietnamese concerning French domination, the United States attributed fears to a feeling of a lack of independence on the part of the Vietnamese.

It takes time to translate papers that are signed in Paris into the living spirit; and it also takes time to overcome a certain feeling on the part of many of the Asian nations that France is not really sincere in its promises. I believe the French are going a long way down that path - perhaps from a legal standpoint as far as it is either wise or necessary to go at the present time. But it is one thing to have the letter and another thing to have the spirit, and I would say at the moment the principal deficiency is a translation of the spirit of liberty into the area and in the conduct of the⁹ French people in relation to the native people.

With the French directing the war effort, allotting certain amounts of the aid from the United States to Viet-Nam, there was not a true spirit of independence within Viet-Nam. Whether such a spirit of independence without complete independence could have been fostered in Viet-Nam is doubtful under the circumstances.

Upon the establishment of a local Vietnamese government, which it hoped would gain the support of the Vietnamese people, France also planned a strong military offensive to begin in 1954 and to continue until the Viet Minh were completely driven out of Viet-Nam. This was the Navarre Plan.

⁹Secretary of State (Dulles) News Conference, May 25, 1954, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents, II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 2392.

The basic elements of this plan were: Full independence of Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia, within the French Union, so that their peoples would have a clear stake in the struggle; building up the national forces of Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia; and some initial addition of armed strength from other parts of the French Union.¹⁰

According to the United States, France was well on the way to fulfilling the first step in the Navarre Plan. The United States fully believed that France would carry out her promise of granting independence. Yet, in January of 1954, the Vietnamese were still striving to gain this independence from France. The difficulty arose because France wanted to retain a certain amount of control over Viet-Nam to which the Vietnamese were opposed. France was unwilling at this time to grant full independence. The Kingdom of Laos was the only Indochinese state to achieve official independence within the French Union.¹¹ Thus Viet-Nam and Cambodia still did not feel that they had a clear stake in the struggle because they had not achieved the independence they desired.

Along with the build up of the national forces of the Indochinese states and the addition of other troops from within the French Union, it was agreed that the United States would increase military aid. General Henri-Eugene Navarre, the French Military Commander in Viet-Nam, hoped that he would be able to clear all the Viet Minh troops out of Co-

¹⁰U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), "Mutual Security Program for 1955," in Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 773, Publication 5434 (April 19, 1954), 582.

¹¹Richard P. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1954, Published for the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 210.

chinchina. Once the French and Vietnamese holdings had been consolidated in Cochinchina, the combined troops could begin a march up the coast line gradually pushing the Viet Minh back into the northern most areas of Viet-Nam. General Navarre hoped this united effort would give France a military advantage so that it could successfully negotiate peace terms with the Viet Minh.¹²

Despite the reluctance of France to complete the first step in the Navarre Plan, the United States was quick to implement its role. The United States agreed to finance most of the cost of the war and to assist in the training, equipping, and maintaining of the local forces within Viet-Nam.¹³ The increase in aid to France and the State of Viet-Nam totaled 385 million dollars beyond the regular aid allotment of 400 million dollars. Thus in 1954 the United States was spending a total of 785 million dollars to finance the war in Viet-Nam.¹⁴

On January 20, 1954, the first successful French-Vietnamese offensive began against the town of Tuyhen. American aid was conspicuous in this offensive as American-made landing barges were used to launch the attack. After occupying the town and surrounding area, the Vietnamese set up a local administration to reeducate the population in support of Bao

¹²New York Times, February 7, 1954, IV, 5.

¹³U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), "Mutual Security Program for 1955," "Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 773, Publication 5434 (April 19, 1954), 582.

¹⁴Ibid.

Dai.¹⁵ It was felt that a reeducation program was necessary to combat the propaganda of the Viet Minh.

Despite the initial success, the French and Vietnamese troops found the Viet Minh more firmly entrenched in Cochinchina than they had at first believed. By 1954 the Viet Minh troops were receiving extensive military aid from China, enabling them to resist more strongly. The Navarre Plan had been strongly criticized for not attempting to cut off the Viet Minh supply line by getting control of the Viet-Nam-China border.¹⁶ By slowly moving up the coast, the French-Vietnamese troops gave the Viet Minh plenty of opportunity to secure needed supplies from China without any interference. This made the Navarre Plan twice as difficult to carry out.

Along with meeting increased resistance from the Viet Minh, the French also had to contend with defections among the native troops of Bao Dai's army. Having no loyalty for either the French or Emperor Bao Dai, the native troops preferred to join the winning side of the Viet Minh rather than to fight against them. The Vietnamese were not convinced that the government of Bao Dai offered true independence as the Viet Minh seemed to do.¹⁷ Thus the time and

¹⁵New York Times, January 22, 1954, p. 1.

¹⁶New York Times, February 7, 1954, IV, 5.

¹⁷Ibid.

money spent in training the national army of Bao Dai were frequently wasted, and the French were never certain of the loyalty of the native troops.

Although his plan was meeting great difficulty, General Navarre was emphatic in his objection to any suggestions that the United States might assist in either training the Vietnamese troops or helping direct the war effort.¹⁸ Financial assistance from the United States was quiet acceptable but there must be no interference directly. Whether or not France was afraid of losing her control over Viet-Nam if the United States interfered is difficult to ascertain. From the time of the establishment of the first American aid mission in Viet-Nam, criticism from American personnel of the French policy in Viet-Nam was forbidden.

Perhaps General Navarre did not want the United States to intervene because the United States would then be aware of the difficult straits that France was in militarily in Viet-Nam. France had minimized its difficulty, and maintained an optimistic attitude even when forced to ask for more aid to carry out the Navarre Plan. That France had successfully deceived the United States was obvious when in March, 1954, Under Secretary of State Walter B. Smith felt he was correct in stating "the military situation in Indochina is favorable."¹⁹ Mr. Smith was apparently ignoring

¹⁸ New York Times, March 1, 1954, p. 4.

¹⁹ Walter B. Smith, "Progress toward Solving Current International Problems," Address of February 23, 1954, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 767, Publication 5393 (March 8, 1954), 359.

or ignorant of the invasion of Laos by the Viet Minh troops up to its capital of Luang Prabeng, the difficulty the French and Vietnamese troops had in clearing Cochinchina of Viet Minh troops, and the inability of the French troops to gain a decisive victory over the Viet Minh. The United States was convinced that all Viet Minh gains were simply "real estate operations." The United States claimed the Viet Minh occupied areas where there was little resistance. Although the areas had no military significance, the Viet Minh played them up as being extensive and important gains. This naturally gave the impression that the Viet Minh had the military advantage.²⁰ The fact that there was no resistance to the Viet Minh advances shows that the Vietnamese at least passively accepted the Viet Minh. Only French troops would have put up any resistance since the loyalty of the Vietnamese troops was questionable. Doubtless there was some truth to the claims of the United States that the Viet Minh exaggerated their gains, yet this explanation is not sufficient to explain the ultimate success of the Viet Minh troops over the French at Dien Bien Phu in May, 1954, or the failure of the Navarre Plan despite the increased United States aid. In the last analysis it would seem that the French did not give the United States a clear picture of the military situation in Viet-Nam and thus its overly optimistic attitude.

²⁰U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), "Threat of a Red Asia," Speech of March 29, 1954, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 772, Publication 5427 (April 12, 1954), 539.

Becoming increasingly more concerned over the ineffectiveness of the Navarre Plan, the United States continued to send larger and larger amounts of supplies to France and the loyal Vietnamese troops. Coupled with the concern over the failure of the Navarre Plan, was the fear that China would send its troops into Viet-Nam thereby expanding the scope of the war. In order to counter such an action, the United States began to take a more aggressive position itself, threatening direct intervention.

Although the American policy makers implied that the United States might intervene in Viet-Nam, public opinion within the United States did not completely support this position. Viet-Nam was far away and the United States had just finished a limited war in that area of the world. The American public was becoming war weary. By stressing the strategic importance of Viet-Nam to the free world in his speeches, Secretary Dulles hoped to incite public interest in the war, but his success was not guaranteed.

The American people were not the only ones who were war weary. France, more intimately involved in Viet-Nam, was becoming tired of the losing battle. There was a growing possibility that France might withdraw from the war as a hopeless situation and leave the area to the Communists. The United States wanted to prevent this from happening. Yet, if it intervened, France would be forced to remain in the war, perhaps, beyond its capacity. The question of intervention was a complex one and heavily debated within the United States.

By sharing the financial burden of the war and by

sending supplies to Viet-Nam, the United States was intervening indirectly. Prior to 1954 France would not permit any consideration of further or more direct intervention by the United States. The French felt that the war in Viet-Nam was a domestic affair. Yet by February, 1954, France admitted that the struggle in Viet-Nam was of international concern and began to imply that direct intervention by the United States would be greatly appreciated. It hoped to receive both ground troops and supplementary power by air and naval forces from the United States.²¹

There was no immediate response to the French hints for the United States to intervene. It being an election year; the administration feared risking political victory if there was a decision to intervene actively. Therefore, the United States simply renewed its previous offers to train French air crews in the use and maintenance of American B-26 aircraft.²² Significantly, there was no offer to train Vietnamese troops in the use of American aircraft. The French were still retaining their military dominance over the Vietnamese troops.

The United States sent the French troops in Viet-Nam B-26 bombers and two hundred military technicians to maintain the aircraft and instruct the French technicians.²³ The sending of United States military technicians into a

²¹New York Times, February 4, 1954, p. 6.

²²Ibid.

²³New York Times, February 7, 1954, p. 14.

war zone created an immediate disturbance in Congress and the press. A debate ensued whether the technicians could be classified as ground troops. If they were ground troops, then the United States had actively intervened in Viet-Nam without the consent of Congress or the public. The President emphasized that military missions in areas such as Viet-Nam constituted technical and training units. In no way could they be considered as ground fighting units.²⁴ The administration pointed out that the United States technicians were stationed at French air fields in Tourance in Central Annam and at Dason near Haiphong, and although near the areas of heavy fighting, they were heavily protected from any possible involvement in the war.²⁵

Despite the President's denial of United States intervention, many in the United States felt the presence of the technicians in Viet-Nam in itself constituted the first step toward full United States intervention. Senator Russell of Georgia expressed the conviction that the technicians represented "piecemeal participation" in the war.²⁶ Should the technicians accidentally become involved in the fighting, the United States would be open to accusations of intervention which would lead to the actual occurrence. Senator George Aiken of Vermont complained that the Senate

²⁴New York Times, February 4, 1954, p. 14.

²⁵New York Times, March 1, 1954, p. 4.

²⁶New York Times, February 11, 1954, p. 6.

Foreign Relations Committee had not been informed of the President's decision to send the technicians to Viet-Nam. Had he been aware of the decision, Senator Aiken maintained that he would have urged the sending of civilian technicians rather than military ones. He felt civilians could have served the purpose adequately and the United States would not be open to charges of intervention.²⁷ Senator Knowland, the Senate Majority Leader, defended the Administration; the technicians were sent, he said, in order to prevent the sending of ground combat troops later. The United States hoped to make the French troops more effective by sending advisors.²⁸ United States officials within Viet-Nam backed the administration's viewpoint that combat troops from the United States were unnecessary.²⁹

The great concern expressed by Congress over the sending of the technicians forced President Eisenhower to state that the United States would avoid direct intervention in Viet-Nam:

...what we were doing was supporting the Vietnamese and the French in their conduct of that war because, as we saw it, it was a case of independent and free nations operating against the encroachment of communism.

No one could be more bitterly opposed to ever getting the United States involved in a hot war in that region than he was. Consequently, ...every move that he authorized was calculated, so far

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

as humans could do it, to make certain that that did not happen.³⁰

Although not a direct promise that the United States would not intervene in Viet-Nam, the President left the strong impression that he was not considering such a move. The United States still had great faith in the success of the Navarre Plan.

It was a rude awakening for the United States when General Paul Ely, the French Chief of Staff, arrived in Washington on March 20, 1954, and announced that Viet-Nam would be lost unless the United States intervened. The military situation had deteriorated to a point where France was unable to keep up the defenses alone. General Ely was referring to the attack on the French out post at Dien Bien Phu. This fort commanded the most direct routes across the mountains into Laos; however, there were other routes as well. Viet Minh control of the post would expedite their drive into Laos but it was not essential for that invasion. Militarily the post was a weak link in the French line of defenses because it had to be supplied completely by air. As early as January it had been pointed out that the airlifts could not be continued should the post come under heavy attack. In March, the French had finally come to this conclusion also, but by then it was too late. Thus General Ely's plea for the United States intervention to

³⁰ Transcript of President Eisenhower News Conference, New York Times, February 11, 1954, p. 16.

aid the French in its uncomfortable situation.³¹

Finally aware of the actual deterioration of the French military situation, the administration began to play up the need for allied support of the French in Viet-Nam. The issue of Communism was emphasized by Secretary Dulles in a speech on March 29, 1954. He pointed out that the Communists were using the issue of nationalism to prevent the attainment of independence in Viet-Nam. Secretary Dulles implied that satisfying of the Vietnamese nationalistic feelings under Communism would not lead to true independence as it would under a Western-sponsored government. Dulles accused Ho Chi Minh of being a long standing Communist and of attempting to convert Viet-Nam into a satellite of Russia and China.³²

There were some who believed that Ho Chi Minh was a true nationalist. A reporter visiting the Viet Minh lines saw how enthusiastically the troops supported Ho Chi Minh in the firm belief that he was the only valid nationalistic leader among the Vietnamese. As has been shown before, the Vietnamese were very skeptical of any national leader who was supported by the French. Ho, by receiving Communist support, broke any possible connections between his government and the colonial powers. Also the fact that Ho Chi Minh was a long standing nationalist leader won him many

³¹New York Times, January 18, 1954, p. 7.

³²U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), Address of March 29, 1954, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2374-75.

supporters among the Vietnamese and foreign observers in the area.

...Ho Chi Minh had become an outstanding leader of the Vietnamese nationalist and revolutionary movement; Mr. Dulles who attended the Versailles parley in 1919, ought to know that Nguyen Ai Quoc, a man with a long patriotic record, and later to become known as Ho Chi Minh, was the sole Vietnamese to present a petition for his country's freedom to Orlando, Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson,....³³

Besides alluding to Ho Chi Minh's long patriotic record, critics of the administration also pointed out that it was France which was preventing the attainment of Vietnamese independence. France had recognized the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam as a legal state in March, 1946, but then violated that recognition by firing on the Vietnamese people.³⁴ This was a valid criticism of French policy. However, the supplying of Ho Chi Minh's troops by the Communist nations turned other western nations such as the United States against Ho Chi Minh. The United States could not support the policies of Ho Chi Minh without also supporting the possible takeover of Viet-Nam by a Communist regime. Thus by default the United States had to support the French. Communism was too much of a threat for the United States to consider the nationalist aspirations of former colonial peoples.

Not only was Communist infiltration in the troops of the Viet Minh a threat to the independence of Viet-Nam,

³³Starobin, Eyewitness in Indochina, p. 174.

³⁴Ibid., p. 176.

but the United States also felt it was a threat to the entire free world. Thus it began to urge a united effort against the Communist takeover in Viet-Nam.

Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively³⁵ accepted, but should be met by united action.

"United action" in Southeast Asia became the goal of the United States. A propoganda drive was begun to convince its allies that they must join in active intervention in Viet-Nam. It was felt that a statement of support by the Western powers for French policies in Viet-Nam would prevent further intervention by the Communists. However, Secretary Dulles wanted to go beyond just a statement of support and to establish a collective defense system for Southeast Asia which could be put into immediate action in Viet-Nam.³⁶

Confident of being able to convince its allies to join in the united action policy, the United States went so far as to formulate plans for possible intervention. The first plan was to aid the beseiged forces at Bien Bien Phu by air attacks from planes based on the carrier ships of the United States Seventh Fleet. The ships were already in the area,

³⁵U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), Address of March 29, 1954, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2376.

³⁶Stebbins, United States in World Affairs, 1954, p. 224.

and action could be immediate. However, members of Congress immediately vetoed this plan as being too abrupt and unilateral on the part of the United States.³⁷

The second plan called for the coordination of ground forces from the United States, Great Britain, France and any Asian states which wished to participate. The integrated forces would then continue the war against the Viet Minh. It is significant that the United States knew that its plan for united action would result in intervention by the Communist Chinese in the war as well as by the Western powers. In contrast to American policy in Korea, the United States was willing for the Western troops to destroy the south China bases should the Chinese intervene in Viet-Nam.³⁸ The United States seemed determined to win this time if it intervened. In Korea the United States had stopped at the Korean-Chinese border; however, in Viet-Nam she was willing to cross the border and invade China. Strong and immediate action was the goal.

Whereas Congress had blocked the first plan for intervention, allies of the United States blocked the second plan. Britain, especially, looked with disfavor on the plans for united action. It preferred to see a settlement through negotiation. Refusal by the British to join in the plans for united action forced Secretary Dulles to modify his aggressive tone. Clearly the United States did not wish

³⁷Ibid., p. 221.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 21-22.

to intervene alone; therefore, it must devise a plan which was acceptable to the British.³⁹ At this point, Secretary Dulles revealed that the plan for intervention through United action had been devised by the United States alone; France had not requested such aid in Viet-Nam. The United States wished to be prepared should a request for intervention be made by France. The Secretary also pledged that the administration would consult Congress before any decisive action was made. There would not be a police action as there had been in Korea, instigated without the consent of Congress.⁴⁰

Afraid that the administration would arbitrarily and unilaterally decide to intervene in Viet-Nam, the Congress demanded an outline of the conditions upon which the United States would intervene in Viet-Nam. Secretary Dulles stated that the United States would insist on a request from France and the State of Viet-Nam for such intervention. There must also be assurances that full independence would be granted to the Indochinese states. Finally, the intervention must be collective, the United States would not intervene by herself, and France must pledge not to withdraw from the war before it was successfully over.⁴¹ Ac-

³⁹Ibid., p. 222.

⁴⁰U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), Transcript of a News Conference of May 25, 1954, in American Foreign Relations, 1950-1955, II, 2393.

⁴¹U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), Address of June 11, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, ed., Peter V. Curl (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955) p. 277.

According to Secretary Dulles the United States wanted action in Viet-Nam, but it did not want this action to replace the efforts of France. Intervention would not be justified if France withdrew from the war before its conclusion.

The possibility of attaining these prerequisites for intervention were remote. Dien Bien Phu had already fallen at the time Secretary Dulles listed these requirements, and France had not called for aid. Previously the British had rejected plans for united intervention and, therefore, the United States would not be able to obtain support from its ally. It seemed safe for the public to assume that the United States would not intervene.

Secretary Dulles was incensed to discover that allies of the United States considered his policy of intervention was his excuse to declare open war with the Communist nations.

There are some, particularly abroad, who seem to assume that the attitude of the United States flows from a desire for a general war with Communist China. That is clearly false...⁴²

President Eisenhower supported the Secretary, stating that arms alone would not guarantee the success of an intervention; there must be a proper psychological attitude both in the country concerned and in the world at large. Armed intervention, by itself, would only use up resources and might not be at all beneficial.⁴³

The statements of President Eisenhower and Secretary

⁴²Ibid., p. 278.

⁴³Transcript of President Eisenhower News Conference, New York Times, June 11, 1954, p. 10.

Dulles in June were in sharp contrast to those made in March. The United States had switched from a policy advocating armed intervention to a denial that it had any immediate plans to intervene in Viet-Nam. Such a change in policy had a detrimental effect on the fighters within Viet-Nam who had come to believe that intervention was near. The change of policy dashed hopes of support and morale fell lower than ever despite the continued supply of war material.

It would have been possible for the United States to have kept to its policy of armed intervention, but it would have been a unilateral action, not united as it wished. Pressures by its allies forced the change in United States policy. As early as February, 1954, France, which continued the war in Viet-Nam only because of the generous military aid from the United States, began pressing the United States to consider a negotiated peace. France hoped the Geneva Conference planned for April, 1954, would consider Indochina as well as Korea.⁴⁴ Negotiations must be considered sooner or later, and France preferred to have them early while she was still fairly strong militarily. With strong support from the United States at the negotiations, France expected to gain more from the Communists than her military position would warrant. Therefore France was pressing the United States at the Berlin Conference to agree to negotiations rather than push ahead with plans for intervention.

⁴⁴New York Times, February 12, 1954, p. 2.

Objections by the United States to negotiations on Indochina were based on the fact that France did not have a military advantage in Viet-Nam and thus would not be able to dominate the conference. Also, the United States feared that negotiations with Communist China would constitute a form of recognition of that regime.⁴⁵

Fear of a nuclear war, should there be any intervention in Indochina, led Great Britain and India to join France in the push for negotiations. India, as a spokesman for the neutralist nations, stated that the American policy of intervention would further the ill-feeling between the Asian and Western nations.⁴⁶ The United States stood alone in its desire to intervene. Outnumbered by the other nations, the United States finally agreed to negotiations on Indochina at the Geneva Conference.

There is, however, no reason why we should refuse to seek peacefully the results we want merely because of fear that we will be outmaneuvered at the conference table. No informed observers believe that we were outmaneuvered at Berlin. We need not, out of fright, lay down the tools of diplomacy and the possibilities which they provide. Our cause is not so poor, and our capacity not so low, that our Nation must seek security by sulking in its tent.⁴⁷

Although forced to concede to a negotiated settlement of the Indochina problem, the United States maintained that

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1954, p. 226.

⁴⁷U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), "Report on Berlin," Address to the Nation, February 24, 1954, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXX No. 767, Publication 5393 (March 8, 1954), 346.

these negotiations would not be successful for the West unless the free nations presented a united front to the Communists. It hoped that the united front would take the form of a collective security pact for Southeast Asia to be used against Communist aggression both at the conference table and on the battlefield if necessary.⁴⁸ The pact would not hinder the proposed Geneva Conference, but would be used in case the negotiations were not successful.

In form, the collective security pact would comprise all the nations of Southeast Asia as well as the Western nations who had interests in that area, such as the United States, Great Britain and France. The United States even contemplated a standing army for the area similar to the NATO forces in Europe.

In the interval between the two conferences, Secretary Dulles attempted to convince his allies of the necessity for a collective security agreement in order to present a united front toward the Communists. Early in April, Secretary Dulles went to Paris and London in order to discuss collective security. He did succeed in obtaining promises from Britain and France that they would consider the possibility. Both Britain and France insisted that the examination of the possibility of establishing collective defense for Southeast Asia must be done with other nations and the

⁴⁸U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), Transcript of a News Conference, April 19, 1954, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 773, Publication 5434 (April 19, 1954), 590.

pact must be in accordance with the charter of the United Nations.⁴⁹ Misunderstandings arose between the United States and its two allies over the implementation of the talks for establishment of a collective defense system for Southeast Asia. Secretary Dulles wanted the defense system for established immediately since he felt it would contribute toward the attainment of peace in Indochina. The two allies of the United States felt that the collective defense system should not be established until after the Geneva Conference had been held. Britain especially was afraid that the United States would use the defense system to force allied intervention in Indochina. Therefore Britain refused to consider it until the Geneva Conference had settled the Indochina situation. Secretary Dulles was irritated at the delay.

Last March, after the siege of Dien Bien Phu had begun, I renewed President Eisenhower's proposal that we seek conditions which would permit a united defense for the area. I went to Europe on this mission and it seemed that there was agreement on our proposal. But when we moved to translate that proposal into reality, some of the parties held back because they had concluded that any steps to create a united defense should await the results of the Geneva Conference. Meanwhile the burdens of a collective defense in Indochina have mounted.⁵⁰

⁴⁹U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles) and British Foreign Secretary (Eden), Communique Issued following talks in London; and Secretary of State (Dulles) and French Minister of Foreign Affairs (Bidault), Communique Issued following talks in Paris, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, pp. 257-59.

⁵⁰U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles), Address of June 11, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 276.

It is apparent from this statement by Secretary Dulles that Britain's fears were justified. Secretary Dulles had intended the collective defense system to be put into effect actively in Indochina in order to insure the success of the allied side in the Geneva negotiations. Secretary Dulles had said that "free peoples will never remain free unless they are willing to fight for their vital interests."⁵¹

Recognizing, however, that some block against further Communist aggression in Southeast Asia must be set up, the British agreed to begin implementation of the collective defense idea whether the Geneva talks were successful or not.⁵² This led to the establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in September, 1954, which protected the neutralized states of Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia although those states could not participate in the organization.

Unable to carry through the collective defense system in time to intervene in the Indochinese war, Secretary Dulles believed he had built a system which would effectively prevent any further aggression in that area of the world. Secretary Dulles still felt that defenses should be planned in advance in order to deter possible aggression, which was what he had wanted to do for Viet-Nam. The dilemma in June of 1954 was to find a settlement for the immediate problem within Viet-Nam.

⁵¹U.S. Secretary of State (Dulles) Address of May 7, 1954, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2389.

⁵²Anglo-American Principles: Joint Statement Issued by the President of the U.S. (Eisenhower) and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (Churchill) June 28-29, 1954, in Documents

CHAPTER III

THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

Scheduled to begin on April 26, 1954, the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference hoped to arrange a cessation of hostilities and a settlement which would insure future peace in Southeast Asia. It took the participants three months to achieve this goal. The main negotiations were carried on between France and the Peoples' Republic of China as the two powerful states supporting the factions within Viet-Nam. All the Indochinese states were represented with two delegations from Viet-Nam, one from the French-sponsored State of Viet-Nam, and one from the Communist-sponsored Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom acted as co-chairman of the Conference. Although a representative was present at the proceedings, the United States preferred to act only as an observer, not as an active participant.

The Geneva Conference was the first instance when the United States agreed to negotiate with Communist China. At first the United States had emphatically objected to the seating of Communist China. It feared the Communist bloc would play up the occasion and claim de facto recognition for China. The United States did not want any implications of recognition to occur, and only consented to the seating of China when assured by its allies that de facto recognition would not be implied.¹ A second objection to the

¹Richard P. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1954, Prepared by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 117.

seating of China was raised over United States fear that its own allies wished to secure more favorable terms by granting China concessions. The allies hoped that by reducing the trade restrictions for China, China, in turn, would not try to force France completely out of Indochina.² Appalled at such an idea, the United States made it quite clear both to its allies and to the Communist powers that it would not consent to the granting of concessions to Communist China.

We hope that any Indochina discussion will serve to bring the Chinese Communists to see the danger of their apparent design for the conquest of Southeast Asia, so that they will cease and desist. We shall not, however, be disposed to give Communist China what it wants from us, merely³ to buy its promises of future good behavior...

The United States would negotiate but not bargain with Communist China in order to gain Southeast Asia for the West. Its position also prevented the allies from making any bargains. Only when the United States received specific guarantees from all of the allies that they would not consider de facto recognition nor grant concessions to China would the United States agree to the seating of Communist China at the conference table. With the gaining of an additional participant for the Communist bloc, the sides were more evenly balanced and negotiations were more difficult for the Western nations. There were two strong Communist powers together for the first time.

²Ibid., p. 215.

³U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 772, Publication 5427 (April 12, 1954), p. 542.

The opening of the Geneva Conference was delayed by several days because of a dispute between the two representations from Viet-Nam. Believing all the statements by the American government about the strategic importance of Viet-Nam to Western defense and that the West could not afford to let Viet-Nam fall to the Communists, the State of Viet-Nam felt it had enough powerful backing to make a bid to be the only representative for Viet-Nam at the Conference. The delegation from the State of Viet-Nam claimed to be the only true representative of all Viet-Nam and refused to sit at the conference table with the delegates from the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. Eventually persuaded that they were not in a political or military position to represent all Viet-Nam, the State of Viet-Nam consented to the seating of both delegations as had been originally planned. The delay of eleven days meant that the conference did not open until May 8, the day after the military defeat of the French Union forces at Dien Bien Phu. The fall of this outpost with the large numbers of casualties on the French and Vietnamese side, greatly influenced attitudes at Geneva. The already weak French position was further weakened. The outpost of Dien Bien Phu was not important militarily, but it was significant as a factor contributing to the French defeatist attitude at Geneva. The delegation from the State of Viet-Nam in delaying the Conference had played into the hands of the Communists, enabling them to gain a psychological victory over the West even before the opening of the negotiations. The French felt they were "suing for

an armistice after a lost war."⁴

Despite former declarations on the part of the United States that when the Communists began to obtain a military advantage, the United States would intervene with massive retaliation, intervention did not occur after the fall of Dien Bien Phu. The United States, instead, took the position that the situation in Viet-Nam was too weak for military intervention to be worthwhile. Yet the possibility of intervention was kept open in order to intimidate the Communists.

We indicated that we ourselves would be prepared to intervene with our own military forces on certain conditions. It might appear that these actions on our part were ineffectual. For the purposes intended, they were, but it is probable that their effect was important and that without them an agreement even more unfavorable to the French, the anti-Communist Vietnamese, and the free world would have resulted.⁵

The threat of intervention was merely a bluff, but the United States felt it would be effective in giving France support at Geneva. The United States also hoped that its bluff would prevent its own side from granting any concessions to the Communists.

The negotiations at Geneva centered around three main interests. The first was whether there should be one armistice agreement for all three of the Indochinese states,

⁴Bernard B. Fall, "Cease-Fire in Indochina - An Appraisal," Far Eastern Survey, XXIII (September, 1954), 136.

⁵Address by Assistant Secretary of State Walter S. Robertson, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI, No. 791, Publication 5573 (August 23, 1954), 261.

or whether each state should be dealt with separately. Viet-Nam had been the center of the fighting; however, minor engagements had occurred in both Laos and Cambodia. The Communist position was relatively weak in Laos and Cambodia; therefore, if the Communists could secure one armistice agreement to be applied to all three states, their position would be considerably strengthened. The Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, Pham Van Dong, wanted all foreign troops to be withdrawn from the three states along with the complete cessation of military aid. Then, he felt, an overall settlement could be considered.⁶

The French proposals on the issue, stated by M. Bidault, rejected any Communist claims in Laos or Cambodia. He asserted that a civil war situation did not exist in those two states, such as the Communists claimed, but rather a Communist invasion had occurred.⁷ Both Britain and the United States supported the French position of separate agreements for each state. But Britain and the United States also insisted that Laos and Cambodia must be kept free and independent from either Viet Minh or French control.⁸ This position blocked French attempts to retain the two states as semi-independent colonies. Eventually all participants agreed that separate agreements would be concluded.

The second issue was the regroupment of the military

⁶Stebbins, p. 240.

⁷Ibid., p. 239.

⁸New York Times, June 11, 1954, p. 4.

forces within Viet-Nam, whether the troops should occupy their positions as of the beginning of the conference, or whether the two sides should be consolidated and Viet-Nam divided accordingly. The Viet Minh preferred regroupment according to military positions as of the conference. This would leave pockets of Viet Minh troops throughout Indochina enabling them to infiltrate the entire countryside with ease.⁹

The French preferred a division of Viet-Nam into zones. The Commanders in Chief of the opposing forces could decide the boundaries of the zones. Once the zones were established, the French advocated the complete disarmament of all elements not in the army or the internal police forces.¹⁰

The French proposal was carrying out the recommendations of a secret report from the Chairman of the French Joint Chiefs of Staff General Ely and his associates Generals Salan and Pelissier. These men recommended a contraction of the French troops around easily defendable beachheads. This would be in preparation for the eventual withdrawal of the French Union forces from the Red River Delta, which the Generals did not feel could be defended unless they received more allied aid and troop reinforcement.

⁹Stebbins, p. 340.

¹⁰U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 778, Publication 5468 (May 24, 1954), 789.

ments from France itself.¹¹ According to these recommendations, Viet-Nam would then be divided at the nineteenth parallel with the Viet Minh controlling north Viet-Nam and the Red River Delta, and the State of Viet-Nam controlling central and southern Viet-Nam. The secret report was leaked to the French press, and its publication convinced the public that France must withdraw its interests from the area as soon as possible.¹²

The State of Viet-Nam was incensed that France had decided to withdraw from the Red River Delta without consulting the Vietnamese government. The French plan was completely contrary to the State of Viet-Nam's proposal that the political and territorial integrity of Viet-Nam must be maintained.¹³ The State of Viet-Nam counted on Western support to drive out the Communists from Viet-Nam, thereby leaving the country united and under the control of the State of Viet-Nam. They would not accept the defeatist attitude of the French government, the French army, and the French public. However, France was the main military power defending the State of Viet-Nam from complete takeover by the Communists. Hence, objections to French decisions by the Vietnamese were futile. It was not possible militarily for Viet-Nam to remain territorially united unless it was under full Communist control. The State of Viet-Nam did not have a strong national

¹¹ Fall, Far Eastern Survey, XXIII, No. 9, 138.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 139.

army and France did not intend to remain in Viet-Nam to continue a losing battle.

Although the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam also preferred to leave Viet-Nam united, it was forced by Communist China to accept a division of Viet-Nam. Such a division would establish a strong Communist state in the north which could later be used as a base for the further infiltration and takeover of southern Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia.¹⁴

The third issue, and the one which caused the most difficulty among the negotiators, was supervision of the armistice agreements. France proposed that an international commission be established to control the execution of the armistice. Guarantee of the armistice would be provided by the conference participants, and any violations reported by the international commission would be referred to the Geneva participants.¹⁵ The United States supported the French proposal in principle.

The United States maintains that....an armistice agreement can be effective only under international supervision. The United States, therefore, believes that any settlement must include provisions for effective international supervision and assurance of powers and privileges on the part of the international supervising authority equal to enable it to carry out its various responsibilities.¹⁶

As for "powers and privileges" of the international commission, the United States felt the commission should be able to settle any problem which the joint commission composed of the two belligerents could not decide upon. The

¹⁴Stebbins, p. 241.

¹⁵U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 778, Publication 5468 (May 24, 1954), 784.

decisions of the international commission would have to be binding.¹⁷ The United States joined Britain in proposing an impartial group of five Asian powers, such as India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, and Indonesia to comprise the commission. They also agreed that in order for the commission to be effective, all decisions should be by majority agreement.¹⁸ This would eliminate a need for a veto power.

The Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam preferred just the Joint Commission to carry out the terms of the armistice.¹⁹ However, Russia and China wanted the international commission, but one which included a Communist power in its membership. The Communist states proposed Poland or Czechoslovakia for such a commission. They also insisted on a veto power.²⁰ The Western powers feared that the inclusion of a Communist nation on the international commission with the veto power would prevent any constructive action from taking place.

The Geneva Conference was in deadlock over these major issues when in June there occurred a change of governments in France. Premier Laniel was replaced by Premier M. Mendes-France on June 17. On the nineteenth, the conference de-

¹⁷U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 782, Publication 5507 (June 21, 1954), 944.

¹⁸New York Times, June 11, 1954, p. 4.

¹⁹Stebbins, p. 240.

²⁰U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI, No. 791, Publication 5573 (August 23, 1954), 260.

cided to establish a bilateral military committee for each of the three states of Indochina in order to study further details for an armistice. While the committees were gathering material for their reports, the conference would recess for twenty-one days. The recess would give Premier Mendes-France time to form his government, and give the delegates time to consult with their governments over the discussions at Geneva.²¹

Premier Mendes-France already had definite ideas about the Geneva negotiations. Earlier he had urged France to begin negotiations with the Communists while it was in an advantageous situation. At that time, France believed it could fully defeat the Viet Minh and ignored the proposal for negotiations. The positions became reversed and France was forced to negotiate. In an address before the French National Assembly, Premier Mendes-France clearly outlined his policy for negotiations on Indochina.

And now a new and fearful danger has emerged: if the conflict in Indochina is not settled - and settled very soon - it is the risk of war, of an international and perhaps atomic war, that we must face.

It is because I wanted a better peace that I wanted it sooner, when we held more trump cards in our hand, but there are concessions and sacrifices which even the present situation does not call for. France need not accept, and will not accept, a settlement under conditions which would be incompatible with her most vital interests. France will maintain her presence in the Far East. Neither our Allies nor our enemies should harbor the slightest doubt as to the significance of our determination.

We have entered into negotiations at Geneva in liaison with our Allies and with the Associated States. The Government I shall form...will pursue these ne-

²¹ Stebbins, p. 243.

gotiations, prompted by a constant will to peace, but equally resolved - in order to safeguard our interests and reach an honorable settlement - to play for all they are worth the trump cards still held by France: the concentration of our material and spiritual forces in wide areas; the interest and support of our Allies; and, last, the valor and heroism of our soldiers...²²

Premier Mendes-France was anxious to negotiate, but he was also anxious to defend French interests in the Far East. To show his determination to achieve a peaceful settlement, he pledged himself to attain a cease-fire in Viet-Nam within four weeks or he would offer the resignation of his government.²³

Such a deadline for the settlement of the situation in Indochina tended to intensify the negotiations. There was also the danger that the Communists might purposely delay the final settlement just to force Premier Mendes-France's resignation. The Premier was taking a great risk, because the French position would be further weakened if the Communists were able to force the resignation of his government. However, the risk was successful in the long run.

Just before Premier Mendes-France was elected, France granted total independence to the three Indochinese states. In return, the three states promised to remain within the French Union. The nationalist leader Ngo Dinh Diem formed the new government in Viet-Nam on June 15, 1954. Although

²² Foreign Policy Address by the Premier Candidate (Mendes-France) in the French National Assembly, June 17, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, ed. Peter V. Curl (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 75.

²³ Stebbins, p. 243.

very happy that independence had finally been fully achieved, the new Vietnamese government was in a weak political position due to the deadline put on the Geneva negotiations by France. The deadline only gave the government of Ngo Dinh Diem four weeks to organize and attempt to establish a strong policy at Geneva.²⁴ Ngo Dinh Diem was further weakened politically by the French practice of not consulting with the Vietnamese before it negotiated with the Communists. Prior to granting independence, France had been careful to consult with the delegation of the State of Viet-Nam on all issues at Geneva. After independence was granted, France and the Communist states carried on the negotiations alone, and the State of Viet-Nam frequently did not even receive the details of the negotiations results. The Vietnamese protested, but to no avail.²⁵

During the recess of the Geneva Conference, France and Communist China continued negotiating. Although no concrete decisions were concluded, it became evident to both sides that a temporary partition of Viet-Nam was inevitable. The United States was very much opposed to any partition of Viet-Nam, believing the West should defeat the Communists rather than divide Viet-Nam. The United States did not want to grant any concessions to the Communists, and a division of Viet-Nam constituted a concession.

²⁴Fall, Far Eastern Survey, XXIII, No. 9, 137-38.

²⁵Ibid., No. 10, 152.

In spite of substantial material assistance from the United States, the French military position was worsened. And Premier Mendes-France is now engaged in direct negotiation with the Viet Minh in an effort to reach an acceptable settlement. At this time, we have no way of knowing whether a settlement can be reached and, if one is reached, whether or not it will be acceptable.

However, this much can be safely said. The United States will not become a party to any agreement which smacks of appeasement. Nor will we acknowledge the legitimacy of Communist control of any segment of Southeast Asia any more than we have recognized the Communist control of North Korea.²⁶

This was a warning to France not to concede too much, as well as a warning to the Communists that the United States would not recognize any of their territorial gains as being permanent ones. To emphasize its position, the United States stated that it would not sign an agreement which arranged the partition of Viet-Nam. Since such an agreement seemed inevitable, the United States announced that it saw no need to maintain delegates at Geneva and they would be withdrawn.²⁷ The United States' action showed the split in the Western position at Geneva and deprived France of strong support. There was the possibility that France would be forced to concede more to the Communists than its national honor would permit, unless it could convince the United States to return to Geneva. If the United States did not return and the Communists increased their demands, France would be forced to continue the Indochina war beyond its capacity to do so.

²⁶U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI, No. 787, Publication 5547 (July 26, 1954), 121.

²⁷U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI, No. 787, Publication 5547 (July 26, 1954), 123.

On the other hand, there was the problem of enforcing the peace terms if they were concluded. France, alone, was not strong enough militarily to enforce peace in South-east Asia should the Communists decide to violate the peace terms.²⁸ It was essential that France persuade the United States to continue to support the Geneva negotiations.

Britain joined France in attempts to persuade the United States that it must return to Geneva. They pointed out that even with United States aid France had not been able to win the war in Viet-Nam. Therefore, the United States should accept any agreement for peace, even the partition of Viet-Nam.²⁹ The United States had overestimated the capability of the French Union forces to win in Viet-Nam. The troops had failed and France had to sue for peace before it lost all its interests in Viet-Nam. The arguments were successful; the United States decided to send Under Secretary of State Walter B. Smith back to Geneva at the reopening of the conference.³⁰ However, the United States did not abandon her principles of non-appeasement and non-recognition of Communist territorial gains. Thus the United States, in effect, clung to its position of not signing an armistice agreement which provided for the partition of Viet-Nam.

Under Secretary Smith reached Geneva on July 17; the

²⁸ New York Times, July 11, 1954, p. 2.

²⁹ New York Times, July 15, 1954, p. 4.

³⁰ Statement by Secretary of State on United States Participation in the Geneva Conference, July 15, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 282-83.

formal sessions of the conference reopened the following day. Negotiations were intense as there were only four days left to the end of Premier Mendes-France's deadline. However, concessions were made by both sides so that an agreement could be reached in time. On the issue of parallel or separate armistice agreements for the three states, it was concluded that there should be separate armistice agreements for each. Laos and Cambodia retained political and territorial unity while pledging "to adopt measures permitting all citizens to take their place in the national community, in particular by participating in the next general elections...."³¹

The agreement on Viet-Nam provided for the temporary division of the country along the seventeenth parallel and the establishment of a neutral buffer zone along the division line.

A provisional military demarcation line shall be fixed, on either side of which the forces of the two parties shall be regrouped after their withdrawal, the forces of the People's Army of Viet-Nam to the north of the line and the forces of the French Union to the south.

It is also agreed that a demilitarized zone shall be established on either side of the demarcation line, to a width of not more than five kilometers from it, to act as a buffer zone and avoid any incidents which might result in the resumption of hostilities.³²

The division of Viet-Nam was only temporary, according to

³¹Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, July 21, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 311.

³²Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, Article I, July 20, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, pp. 283-84.

the Geneva Conference. It was a division for military convenience and should not have any implications politically.

The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet-Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary.³³

In order to insure that the demarcation line dividing Viet-Nam was not made into a permanent division, the conference provided terms for the eventual reunification of Viet-Nam after a period of cooling off for the two sides in the hostilities. Until the elections were held, the two zones would be administered by the respective political party whose forces were regrouped in that particular zone.³⁴ This allowed each side to build up political support in anticipation of the elections. The Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference gave very specific instructions regarding the elections for the reunification of Viet-Nam.

General elections shall be held in July, 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the member states of the International Supervisory Commission referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from April 20, 1955, onwards.³⁵

The United States wanted elections immediately upon

³³Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, July 21, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 313.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

achieving a cessation of hostilities. However, the French pointed out that the Western position in Viet-Nam was very weak. If the West hoped to win the elections for reunification, some time would have to lapse to rebuild relations between Viet-Nam and the West.³⁶ All Vietnamese in 1954 were strongly pro-Communist because of the nationalist propoganda of the Communists. The State of Viet-Nam must be given a chance to develop and to show the Vietnamese that a pro-Western state could be just as independent and nationalistic as a pro-Communist state. If the State of Viet-Nam was successful in creating a strong, independent government, then the Vietnamese would favor that system in the 1956 elections. Until the elections were held, there was no curb on the strength of the civil administration controlling each zone within Viet-Nam.

On the issue of supervision of the agreement terms, there had long been agreement that two supervisory bodies were necessary, a Joint Commission and an International Commission. As established by the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, the Joint Commission was to insure the execution of:

- (a) A simultaneous and general cease-fire for all regular and irregular armed forces of the two parties,
- (b) A regroupment of the armed forces of the two parties,

³⁶New York Times, July 14, 1954, p. 1.

(c) Observance of the demarcation lines between the re-grouping zones and of the demilitarized sectors.

Within the limits of its competence it shall help the parties to execute the said provisions, shall ensure liaison between them for the purpose of preparing and carrying out plans for the application of these provisions, and shall endeavor to solve such disputed questions as may arise between the parties in the course of executing these provisions.³⁷

As the Joint Commission was to ensure the execution of the armistice, the International Commission was established "for the control and supervision over the application of the provisions of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet-Nam."³⁸

At the Geneva Conference there had been much dispute over the membership of the Commission. Britain and the United States wanted five Columbo powers as the members. The Communist powers insisted that a Communist nation must be represented. Eventually the West gave in and allowed Poland to become a member along with Canada and India.³⁹

The International Commission was to establish mobile inspection teams in order to supervise the execution of the armistice, control the movement of the armies within Viet-Nam, supervise the demarcation line and the demilitarized zone, and supervise the ports and airfields along the fron-

³⁷ Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, Article 33, July 20, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 296.

³⁸ Ibid., Article 34, p. 296.

³⁹ Ibid.

tiers of Viet-Nam to prevent additional reinforcements or supplies from entering illegally. Any disputes over the application or interpretation of armistice terms were to be referred to the International Commission. In most instances, disputes could be settled by a majority vote within the Commission; however, when violations threatened an outbreak of renewed hostilities, then the Commission was required to have a unanimous vote.⁴⁰ Thus in most instances the disputes would be minor and the Commission could easily settle them. When the issue was of a major concern, the veto power was put into effect. The terms were a compromise between East and West demands.

Although primarily a document covering the military settlement of the cease-fire, the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities also provided protection of the rights and liberties of the Vietnamese civilians.

(c) Each party undertakes to refrain from any reprisals or discrimination against persons or organizations on account of their activities during the hostilities and to guarantee their democratic liberties.

(d) From the date of entry into force of the present Agreement until the movement of troops is completed, any civilians in a district controlled by any one party who wish to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district.⁴¹

In these two provisions, the Geneva Conference hoped to pre-

⁴⁰Ibid., Articles 37-43, pp. 297-99.

⁴¹Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, Article 14, July 20, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 288.

vent any reprisals against the civilian populations and to allow each citizen to choose freely the zone in which he desired to live. Supervision over the execution of these two provisions was almost impossible as it would involve investigations on the village level. Also, the inspection teams could not go beyond the demilitarized zone or the specific cities open to them without express permission of the party controlling the zone.⁴² If a party was violating one of these provisions, it certainly would not allow an inspection team to observe the violations.

Hoping to keep the military power of the respective sides fairly stable and equal, the Agreement prohibited the entry of new troops and military personnel into any zone of Viet-Nam. However, rotation of troops was allowed, but at the same strength.⁴³ Build up of military supplies was also prohibited, except on a piece-for-piece basis of replacement of destroyed or worn-out equipment.⁴⁴ In this way, it was hoped, neither side would be able to increase its military strength to the point of being able to conquer easily the other zone. The establishment of new military bases was also prohibited, especially bases of a foreign power. The Geneva Agreements hoped to create a neutral Viet-Nam by preventing either zone from forming military alliances of any

⁴²Ibid., Article 35, p. 297.

⁴³Ibid., Article 16, p. 290.

⁴⁴Ibid., Article 17, p. 291-92.

kind.⁴⁵

The overall aim of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities was to achieve peace through the disengagement of the opposing forces and the stabilizing of their military strength as of the Conference. Since the agreement was of a military nature, the Commanders in Chief of the opposing forces signed the agreements. For the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, the Vice-Minister of National Defense, Ta Quang-Buu signed. Brigadier-General Delteil signed for the State of Viet-Nam as he was the Commander of the French Union forces.⁴⁶ Thus no representative from the State of Viet-Nam signed the agreements; it was done for them by the French.

It is doubtful whether the State of Viet-Nam would have signed the agreements had it been necessary for it to ratify them. The State of Viet-Nam completely disapproved of the conclusions of the agreement and entered a protest to that effect.

It the State of Viet-Nam protests solemnly: (a) the hasty conclusion of the armistice agreement, contracted only by the high authority of France and the Viet Minh notwithstanding the fact that the French High Command controls the Vietnamese troops only through a delegation of authority by the Chief of State of Viet-Nam, and especially notwithstanding the fact that many clauses of this agreement are of such a nature as gravely to compromise the political future of the Vietnamese people; (b) by the fact that this armistice agreement

⁴⁶ Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, July 20, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 300.

abandons to the Viet Minh territories, many of which are still in the possession of Vietnamese troops and thus essential to the defense of Viet-Nam in opposing a larger expansion of Communism and virtually deprives Viet-Nam of the imprescriptible right to organize its defense otherwise than by the maintenance of a foreign army on its territory; (c) the fact that the French High Command has arrogated to itself without preliminary agreement with the delegation of the State of Viet-Nam the right to fix the date of future elections, notwithstanding that a matter of a clearly political character is concerned.⁴⁷

The Vietnamese had just cause to protest. France did not consult with the delegates from the State of Viet-Nam before making promises to the Viet Minh. The State of Viet-Nam was told to comply with the wishes of the Conference. Division was inevitable unless Viet-Nam went Communist. However, it was the French Decision to withdraw its troops to easily defensible beachheads that forced the State of Viet-Nam to give up the two provinces which it held in the Red River Delta. The underlying protest was due to the fact that France was signing the agreement for the State of Viet-Nam. To the Vietnamese this was a symbol that Viet-Nam was still a colony, despite all the statements about granting independence. In defiance of the fact that the French signed the Geneva Agreements for the State of Viet-Nam, that state reserved "to itself complete freedom of action to guarantee the sacred right of the Vietnamese

⁴⁷Protest by the Vietnamese Delegation Against the Geneva Conference Agreements, July 21, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 316.

people to territorial unity, national independence and freedom."⁴⁸

Another protestor against the Geneva Agreements was the United States, which refused to sign the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference by which participants in the conference agreed to abide by the Agreements. Although it did not approve of the Agreements, the United States did agree to "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them, in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations dealing with the obligation of members to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force; and it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."⁴⁹ The United States did not approve, but would not attempt to upset the Geneva Agreements, although this promise was later violated when the United States decided not to support the holding of general elections to reunite Viet-Nam.

The United States also supported the protest of the State of Viet-Nam. "With respect to the statement made by the representative of the State of Viet-Nam, the United States reiterates its traditional position that peoples

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 315-16.

⁴⁹Declaration by the United States Regarding the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, July 21, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 316.

are entitled to determine their own future and that it will not join in an arrangement which would hinder this."⁵⁰

Both countries protested the division of Viet-Nam and the granting of half the country to the communists.

The United States position at Geneva was further explained by President Eisenhower.

The United States has not been a belligerent in the war. The primary responsibility for the settlement in Indochina rested with those nations which participated in the fighting. Our role at Geneva has been at all times to try to be helpful where desired and to aid France and Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam to obtain a just, and honorable settlement which will take into account the needs of the interested people. Accordingly the United States has not ~~it~~ self been party to or bound by the decisions taken by the Conference, but it is our hope that it will lead to the establishment of peace consistent with the rights and the needs of the countries concerned.⁵¹

The United States had stopped just short of giving military support during the fighting in Viet-Nam, and it refused to give any support to the cease-fire terms. From the beginning of the Conference, it had declared that it was just an observer. Midway in the Conference, the American position was not to support an agreement which "smacks of appeasement."⁵² According to the United States the partitioning of Viet-Nam was appeasement and, therefore, it would

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 317.

⁵¹Statement by the President of the United States on the Results of the Geneva Conference, July 21, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 317.

⁵²U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI, No. 787, Publication 5547 (July 26, 1954), 121.

not support the Agreements. In this view the United States stood alone, its allies fully supporting the Agreements. The strong position of the United States had not prevented its allies from compromising in order to obtain peace. One State Department official expressed that "it would be an understatement to say that we do not like the terms of the cease-fire agreement just concluded."⁵³

The United States policy for Viet-Nam was defeated at Geneva. The United States had wanted to intervene in the fighting, but neither France nor Britain wished to have her do so: France, because it wanted to control affairs within Viet-Nam and Britain, because it saw a further complication of the issue if the United States did intervene. Both countries had to persuade the United States to agree to peace negotiations over Viet-Nam. At Geneva, the United States did not want to see Viet-Nam divided and half given to the Communists, but this is what occurred. American policy toward Viet-Nam did not become successful until after Geneva, when the State of Viet-Nam began to build a new government and economy in the southern half of Viet-Nam.

⁵³U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI, No. 791, Publication 5573 (August 23, 1954), 261.

CHAPTER IV

POST-GENEVA

Creation of a Government in South-Viet-Nam

Ngo Dinh Diem, Premier of the State of Viet-Nam controlling the southern zone faced the difficult task of creating a strong, independent government within Viet-Nam. The government of the State of Viet-Nam had to be strong enough to compete with the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the north. Although Premier Ngo Dinh Diem exercised the real power within the government, Emperor Bao Dai retained the title Chief of State and considerable prestige among the Vietnamese. With extensive financial and political support from the United States, Ngo Dinh Diem hoped to create a strong government by the close of 1955.

The Premier faced three major problems which had to be overcome before attaining a strong government. The government had to institute many reforms, especially in land redistribution in order to compete with Communist reform programs. Also, the Geneva Agreements had created a large refugee problem of the State of Viet-Nam since many Vietnamese took advantage of being able to choose the zone in which to live. Finally, the government had to overcome the dissident power elements within the country before effective control and order could be maintained.

The most immediate problem was that of land reform. The Vietnamese peasants were greatly influenced by Communist propaganda which claimed that land belonged to those who tilled it. In Southern Viet-Nam most of the land had been cleared by French colonial administrators and given to favored

Vietnamese to manage. During the long struggle in Viet-Nam the Communists took over the countryside and gave the land to the peasants. When order was again restored, the peasants did not want to return the land to their former landlords. Ngo Dinh Diem attempted a middle course between the landlords and the peasants. He returned the land titles to the landlords but he instituted reforms correcting their worst abuses.¹

The decree of January 8, 1955, stipulated that the annual land rent must not be lower than fifteen percent and higher than twenty-five percent of the value of the annual crop. Six months from the date of the promulgation of this decree, all oral agreements between tenants and owners must be translated into written agreements according to the promulgated clauses of the decree.

In another decree, the Government stipulated that public or private lands left fallow in the past season must be immediately leased for a period of three years to tenants who have tilled the soil, to the refugees, to war veterans, to the heirs of fighting men and workers who have sacrificed their lives for the Nation.²

These land reforms were worked out by American agricultural experts headed by Wolf Ladejensky.³ The advice was good; the reforms were a major step in solving the worst abuses of landlordism. However, the reforms did not go far enough to satisfy the peasants who believed the

¹Roy Jumper, "The Communist Challenge in South Viet Nam," Far Eastern Survey, XXV, No. 11 (November, 1956), 163.

²Premier Ngo Dinh Diem's New Year Message to the People, January 1, 1955, in Conflict in Indochina and International Repercussions (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 212-13. Hereafter cited as Conflict in Indo-China.

³Brian Crozier, "The Diem Regime in Southern Vietnam", Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 4 (April, 1955), 52.

Communist statements that they owned their land. To the peasants, the reforms of the government were not reforms but a step backward. They could not understand why they must pay rent for land they already owned.

Attempts at land reform were further hindered by a lack of efficient rural administrators. There were not enough civil servants to staff all the offices of the government. Thus control of the central government ended at the district level, leaving the villages to form their own governments. This system made Communist infiltration on the village level very easy.⁴ With many of the villages dominated by the Communists, the government's land reform program was not correctly interpreted or implemented. Ngo Dinh Diem had to extend the actual government administration into the rural areas before he could hope to see his reforms carried out.

The decree requiring fallow land to be leased for cultivation was a vital necessity. There were many refugees from the north who had to be resettled in southern Viet-Nam. By cultivating the fallow land the refugees would be given homesteads and a position in the economy of South Viet-Nam.

There were estimates that from 600,000⁵ to 850,000⁶

⁴Jumper, Far Eastern Survey, XXV, No. 11, 164.

⁵U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXIII, No. 853, Publication 6049 (October 31, 1955), 643.

⁶Hollis W. Barber, ed., United States in World Affairs, 1955, Prepared for the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 111.

refugees from northern Viet-Nam fled to the south by May, 1955. No definite count was attempted because there were too many mixed with the transportation of troops as well as by other means. In contrast to the numbers fleeing to the south, it was estimated that only 3,000 chose to live in northern Viet-Nam from the south.⁷ There were many reasons for the large evacuation. Premier Ngo Dinh Diem chose to attribute the flight from the north to a love of freedom.

...More than half a million people of every walk of life, every religious faith, and every organization determined to choose freedom and departed for the national zone leaving behind the tombs of their ancestors, and the familiar scenes of their gardens to avoid the dictatorial gang.⁸

The significance of this flight to southern Viet-Nam was emphasized to the Western nations by the fact that the Vietnamese were normally a sedentary people. They preferred to endure hardship and suffering rather than leave their villages and homesteads. Thus the government of the State of Viet-Nam felt justified in stressing that the refugees to its section of the country were not seeking to avoid economic hardship but were seeking personal freedom.⁹

This was a noble explanation for the number of refugees;

⁷Ibid.

⁸Premier Ngo Dinh Diem's New Year Message to the People, January, 1955, in Conflict in Indo-China, p. 211.

⁹Speech by the Head of Vietnam's Delegation to the Bandung Conference, April 29, 1955 in Conflict in Indo-China, p. 220.

but other observers felt there were different causes for the number of refugees. It was noted that at least 200,000 of the total were the dependents of Vietnamese soldiers who had been commanded by the French High Command to move to the southern zone with their families. The rest of the refugees were poor peasants from the two Catholic provinces of Phat Diem and Bui Chu located in the southernmost section of the Red River Delta. The village priests in these provinces were the actual local rulers because of the great prestige they had among the people. When the bishops of the two provinces ordered the people to move south as "God had moved south", the peasants followed their village priests.¹⁰

The Viet Minh used all sorts of ruses to prevent the outflow of people from the provinces. The peasants were tortured and warned that the Americans would starve them. Yet the peasants continued to flee, many putting to sea in rafts and small boats in hope of reaching a transport ship of Haiphong.¹¹

Although they distrusted French assistance, the Vietnamese and the French worked together to evacuate the refugees from the south. The French Air Force transported approximately 3400 refugees along with the French Union troops and Expeditionary forces.¹² The numbers wishing to

¹⁰Jumper, Far Eastern Survey, XXV, No. 11, 166.

¹¹Richard P. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1954 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 285.

¹²White House Statement, August 22, 1954, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), II, 2399.

go to the southern zone reached such heights that the United States was asked to contribute transportation facilities for the refugees. The United States sent the Fifth Amphibious Group of the Western Pacific Fleet to assist as well as transport vessels and commercial freighters from the United States Military Sea Transport Service.¹³ It also sent material aid to help resettle the refugees once they reached the southern zone. The material help consisted of 1,350,000 dollars "to meet relief and rehabilitation and other emergency needs," the purchase of lumber, asbestos roofing and siding to build refugee shelters, hand tools, and 11,272 blankets.¹⁴ The United States Foreign Operations Administration announced that it was contributing 2,000 tents which was enough to shelter 40,000 refugees.¹⁵ By the date of the closing of the two zones in May, 1955, the United States had appropriated forty-five million dollars in supplies and aid to help shelter the refugees.¹⁶

The numbers of refugees were so overwhelming, especially along with all the other problems of the government of the State of Viet-Nam, that by March, 1955, only 300,000 had been permanently resettled on homesteads. Of this total,

¹³Ibid., II, 2398-99.

¹⁴U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI, No. 791, Publication 5573 (August 23, 1954), 265.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Barber, United States in World Affairs, 1955, p. 111.

ten percent had been located on undeveloped land in central Viet-Nam, while the remained were settled in the rich delta area to the extreme south of Viet-Nam. The numbers who were not settled remained at large, crowded refugees camps, most of which were located outside of Saigon.¹⁷ The problem of resettlement was a grave one because there was the possibility that many of the refugees would become discouraged and vote for the Viet Minh in the 1956 elections. Communist propaganda was rampant among the refugees.

Besides the difficulty of finding vacant land for the refugees to settle, there was a problem of antipathy between the refugees and the south Vietnamese. The northern Vietnamese had been more strongly influenced by Chinese culture and were of a mixed racial background. Also the northerners were used to a harder climate and they worked harder and had more ambition than the southerners. This gave rise to fears on the part of the south Vietnamese that the northern refugees would soon take over all the land. This was true among the intellectuals who fled to the south. They freely entered government service, while the southerners remained apart from the government still fearful of its being dominated by French interests.¹⁸

Not only did Premier Ngo Dinh Diem have to worry over the refugee problem and reforms for his people; he also had to create a strong central government. There were many

¹⁷Crozier, Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 4, 50.

¹⁸Jumper, Far Eastern Survey, XXV, No. 11, 166-67.

elements in the society which wanted to make bids for power. Premier Ngo Dinh Diem hoped to achieve an independent government with national institutions. The national institutions which he most wanted to control were the army and the government administration. In competition with the government for control of the army and administrator's loyalty were the three Sects within Viet-Nam, the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Binh Xuyen. Each of these Sects had its own large and loyal following and efficient armed force. The government had to obtain enough power and authority to make its will felt above that of the sects.

Viet-Nam did have a National Army but it was small and its loyalty to the central government was not always ensured. In September, 1954, the Premier's own Chief of Staff of the National Army, General Nguyen Van Hinh, attempted to take over the government. The General had a French education and was very capable, but his French background made him suspect as a national leader for the Vietnamese people. The Premier had sensed General Hinh's desire to take control and he attempted to dismiss him. The issue was temporarily resolved by Emperor Bao Dai who called General Hinh to France and there stripped him of his rank. This action rid Ngo Dinh Diem of a dissident element within his army, but it did not stop the General's intrigues to gain control of Viet-Nam.¹⁹

This was the first power struggle that Ngo Dinh Diem

¹⁹Crozler, Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 4, 51.

had to face, and it still did not insure the loyalty of the army to him. Vietnamese soldiers fought for mercenary reasons, not for loyalty to causes. They joined the army to obtain meat and rice for themselves and their families. Not being motivated by loyalties, the soldiers joined whichever side appeared to be the winner or had the greatest financial support. Ultimately the decision of the army was to support Ngo Dinh Diem because he had vast American financial support.²⁰ The Premier's position in regard to the army was strengthened even further when the United States announced a new policy of giving all future aid directly to the government of the State of Viet-Nam rather than channeling it through France as before.²¹ Also, Ambassador General Lawton P. Collins, stated that the Vietnamese army would not receive financial support from the United States unless it was loyal to Premier Ngo Dinh Diem.²² This cemented the loyalty of the army to the Premier and enabled him to cope forcefully with the dissident Sects.

The next crisis for the government occurred in March, 1955. Premier Ngo Dinh Diem had admitted representatives of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai Sects to participate in the national government. He excluded the Binh Xuyen Sect because

²⁰Jumper, Far Eastern Survey, XXV, No. 11, 165.

²¹French-United States Communique on Talks on Indochina, September 29, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 365.

²²Grozier, Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 4, 51.

it was composed of underground figures who controlled all the gambling devices throughout Southeast Asia. In March, the three Sects joined together in a United Front, asserting that their armies should comprise the National Army for the State of Viet-Nam. They also attempted to force Ngo Dinh Diem out of office by calling on Emperor Bao Dai to dismiss him. When the move to oust Ngo Dinh Diem failed, the United Front issued an ultimatum to the government stating that the Premier must reorganize his cabinet to their liking within five days.²³ The Premier replied to the Sects via a radio message on March 24, 1955.

But in a Viet Nam, which has become independent, no matter who is the Chief of the government in power it is imperative that he form into a national army all of the Vietnamese armed forces existing in his territory, directed by a single command and acting as a single unit....

In pursuing this objective which is all the more pressing because we must face communism, I have always hoped for the cooperation of the forces called Sects.²⁴

The Premier ignored the demand to reorganize his government. He did discuss the main issue of the differences between the Sects and the national government. The Sects feared that when they merged their armies into the National Army, all the planned reduction of troops would be taken from the forces of the Sects. This would reduce their power and eliminate them as an effective force. It was the objective of the Premier to reduce the power of the Sects by assimilating

²³Ibid., pp. 52-53.

²⁴Premier Ngo Dinh Diem's Radio Reply to the Sects, March 24, 1955, in Conflict in Indo-China, p. 216.

their armies into the National Army but the Sects hoped to keep their forces intact even within the army. The Premier pledged that all reductions within the army would be applied fairly to all the forces and a reconversion program would be instituted for the discharged.²⁵

The United States urged the Premier to seek a political solution rather than attempt the use of force. However, the Sects did not attempt to take over the government by force. The issue temporarily died out.

Ill-feeling between the Sects and the Premier arose again in April when the Premier asked Emperor Bao Dai to remove the Chief of Police, a member of the Binh Xuyen Sect. The Emperor refused to take action; therefore, Ngo Dinh Diem on his own responsibility appointed Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Le as the new Chief of Police. The action created a break between the Premier and the Emperor and the Emperor attempted to dismiss Ngo Dinh Diem.²⁶ At this point a group of citizens in support of Ngo Dinh Diem formed the Vietnamese People's Revolutionary Council which on April 30 resolved:

- ...to remove Bao Dai, to dissolve the Ngo Dinh Dien Government formed by Bao Dai, and to entrust Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem with forming a national provisional government supported by the people to carry out three assignments:
- 1. To punish the rebels and reestablish order and security;

²⁵Ibid., p. 217.

²⁶Miriam S. Farley, "Vietnam Kaleidoscope," Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 5 (May, 1955), 77.

2. to gain complete independence and request the complete withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Forces from Vietnamese soil;
3. to organize the people's elected National Assembly to return the power to the people.²⁷

Although very sympathetic to the demands of the People's Revolutionary Council, the Premier refused to align himself definitely with the group. Yet, with the council in support, the Premier emphasized to Bao Dai that there could not be a change of government unless it was sanctioned by the people.

The Vietnamese population demonstrated several times what it disliked and what it liked. There is no question about the choice. They solemnly condemned all that was contrary to national independence and freedom. They will decide their own fate through democratic means and principally through elections for which preparation must begin at once.

From now on, politicians in my country will know that they can no longer govern by alliance with reactionary forces of any kind.²⁸ The Vietnamese people no longer accept deceit.

For the remainder of 1955 there was constant friction between the Emperor and the Premier. Ngo Dinh Diem had gained the support of the majority of his people during his struggle to obtain full control for the central government. As long as Bao Dai remained Chief of State and thus the final source of power, there was a source of power outside Viet-Nam to which dissident elements could rally. The ultimate goal of Premier Ngo Dinh Diem was the abdication of Bao Dai. The

²⁷Manifesto of the Revolutionary Council in South Viet Nam, May, 1955, in Conflict in Indo-China, p. 223.

²⁸Premier Ngo Dinh Diem, Speech to the Free World, May 8, 1955, in Conflict in Indo-China, p. 225.

British and French opposed such a step, but the United States eventually persuaded them not to object if the Vietnamese people decided to dismiss Bao Dai as their emperor.²⁹ This paved the way for a decision between Bao Dai or Ngo Dinh Diem as the Chief of State.

The referendum was held October 23, 1955. Ninety percent of the registered voters participated, and Ngo Dinh Diem received ninety-eight percent of the votes cast. Thus a new Republic of Viet-Nam was created with Ngo Dinh Diem as its first President.³⁰ The United States hoped that a democratic form of government would then evolve within Viet-Nam.

The courageous struggle of the Vietnamese to work out their destiny by themselves and to formulate a new sense of national purpose has won the admiration of the United States and the free world. To support President Ngo Dinh Diem and to aid the Vietnamese people in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of a country ravaged by eight ruinous years of civil and international war is consistent with our historic policy of supporting the aspirations of freedom and independence.

In general, the challenge of Asia and our interests there indicate that we seek and support a democratic leadership which is vigorous, hardheaded, and competent to deal swiftly and effectively with domestic problems and with various Communist attempts at subversion or even aggression.³¹

²⁹Parley, Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 5, 78.

³⁰U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Relations, Report of the Special Study Mission to the Middle East, South, and Southeast Asia, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, 1956, House Report No. 2147, p. 114. Cited hereafter as House Committee on Foreign Relations, Special Study Mission, 1956.

³¹Kenneth T. Young Jr., "The Challenge of Asia to United States Policy," Address of August 13, 1956, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXXV, No. 896, Publication 6383 (August 21, 1956), 346.

In seeking the development of a democratic government within Viet-Nam, the United States was going against the recommendation of its own advisors. Study Missions to Viet-Nam in 1953 and 1955 advised that the peoples of the Far East did not understand nor respect the democratic processes. "In the democratic process opposition performs a valuable service. In the Orient the idea of a 'loyal opposition' is neither understood nor respected. It has no constructive function. To be in the opposition is generally regarded not as evidence of political courage but as evidence of weakness."³²

If the United States persisted in forcing President Ngo Dinh Diem to create a democracy, it would be courting failure. The Republic of Viet-Nam could not afford to remain politically weak while attempting to educate its people in the methods and responsibilities of a democracy. Time was against such an experiment since the north Vietnamese were ready at any moment to take advantage of any weakness in the southern half of the country. The Republic of Viet-Nam needed immediate action to reform the government, living conditions and the economy. The Communists to the north were efficient and speedy in carrying out reforms; a democracy would be much slower.

The United States continued to press for the establishment of a democratic regime within Viet-Nam. Senator John F. Kennedy felt that Viet-Nam was the "proving ground

³²House Committee on Foreign Relations, Special Study Mission, 1956, p. 207.

of democracy in Asia."³³ It was assumed that if Viet-Nam succeeded in creating a democratic form of government the other Southeast Asian nations would be willing to follow suit.

In general the United States was impressed with the progress achieved by the Republic of Viet-Nam in creating a strong government. It was felt that the morale of the Vietnamese people was higher; they were more anxious to participate in the government and to carry out reforms. The change was probably due to the attainment of full independence.³⁴ President Eisenhower went warm congratulations to President Ngo Dinh Diem on his achievements.

The admiration with which I have watched the progress of the Republic of Viet-Nam during the past year prompts me to send to you the warmest congratulations of the American people on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Republic and upon the promulgation of the Vietnamese constitution.³⁵

The United States attributed all the achievements of the Vietnamese to the resourcefulness of their President. "In him, his country has found a truly worthy leader whose integrity and devotion to his country's welfare have become generally recognized among his people."³⁶

³³ John F. Kennedy, "America's Stake in Vietnam," A Symposium on America's Stake in Vietnam (New York: American Friends of Vietnam, 1956), p. 10-11. Cited hereafter as Symposium.

³⁴ House Committee on Foreign Relations, Special Study Mission, 1956, p. 207.

³⁵ Letter from President Eisenhower to Ngo Dinh Diem, President of the Republic of Viet-Nam, October 26, 1956, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXXV, No. 907, Publication 6414 (November 12, 1956), 765.

³⁶ Walter S. Robertson, "United States Policy Toward Viet-Nam," Symposium, p. 15.

The United States felt confident that the experiment in helping to create a democratic form of government in Viet-Nam was successful. Ngo Dinh Diem had been able to prevent the rise of a strong opposition from the Sects and had created a National Army. Other projects such as the reform and resettlement of the refugees were moving slowly but they were progressing. The United States felt proud that it had contributed toward making the experiment a success.

The Extent of United States Aid

Much of the success of Viet-Nam could not have been achieved without extensive United States support. It hoped to see the Republic of Viet-Nam develop a strong and constructive policy to counter the Communists to the north. Before this could be fully realized, the Vietnamese people had to change their attitude toward the French. Most Vietnamese were very anti-French, including their President Ngo Dinh Diem. French attempts to retain as much of their interests in Viet-Nam as possible did not help to lessen Vietnamese hostility. This attitude also hindered American advisory and aid programs in Viet-Nam, trying to work with the French as well as the Vietnamese. Many of Viet-Nam's ties with France were gradually being loosened. Viet-Nam had attained political independence, but economic independence came much later. The first step toward economic independence from France occurred in October, 1954, when the United States decided to issue aid directly to the government of the State of Viet-Nam rather than continue sending the aid through France.

We have been exploring ways and means to permit our aid to Viet-Nam to be more effective and to make

a greater contribution to the Welfare and stability of the Government of Viet-Nam. I am, accordingly, instructing the American Ambassador to Viet-Nam to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, how an intelligent program of American aid given directly to your Government can serve to assist Viet-Nam in its present hour of trial, provided that your Government is prepared to give assurances as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied.³⁷

The second step toward economic independence came in December, 1954. France granted Viet-Nam the right to issue its own currency free from ties with the French franc.³⁸ Formerly, the Vietnamese currency had to equal the franc in value.

With American aid coming directly to the government of the State of Viet-Nam and the currency independent of French control, the Vietnamese had gained almost complete economic freedom from France. French interests were gradually being reduced by the greater increase of American investments and the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Forces from Viet-Nam. French economic influence was weakened while the influence of the United States was growing. This gave rise to ill feeling on the part of the French still in Viet-Nam who disliked the change.³⁹

On November 3, 1954, General J. Lawton Collins was

³⁷Letter from President of the United States (Eisenhower) to President of the Council of Ministers of Viet-Nam (Ngo Dinh Diem) on United States Aid to Viet-Nam, October 23, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 366.

³⁸General Monetary and Commercial Convention between France and the State of Vietnam, December 30, 1954, in Conflict in Indo-China, p. 199.

³⁹Crozier, Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 4, 55.

appointed Special United States Ambassador to Viet-Nam. He was to coordinate the United States aid programs and to work closely with the French especially in the training of the Vietnamese troops. His appointment emphasized the reduction of French influence, for France had been training the troops before the arrival of General Collins.⁴⁰ The final split between France and the State of Viet-Nam occurred during 1955 when the Vietnamese gradually lost interest in the French Union and eventually failed to send representatives to its council. By the close of the year, it was evident that Viet-Nam was no longer within the French Union.⁴¹

American aid to Viet-Nam concentrated on two areas, helping to build up the National Army and develop the economy of Viet-Nam. Of the two programs the development of the National Army had the top priority. The aid was administered through the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) which in fiscal year 1955 allocated 234.8 million dollars for military aid and 85.4 million dollars for economic assistance. In fiscal year 1956 military aid consisted of 359.7 million dollars, while economic aid rose to 170.0 million dollars.⁴² From general economic

⁴⁰White House Announcement, November 3, 1954, in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, p. 367.

⁴¹Stebbins, p. 288.

⁴²Frederick Bunting, "ICA in Viet Nam," Symposium, p. 32.

aid for 1956, the refugee resettlement program received 37,000,000 dollars.⁴³

The large appropriations for military expenditures were necessary in order to create a National Army for the State of Viet-Nam. France did not allow Viet-Nam to have a separate national army until the last year of the war in Viet-Nam. Thus the troops had to be completely trained and equipped by American aid. At first the United States felt the National Army should be large enough to resist any possible Communist aggression from the north. When it became apparent that the American government alone would have to finance the army completely, officials decided to reduce the size. Instead a small but highly efficient fighting force was planned for Viet-Nam. There were strong protests from both the French and the Vietnamese, but the decision stood.⁴⁴

The final plans called for a regular force of 150,000 men, supported by mobile civil guard units totaling 45,000 men and local defense units on the village level. All of these units were to be trained and supplied through American assistance.⁴⁵ The units were put into immediate use as Viet Minh guerrilla forces soon began to terrorize the countryside of South Viet-Nam. Later the forces were influential in subduing the rebellious Sects.

⁴³ICA Program in Viet-Nam, in Department of State, Bulletin, XXXV, No. 894, Publication 6379 (August 13, 1956), 272.

⁴⁴Stebbins, p. 289.

⁴⁵Robertson, Symposium, p. 17.

The military allocations also provided for a National Police Academy which gave intensive training to the internal police forces of South Viet-Nam. It was hoped that the police forces would be useful in combatting Communist terrorism.⁴⁶

A National Army was necessary to demonstrate strength to the Communists to the north, but it was also necessary to build a strong economy in South Viet-Nam to show the northerners the advantages of the democratic system. South Viet-Nam was under a great handicap in developing the economy because the division of Viet-Nam put all the industries under the control of the Viet Minh. South Viet-Nam had an agricultural economy and her people had no training as technicians.

The United States planned to provide some of the capital and technical training needed to industrialize the south, but for the first two years of the aid program the funds were spent for immediate needs. The United States felt that the deadline of the 1956 elections prevented any long range plans. The most urgent problems were the sponsoring of the agricultural reforms and the training of Vietnamese administrators to replace vacancies left by the French. Industrialization could begin once the political situation had become stabilized.

The first project of American economic aid was the establishment of a National Institute of Administration to

⁴⁶Bunting, Symposium, p. 33.

train competent and honest government administrators. The Institute was directed by Michigan State University; it provided civil servants for the government as well as an advisory service. Also, public services were established, such as a nurses' training school and training centers for public health specialists. Medical supplies were also provided. American aid helped to improve the educational facilities of the State of Viet-Nam. The University of Viet-Nam was established as well as a National Normal School. The aid program also financed the construction of over three hundred elementary schools and twenty secondary schools.⁴⁷

In the agricultural area, the aid program helped to finance the land reforms of President Ngo Dinh Diem. There were also other concrete steps taken to aid the Vietnamese farmers. American aid provided four thousand work animals, sixteen thousand metric tons of fertilizer, and a small number of farm machines.⁴⁸ American aid furnished farm technicians who were to advise the government in land reform and improvement of farming methods.

In all, the projects sponsored under American auspices were those easily seen by the public and of immediate benefit. The program of aid was heavily criticized for supporting that type of project rather than long term but more lasting projects. Many critics felt that the American aid should have immediately begun planning for the industrialization of Viet-Nam and the redistribution of the land. The program did not

⁴⁷Bunting, Symposium, p. 33.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 34-35.

attempt to build up the basic strengths and resources of Viet-Nam.⁴⁹ Only when Viet-Nam became developed in her basic resources and became industrialized would the general living standards begin to rise. For South Viet-Nam this was especially important because the north was already industrialized and had an early advantage.

A second major criticism of the United States aid program was its ignoring of the need to establish good human relations. The American experts not only planned the projects, but also took over their execution. The Vietnamese became resentful, but it appeared that the Americans did not feel that the Vietnamese were competent to execute the projects.⁵⁰ The United States could not hope to succeed in helping the Vietnamese if it alienated the population. A minor fault of the aid program was that too many projects were planned as against the amount of allocations. This resulted in depriving the more important projects of needed funds. The money was spread too thin, and thus completion of projects was slowed down.⁵¹

Considering the aim of the aid program, which was to develop the political and economic position of Viet-Nam as quickly as possible before the 1956 elections, the faults were minor. However, the United States would have to change the approach of the aid policy after 1956 in the light of the continued division of Viet-Nam. It became apparent as

⁴⁹House Committee on Foreign Relations, Special Study Mission, 1956, p. 205.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 211.

⁵¹Walter H. Judd, "American Policy in Asia," Symposium, p. 81.

early as the middle of 1955 that the elections would not be held due to the United States' and South Viet-Nam's opposition.

The 1956 Elections

The Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference called for elections to be held in July, 1956, to decide under which system of government the Vietnamese people wished to live. Negotiations about the elections were to begin after April, 1955. In June, 1955, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam announced its readiness to begin the negotiations over the elections.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam declares its readiness to hold the consultative conference with the competent representative authorities in South Vietnam⁵² on July 20, 1955, onwards in order to discuss the organization of free general elections throughout the country in July 1956.

.....
The achievement of the unity of their country by means of free general elections within the framework of the Geneva Agreements is the sacred national right of the Vietnamese people. The entire Vietnamese people are firmly resolved to unite closely and to fight determinedly for the realization of this sacred right.⁵²

The Government of the State of Viet-Nam was not as anxious to begin preparing for the elections. It saw the Communist move as a propaganda effort in order to take credit for desiring national unity. The main objections of the South Vietnamese to the elections was that they would not be truly free in the northern zone.

⁵²Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam warns that Agreement on Elections must be Observed, June 6, 1955, in Conflict in Indo-China, pp. 208-209.

We did not sign the Geneva Agreement. We are not bound in any way by these agreements, signed against the will of the Vietnamese people. Our policy is a policy of peace, but nothing will lead us astray from our goal: the unity of our country-- a unity in freedom and not in slavery.

Serving the cause of our nation more than ever, we will struggle for the reunification of our homeland. We do not reject the principle of free elections as peaceful and democratic means to achieve that unity. Although elections constitute one of the bases of true democracy, they will be meaningful only on the condition that they are absolutely free.⁵³

South Viet-Nam's fear that the elections would not be free was based upon the experience with Viet Minh use of thought control, distortion of facts as well as coercion and intimidation among the South Vietnamese peasants. On the surface the elections would appear to be free, but the Viet Minh would have previously intimidated the people into voting for the Viet Minh regime. Also, the northern zone was more populous, which would automatically give the election to the Viet Minh.⁵⁴

The State of Viet-Nam was fully supported in the decision not to hold the elections by the United States.

The United States believes, broadly speaking, in the unification of countries which have a historic unity, where the people are akin. We also believe that, if there are conditions of really free elections, there is no serious risk that the Communists would win.

The Communists have never yet won any free elections. I don't think they ever will. Therefore, we are not at all afraid of elections, provided they are held under conditions of genuine freedom which

⁵³Premier Ngo Dinh Diem Statement on Policies Regarding Country-Wide Elections, July 16, 1955, in Conflict in Indo-China, p. 226.

⁵⁴U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXXIII, No. 853, Publication 6049 (October 31, 1955), 693.

the Geneva armistice agreement calls for. If those conditions can be provided we would be in favor of elections, because we believe that they would bring about the unification of the country under free governmental auspices.⁵⁵

The United States was confident that elections which were held under conditions of complete freedom would result in a pro-Western decision. However, it doubted that conditions of complete freedom could be obtained when one of the parties concerned was a Communist state.

Both Britain and France opposed the American position. They felt that the Geneva Agreement had achieved peace for Southeast Asia; therefore, the terms should be carried out to the letter. Feeling was so strong on both sides that Britain and France would not go to the assistance of the United States should hostilities reoccur in Viet-Nam over the failure to hold the elections. The United States would have to defend South Viet-Nam alone.⁵⁶

In 1954 the United States had agreed that all international agreements must be carried out to the fullest. "The foundation for any relaxation of international tensions is a scrupulous observance of international agreements."⁵⁷ A year later, it was most anxious to violate the Geneva Agreements by not holding the free general elections for the reunification of Viet-Nam.

⁵⁵ Statement by the Secretary of State at a News Conference, June 28, 1955, in American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, II, 2404.

⁵⁶ Crozier, Far Eastern Survey, XXIV, No. 4, 56.

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, XXX, No. 775, Publication 5452 (May 3, 1954), 667.

Both Britain and the Soviet Union as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference attempted throughout 1955 and 1956 to persuade the United States that the elections must be held. However, the United States remained firm in its position and refused to agree to the elections. July, 1956, the date of the elections, passed without incident; hostilities were not renewed because of the violation of the Geneva Agreements. Viet-Nam would remain permanently divided until both sides agreed to the elections or attempted to conquer the other zone.

The United States had been influential in helping the State of Viet-Nam build up a strong government and correct some of its worst economic and social problems. The United States did not wish to see all this work lost. When it became apparent that the elections would not be held, the United States began concentrating its policy on the further build-up of the State of Viet-Nam. United States aid to Viet-Nam previous to 1956 had been only a beginning.

CONCLUSION

Between 1954 and 1956 United States policy toward Viet-Nam consisted of two phases. The first ended in failure at the Geneva conference, while the second, extending from the Geneva Conference through 1956 was fairly successful.

The first phase, marked by a militaristic attitude, failed for two basic reasons. The policy makers waited too long in formulating their position and events took the initiative away from them. Also they failed to obtain Congressional support for their policies. The failure to take decisive action was evidenced by the complete lack of an American policy toward Viet-Nam between 1945-and 1950. Even after 1950 the United States had only a token interest in the area, real interest not beginning until 1953. The total lack of a policy between 1945 and 1950 was due to American indecisiveness about which side to take in the struggle for independence between France colonial powers an ally of the United States, and Viet-Nam which was clamoring for independence. Viet-Nam was one of the first of the new Asian nations striving to gain independence. Hoping to keep good relations with both its allies and the new Asian states, the United States chose to remain apart from the independence issue as long as it could.

Events forced a change in American policy; the United States had to assume a definite policy in regard to Viet-Nam. The most important event forcing the change was the fall of China to the Communists in 1949. With the Communists controlling China, it was much easier for the Viet Minh to

obtain supplies and reinforcements. A second event forcing the United States to formulate a policy was Communist powers recognition of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam powers as the only legal government in Viet-Nam. Completely caught off guard, the United States rushed to back French policy in Viet-Nam and recognized the French-sponsored State of Viet-Nam as the only legal government. It also began sending military aid to Viet-Nam in order to strengthen the resistance to the Communists. Although forced to take a definite position regarding Viet-Nam, the United States still did not show an active interest in the area until late 1953 when it began calling for intervention either alone or in concert with a group of the Western nations.

The plan to intervene in Viet-Nam was doomed to failure because it was based upon false information regarding the French military position and because it did not have support from Congress, the American public and press, or its allies. Congress and the press took issue with the Administration over the possibility of United States intervention as in Korea, without the consent of Congress. Frequently the Administration was forced to state that it would not intervene in Viet-Nam without prior consent of Congress. Yet even with assurances that it would not be bypassed, Congress was quick to note any incidents which might lead the United States unwittingly into intervention. This was the basis of the issue over the technicians which the United States sent to Viet-Nam to train air craft crews in the repair of American planes. Congress feared that these men would accidentally get involved in the fighting, and the United States

would be forced to intervene. But not only was the policy of intervention unpopular at home; it was disliked abroad also. Britain stated that it preferred not to get involved in the war, and France openly stated that it did not wish the United States to intervene in its affairs. However, financial aid would be appreciated by France.

France preferred not to have American troops in Viet-Nam because it had deceived the United States about the military strength of the French Union troops. France had convinced the United States that it was on the verge of winning the war, while it actually was getting weaker militarily. With hopes of winning the war, the United States could not understand the anxiousness of France to negotiate. It was totally unprepared for General Ely's report on the desperate military situation in Viet-Nam. The United States discovered that it had waited to formulate its policy of intervention, until intervention was useless. American policy in its first phase was unrealistic. It was not founded upon solid facts about the situation, and it did not have adequate support.

The Geneva Conference further pointed out the weakness of the American policy. The United States took a strong but hopeless stand at Geneva that Viet-Nam must remain unified. When it became apparent that Viet-Nam must be divided, the United States almost left the conference. Although persuaded to return to the negotiations, it refused to sign the Final Declaration which would have obligated it to abide by the Geneva Agreements.

The experience at Geneva taught the United States that

a more constructive policy was necessary in order to prevent Communist infiltration of all Southeast Asia. The new policy was centered around the idea of extending vast amounts of military and economic aid to Southeast Asia and especially Viet-Nam. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was formed to provide a collective defense for the area including neutral Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia. Direct aid was extended to the Republic of Viet-Nam to help that state develop firm control over its section of Viet-Nam. A vast amount of economic aid, military supplies, and training personnel was sent to the area in order to strengthen it. The aid funds provided for the training of capable administrators for the government and the establishment of public services for the people. They also backed President Ngo Dinh Diem's agricultural reforms as well as providing specific agricultural supplies such as tools and fertilizer. Economic penetration was so complete that French interests were frozen out in the course of two years.

The intensity of United States' efforts at creating a strong state in South Viet-Nam was due to the provision in the Geneva Agreements calling for general elections in Viet-Nam in 1956. American aid was spent in order to show the Vietnamese all the benefits which a free democratic system could give them. If the Republic of Viet-Nam advanced both politically and economically, then the citizens in North Viet-Nam would observe the progress and vote for the democratic system of government. American policy makers were criticized for striving to attain immediate goals rather than

long term achievements such as a basic strengthening of the economy of South Viet-Nam. The criticism was justified but it was felt that the 1956 elections were of such importance that all efforts must be concentrated upon winning them. A long range aid program could be established later.

Although originally a supporter of the elections, in the middle of 1956 the United States decided that the elections should not be held because they would not be genuinely free in the north. Communist intimidation practices would make the elections false. Failure to hold the elections would make the division of Viet-Nam permanent, but American policy makers felt this was better than risking the future of South Viet-Nam in rigged elections. Consequently the elections were not held, because of the strong position by the United States. United States policy was successful.

Just as the earlier phase of American policy had failed because of a lack of support from Congress and the press, so the second phase succeeded because it had that support. The United States was able to defy its allies in the issue over the elections in Viet-Nam because it had the support of its own Congress and people. Rather than waiting until too late, the United States had begun immediately after its failure at Geneva to build up the Republic of Viet-Nam so that it could successfully compete in the 1956 elections should they be held. Since this study does not go beyond the year 1956, no definite statement may be made about the continued success of American policy toward Viet-Nam. However, it may be ventured that United States policy is more likely to achieve success as long as the interest in Viet-Nam is sustained.

APPENDIX

FINAL DECLARATION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON THE PROBLEM OF RESTORING PEACE IN INDOCHINA, JULY 21, 1954¹

1. The Conference takes note of the agreements ending hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam and organizing international control and the supervision of the execution of the provisions of these agreements.

2. The Conference expresses satisfaction at the ending of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam; the Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreements on the cessation of hostilities will permit Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam henceforth to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations.

3. The Conference takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and of Laos of their intention to adopt measures permitting all citizens to take their place in the national community, in particular by participating in the next general elections, which, in conformity with the constitution of each of these countries, shall take place in the course of the year 1955, by secret ballot and in conditions of respect for fundamental freedoms.

4. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam pro-

¹Peter V. Curl ed., Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, Prepared for the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), pp. 311-314.

hibiting the introduction into Viet Nam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions. The Conference also takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and Laos of their resolution not to request foreign aid, whether in war material, in personnel or in instructors except for the purpose of the effective defense of their territory and, in the case of Laos, to the extent defined by the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Laos.

5. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam to the effect that no military base under the control of a foreign State may be established in the regrouping zones of the two parties, the latter having the obligation to see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military alliance and shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy. The Conference also takes note of the declarations of the Governments of Cambodia and Laos to the effect that they will not join in any agreement with other States if this agreement includes the obligation to participate in a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations or, in the case of Laos, with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations or, in the case of Laos, with the principles of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos, or so long as their security is not threatened, the obligation to establish bases on Cambodian or Laotian territory for the military forces of foreign Powers.

6. The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Viet Nam.

7. The Conference declares that, so far as Viet Nam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20, 1955, onwards.

8. The provisions of the agreements on the cessation of hostilities intended to ensure the protection of individuals and of property must be most strictly applied and must,

in particular, allow everyone in Viet Nam to decide freely in which zone he wishes to live.

9. The competent representative authorities of the Northern and Southern zones of Viet Nam, as well as the authorities of Laos and Cambodia, must not permit any individual or collective reprisals against persons who have collaborated in any way with one of the parties during the war, or against members of such persons' families.

10. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the Government of the French Republic to the effect that it is ready to withdraw its troops from the territory of Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, at the request of the Governments concerned and within periods which shall be fixed by agreement between the parties except in the cases where, by agreement between the two parties, a certain number of French troops shall remain at specified points and for a specified time.

11. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that for the settlement of all the problems connected with the re-establishment and consolidation of peace in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, the French Government will proceed from the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam.

12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned States, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs.

13. The members of the Conference agree to consult one another on any question which may be referred to them by the International Supervisory Commission, in order to study such measures as may prove necessary to ensure that the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam are respected.

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