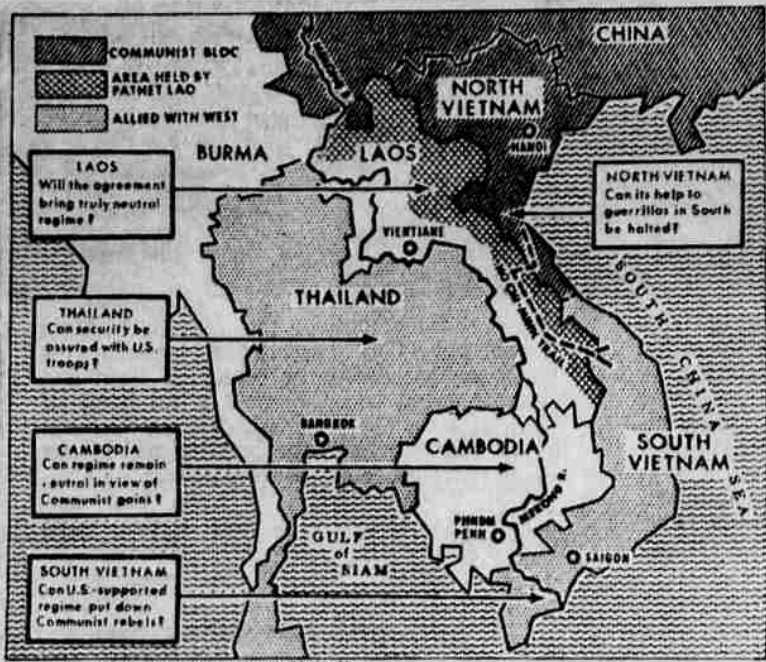


Southeast Asia Subject of Decisions Groups



SHOWS SOUTHEAST ASIA—This United Communist, neutralist and pro-western. Press International newspaper shows Southeast Asia and the three political entities—

Effectiveness of U.S. Aid to South Vietnam Raises Question

(Editor's note: The sixth topic of discussion in the Great Decisions program this year concerns Laos and Vietnam, and whether Southeast Asia is in danger. The following dispatch was provided by the Foreign Association, New York, which sponsors the program.)

When a bipartisan Senate group headed by Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) threw doubt recently on the effectiveness of the \$400 million a year U.S. commitment to South Vietnam, it raised a question that is likely to be a hot issue in the 1964 presidential campaign.

As the Mansfield group saw it, the U.S. has little to show for the \$2.1 billion in economic and military aid it has pumped into the beleaguered Southeast Asian republic since 1955. Mansfield noted that South Vietnam still has "substantially the same difficulties" it had in 1955, "if indeed they have not been compounded."

In addition to financial aid, the U.S. has stationed 12,000 noncombat special forces in South Vietnam to backstop the country's defense. U.S. troops are assigned to "advise, observe, support and assist" the 205,000-man regular army. Though theoretically noncombatants, they may fire only when fired upon — one-third of the troops are regularly exposed to the shooting war. More than 50 have been killed.

Casualty figures will mount in coming months if the U.S., as it has pledged, stays in the war until the Communist defeat is assured. How long that will be no one knows for certain — but officials, both U.S. and Vietnamese, guess 10 years, possibly longer.

Protracted Conflict

This pessimistic estimate is based on the recognition that in guerrilla warfare it takes more than just so many rounds of ammunition and so many men to win. Political and psychological factors are important too. The rebels have proved adept at all three.

The 10,000 pro-Communist Vietcong guerrillas, supported by 10,000 - 15,000 North Vietnamese troops and supplied with Soviet, Czech and Chinese arms, have used not only main force but political

persuasion to gain control over half of South Vietnam's 16,000 widely scattered hamlets. They have indoctrinated the peasants and then recruited them as couriers, spies and part-time fighters.

Because the guerrillas can move in small bands and endure indescribable physical hardships, they place the government's regular troops at a severe disadvantage.

In numbers and supplies the government forces have the logistic edge. A 72,000-man regional civil guard and an 80,000-man self-defense corps — both effective local weapons against the rebels — supplement the regular army. U.S. arms and 150 U.S. helicopters have greatly increased the striking power and mobility of these forces. Where the government is weakest is in its ability to mobilize popular support.

No Running Contest

Ngo Dinh Diem, South Vietnam's 62-year-old bachelor president, is not running a popularity contest — or a democracy. He and the few people whom he trusts — mostly members of his family — run the country by decree. There is no freedom of assembly, speech or press. Political opponents are either jailed or exiled. "Freedom in an undeveloped society," Diem's brother has said, "is something that can be achieved only through militancy and vigilance."

Vigilance, Diem has found, is difficult in a country with the rugged terrain of South Vietnam — impenetrable jungle, mountain and swamp. Defending isolated villages against Communist infiltration in the past has been an almost impossible task. A village liberated by day would be back in Communist hands by night.

To protect the villages and cut the guerrillas off from their major source of rice and recruits, Diem two years ago launched "Operation Sunrise" — a program which calls for the construction of 8,000 strategic hamlets. Trenches, mud walls, barbed wire and other bamboo stakes surround the hamlets and the inhabitants are armed for self-defense.

At U.S. urging and with U.S. help, Diem is supplying the hamlets with public health and education teams and permitting the local population a degree of independence they have not known before. Such reforms, U.S. officials believe, are as important in winning the war as military victories.

Guarded U. S. Optimism

The success to date of the experimental strategic hamlet program is one reason why U.S. observers view the future with "guarded optimism." They are also encouraged by statistics: the increased rate of guerrilla defections, the ratio of casualties which now favors the government 5 to 3, and the higher proportion of guerrilla weapons captured to those lost by government troops.

Despite the statistics, the future of the war is still very much in doubt. The battle fought at Ap Bac last Jan. 2 was the bloodiest single battle of the war. It took three American lives, downed five out of 15 U.S. helicopters and inflicted heavy casualties on the Vietnamese troops — despite their 10 to 1 superiority.

U.S. officers in the field complained afterward that their advice had not been heeded, that the Vietnamese commanders lacked decisiveness and leadership.

If the U.S. abandons its advisory role and turns combatant, as some people believe it should, it runs the risk of full-scale armed intervention by North Vietnam, possibly Red China. If it continues to advise without any control over military planning and execution, it may invite more Ap Bacs.

Two other alternatives are for the U.S. to pull out of South Vietnam and Southeast Asia, which the Mansfield report warns "would open the region to upheaval and chaos" or push for a negotiated settlement along the lines of the Laos truce.

Deterioration in Laos

The Laos truce, signed in Geneva last July, is an uneasy one. The right wing-neutralist-Communist coalition, headed by neutralist Premier Souvanna Phouma, is an ineffectual three-headed monster. It has been unable to accomplish any of the three tasks it set out to do eight months ago: integrate the rival military forces, merge the independent civil administrations, hold general elections. In fact the situation has deteriorated.

The pro-Communist Pathet Lao troops stationed in the North are reportedly trying to starve out the 12,800 neutralist troops in order to force them to join up or give up and clear the way for a take-over of central Laos.

There have been two major violations of the truce: foreign troops — some 2,000 of the 10,000 Communist North Vietnamese striking force — were to have withdrawn from the country by midnight, Oct. 6. They are still around, and no attempt has been made to force them out. Furthermore, they have been reinforced by Red Chinese, ostensibly detailed as armed "guards" to protect work gangs building roads between China and Laos.

The truce in Laos, many observers believe, is an object lesson for those who propose a negotiated settlement in South Vietnam. What are the alternatives? Should the U.S. be prepared to intervene directly? Should be prepared to pull out? These questions are likely to figure large in the upcoming presidential campaign.

Communist Guerrillas Practice Eluding Detection If Possible

(Editor's Note: The following dispatch is a team report prepared by United Press International correspondents Arthur J. Domm and Hong Kong, Neil Sheehan of Saigon and Ray F. Herndon of Vientiane.)

By United Press International

Driving along the roads of Indo-China at night, one used to round a bend and suddenly see glowing in the darkness ahead the bright eyes of a tiger.

On seeing the approaching car, the cunning beast usually gave a quick bound and disappeared into the jungle foliage overhanging the roadside. Occasionally, however, hypnotized by the glare of the headlights, the tiger would remain transfixed to one spot and he would then become easy prey for a hunter's gun.

The Communist guerrillas of Ho Chi Minh's Lao Dong party, like tigers, make a practice of eluding detection whenever possible. But sometimes, in their 16-year history of continuous jungle warfare in southeast Asia, they have allowed themselves to become dazzled by some action of their enemy.

Unable to Dislodge

For instance, after months of tedious effort, they have been unable to dislodge the sturdy Meo tribesmen from fortified positions deep within Red-held territory in northern Laos. And in South Vietnam, guerrillas have in recent months begun attacking the so-called strategic hamlets in which the Saigon government is hoping to isolate the war-weary peasants from the insurgents.

In almost all cases the guerrillas have been unsuccessful in their attempts to gain the food and intelligence which these hamlets contain. Often they have come away badly mauled.

Strange Sort of Battle

This is why the Communists prefer a mobile war to a static one — a war which has no visible front and in which an attacking force can melt away into the countryside in comparative safety.

To most Americans, the warfare being waged in Southeast Asia today is a strange sort of battle. It takes getting used to. The rapidly stepped-up American commitment in South Vietnam is now a little more than one year old, and the Geneva-guaranteed coalition government in Laos is



MOVE ACROSS PADDY — Combat-armed Viet Cong guerrillas in a recent picture taken after being dropped into the marches during an offensive against Communist land from U.S. flown helicopters. (UPI)

just a little more than six months old. Deeper American involvement in South Vietnam has produced testimonials from visitors to Saigon of the proficiency, daring and tenacity of the Viet Cong guerrillas facing President Ngo Dinh Diem's government.

American officials engaged in advising and training the government troops do not attempt to gauge how long the war will go on, but are officially optimistic about eventual success.

Will Take Time

Official view in South Vietnam is that it will certainly take time to break the hold of the Communist-dominated Viet Cong on the peasants, but repeated military victories will accomplish this in the end.

The North Vietnamese government view of the position is entirely different. The North Vietnamese says they are fighting a war to reunify their country, not to defend one-half of it. Moreover, as long ago as 1951, the platform of the Lao Dong party proclaimed the interrelationship of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia:

"The people of Viet Nam must unite closely with the peoples of Laos and Cambodia and give them every assistance in the common struggle against imperialist aggression, for the complete liberation of Indo-China and the defense of world peace."

Basically, the view expressed

by the North Vietnamese Communist leaders in Hanoi is that:

—They are riding the wave of nationalist sentiment in Indo-China.

—The forces which rid the land of French rule almost a decade ago will also rid the land of the Americans and their allies.

—In Laos a significant milestone in this direction has been achieved with the formation of a coalition government.

Not Nationalist Figure

—South Viet Nam President Diem is not a nationalist figure to match North Viet Nam's bearded "Uncle Ho" and, therefore, the more U.S. aid Diem receives, the more his people picture him as an American puppet; and, conversely, the more independence he shows, the more the Americans will be tempted to override his bureaucratic apparatus in order to achieve military results.

The North Vietnamese are convinced that the war in South Viet Nam will last as long as the American Congress is willing to finance it year after year.

If the Communists feel they

can bide their time in South Viet Nam without fear of having the war spread to the industrial heartland of North Viet Nam, they have been actively consolidating themselves in Laos.

Refused Permission

Thanks to North Vietnamese help, the Pathet Lao to this day have refused permission even to Prince Souvanna Phouma to visit the Laotian town of Sam Neua. The shifting Communist guerrilla organization in South Viet Nam, on the other hand, has not yet been able to afford the luxury of a base area within the country which would be completely secure from attack.

According to American intelligence sources, the Plain of Jars shows this pattern of zonal control in Laos. The neutralist forces are dominating the plain. At strategically located roadblocks along the main channels of communication, the Pathet Lao have deployed their own units, which are theoretically allied with the neutralist forces. Then, in a wide circle stretching for hundreds of miles, staunchly anti-Communist Meo tribesmen hold fortified positions menacing the Pathet Lao, completing the jigsaw puzzle-like pattern.

The training of the Meos by American special forces team came too late to save Laos from Communist encroachment, but now a serious effort has been initiated in South Viet Nam to organize the mountain tribes, who occupy a similar position there, racially related to those across the Laotian border and having equally little contact with the lowland peasants.

Purpose of Effort

The purpose of this effort, being carried on by small detachments of U.S. special forces army advisers, is to create a "human wall" along South Viet Nam's long exposed border. The "wall" is to consist of jungle trails like the backs of their hands, and will observe and report movement of Viet Cong infiltrating southward to the Mekong Delta.

The North Vietnamese had reason to be pleased with the 1962 Geneva settlement on Laos. It obviously left their armed forces, just over a border across which they had constructed roads and bridges, in a better position than those of the United States.

For the West, the Laos settlement was purchased at a price. While the North Vietnamese were able to regard their own forces as forging ahead on a unified front in Indochina, the United States appeared to be launched on a schizophrenic policy which left many of its allies bewildered: neutralism on an ever greater scale in South Viet Nam.

Serve as Corridors

Militarily speaking, if one accepts the fact that the territories of neutralist nations can serve as corridors of infiltration for Communist cadres, neutralism in South Viet Nam and anti-Communism in Laos might have made more sense, because it would have left the free world with fewer miles of frontier to protect.

Military spokesmen have maintained that South Viet Nam is a proving ground for techniques to counter Communist insurgency. This may be a necessary thing, since such techniques failed to emerge

a decade ago from the case history of the collapse of the Chiang Kai-shek regime on the mainland of China.

Looking ahead, however, some American observers are wondering if South Viet Nam is not going to prove once again the old theory that no amount of military assistance is able to prevent an unpopular government from being undermined by determined Communists.

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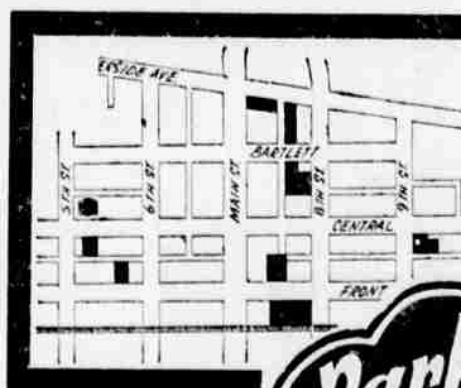
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Crater Lions Set 'Fun Fair' Here

The Crater Lions club will sponsor a major event again this year in conjunction with the annual Pear Blossom festival, Gene Barlow, publicity chairman for the club, has announced.

The spring project will be "A Gigantic Fun Fair," according to Barlow. Dates are April 19, 20 and 21. The fair will be held at the Medford Armory.

Co-chairmen Ted Gerow and Ab Gressett will coordinate plans for a square dance jamboree, art exhibits, sporting events, fashion shows, hobby and home exhibits and continuous stage entertainment.

Contests and other projects are tentatively scheduled. Anyone interested in exhibiting at the Crater Lions "Fun Fair" is asked to contact the exhibit chairman, Gene Franklin, at 772-6278, Barlow said.