

representatives in order to head off a more demagogic Soviet proposal. Our delegation even had the concurrence of the State Department in Washington in its desire to vote for the resolution. But the British were opposed, and Harold Macmillan called Eisenhower by transatlantic telephone to request American abstention. When an instruction to abstain arrived from the White House, / James J. Wadsworth, then our ambassador to the UN, tried to reach Eisenhower to argue the case. Eisenhower declined to accept his call. Wadsworth loyally defended the American abstention in the General Assembly; but, when the resolution passed by 89-0, eight other nations joining the United States in abstaining, an American Negro delegate actually stood up and led the applause. Senator Wayne Morse, another delegate, later condemned the United States decision and declared that "on every major issue of colonialism at the 15th General Assembly, our voting record shows that we rejected our own history, and allowed the Communist bloc to champion the cause of those millions of people who are trying to gain independence."

A 1000 DAYS

KENNEDY - Beliefs

p.508 "The 'magic power' on our side," he said in 1959 to James MacGregor Burns, "is the desire of every person to be free, of every nation to be independent. . . . It is because I believe our system is more in keeping with the fundamentals of human nature that I believe we are ultimately going to be successful."

p.508 Even that most irascible of neutralists, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, later remarked ~~how~~ how the news "was welcomed in Cambodia, where nerves had become somewhat frayed by the obvious determination of the outgoing government to ignore the powerful forces making for change . . . a tendency sometimes to be found among older men, who have failed to keep abreast of the times." This was typical of the sense of relief, curiosity and hope Kennedy's accession to office stirred in neutral capitals.

p.512 For a moment the Bay of Pigs compromised the new American role, - but, curiously, only for a moment - partly because it was over so quickly that impressions did not have time to crystallize, and partly because, as Sihanouk said later, hopes were actually "increased by the President's statesmanlike handling of the crisis." Kennedy's "refusal to involve American armed forces directly in an attack on a neighboring country," Sihanouk later said, "despite a great public outcry by reactionary elements urging this course of action, showed him to be a man of rectitude and courage." J. K. Galbraith, our new ambassador to New Delhi, reported the same reaction from India.

pp.512/3

p.513 The Laos talks had started in Geneva following the cease-fire of early May 1961. The conference opened in a contentious atmosphere. The Russians insisted that the Pathet Lao be seated on a basis of equality with the representatives of Prince Souvanna Phouma, the neutralist, and General Phoumi, the protégé of the Eisenhower administration, and the British were ready to go along. But the Americans objected at first, and everything seemed blocked. / When Rusk, with Kennedy's approval, finally consented to seating the Pathet Lao, the right-wing delegates walked out. Eventually the three Laotian factions met in Laos and agreed on triple representation.

.....
The Geneva meeting recessed while Kennedy and Khrushchev met in Vienna. Laos was, of course, the sole beneficiary of their conversations, and the talks resumed in June, spurred on by the Kennedy-Khrushchev commitment to "a neutral and independent Laos under a government chosen by the Laotians themselves." ...

p.514 In July, for example, the Department actually reproved Galbraith in New Delhi for suggesting to Nehru that the United States was not trying to / collect new military allies in Southeast Asia. The.... He added that military alliances with inefficient and unpopular governments involved grave dangers, especially that of converting legitimate anti-government sentiment into anti-American and pro-Soviet sentiment.

.....
In a similar spirit of devotion to the past, the Department refused to let Harriman talk even informally with the Chinese delegates at the Geneva conference. At the end of July Galbraith wrote me from Geneva, where he had made a brief trip to bring himself abreast of the negotiations. The argument against contact with the Chinese Communists, Galbraith said, is "that if Sarit, Diem and Chiang Kai-shek were to hear, these noble men would think they were being undermined. ...

p.515
The problem remained of establishing a government of national union. Harriman's belief that Souvanna was the only possible head of a coalition displeased the diehards in Washington. The deputy chief of the Far Eastern Bureau snapped, after reading one Harriman telegram, "Well, I suppose the next one will be signed Pushkin." As late as November, when Harriman was trying to organize the coalition, some of our people actually urged Phoumi to hold out for both key ministries of defense and interior. This only reinforced Phoumi's stubbornness. In December ~~xxxxxxx~~ negotiations broke down. Though the Geneva conference persuaded the Laotians to resume talks in January 1962, and Harriman finally got the State Department to say publicly that defense and interior should go to Souvanna, Phoumi continued his resistance.

p.516 In February 1962 Averell got Washington to suspend the monthly grant of \$3 million which enabled the Phoumi regime to meet its military and civilian payrolls, and in March he went to Laos to tell Phoumi personally that he must accept the Souvanna solution. Speaking with brutal frankness, Harriman informed / Phoumi that he could not expect American troops to come to Laos and die for him and that the only alternative to a neutral Laos was a communist victory. Phoumi was still unyielding until April, when the Thai government, which had hitherto backed him, accepted the Harriman logic and urged him to join a government under Souvanna.

(Note: Here is an example of a reputable, a world-famous historian and presidential advisor, displaying his intellectual integrity and devotion to truth and fact.)

No sooner had Phoumi declared a readiness to negotiate than the Pathet Lao broke the cease-fire in a major way. On May 6, with North Vietnamese support, they seized the town of Nam Tha, where Phoumi had imprudently deployed a substantial force. The engagement was, as usual, almost bloodless. The Royal Laotian Army fled, and the communists appeared to be starting a drive toward the Thia border. This flagrant violation of the cease-fire brought a prompt reaction in Washington. Harriman now proposed that a contingent of Marines be sent to Thailand. Kennedy was at first reluctant, fearing that once the Marines were installed in Thailand it would be difficult to find an occasion to withdraw them, but decided to go ahead. The commitment of limited force on May 15 had an immediate effect. The Pathet Lao came to a halt, and negotiations started up again.

(Note: Clearly, in Mr. Schlesinger's history, there was no provocation for this "flagrant violation of the cease-fire" and it was, naturally, by the side he didn't like. But others, without Mr. Schlesinger's political complications, have also (and even earlier) written this history. The following two paragraphs are from "The Invisible Government", Bantam edition, p.163.)

That spring Phoumi began a large-scale reinforcement of Nam Tha, an outpost deep in Pathet Lao territory, twenty miles from the Chinese border. Ambassador Brown warned him personally that the reinforcement was provocative and that the royal troops were so badly deployed that they would be an easy mark for the Pathet Lao. In May, Brown's admonition proved accurate. The Communists retaliated against the build-up, smashed into Nam Tha and sent Phoumi's troops in wild retreat. Two of his front-line generals commandeered the only two jeeps in the area and fled into Thailand.

The Nam Tha rout finally convinced Phoumi that he could not go it alone; and the Pathet Lao, verging on a complete takeover, halted when President Kennedy ordered 5,000 U.S. troops to take up positions in Thailand near the Laos border on May 15.

According to Mr. Schlesinger, General Phoumi was "the protege of the Eisenhower administration" (p.512), indicating he was the protege of no one with the end of that administration, ~~or~~ under the Kennedy administration. But, according to "The Invisible Government" (157-65), Phoumi was "CIA-backed", continuing under Kennedy, and further, "Kennedy promised Phoumi substantial new support if his troops would show some determination to fight." (162)

The "contingent of Marines", as noted, 5,000, and Kennedy's fear of ever getting them out again does not mean these were the only U.S. forces in Thailand, for that bastion of freedom was headquarters of Mr. Dulles' SEATO organization, under a military dictator, Sarit Thanarat, whose personal corruption was spectacular, even for the Orient, and it was a U.S. base. Mr. Schlesinger neglected to note that this "contingent" was a reinforcement versus 1800 Pathet Laos.

He also "forgot" that the Thai dictator "was a close friend of Phoumi" and ~~was~~ dependent upon the US for diplomatic, financial and military support. At Phoumi's request Thanarat imposed a blockade of oil and rice calculated to depose Souvanna Phouma, who then warned the western ambassadors he was at the end of his rope.

The US Ambassador then demanded Souvanna Phouma abandon his neutrality, whereupon, after a final and equally unsuccessful appeal to the US, he "turned to the Russians" who "without delay started an airlift" which the USSR Deputy Foreign Minister Pushkin "told Harriman at the Laotian talk in Geneva in 1961 (exactly the same conference Schlesinger has been detailing) "had been organized and executed on the highest priority of any peacetime operation since the Russian revolution." (pp.160-1)

Mr. Schlesinger's is a highly selective history, probably not typical of Harvard.

In Washington Harriman called in the Laotian Ambassador and said that, if the coalition were not immediately completed, it would be the end of Phoumi. When this word reached Vientiane, Phoumi, whose power had vanished with his army, capitulated. On June 12 a coalition government was formed with Sourvanna as prime minister and Phoumi and Prince Souphanouvong of the Pathet Lao as vice premiers.

The trouble was not yet over. For a moment South Vietnam threatened to walk out of the Geneva conference. When Michael Forrestal, who covered Southeast Asia for the Bundy staff, reported this from Geneva, the President sent a strong letter to Diem saying that this was a decision involving American lives, it was the best possible solution and it would be in the interests of South Vietnam. On July 23 the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos was finally ratified in Geneva. ...

(Note: Again Mr. Schlesinger's memory or notes fail him, for he has failed to note whose "man" Nhu Diem, who tried to wreck the accord, was. He was Washington's, from the time Mr. Dulles moved him from the Maryknoll Monastery in the US and installed him in Saigon, where Diem was a faithful implementer of Mr. Dulles's policies. Nor does he record Washington's singular lack of warmth in support of Souvanna Phouma. But by now, with the clear inability of Phoumi Nosovan to take over, the only other choice was the Pathet Lao leader or, from Washington's interests and intents, there was no other choice.

p.517

The settlement did not 'work' in the sense that the signatories observed the Geneva declaration. Coalition might have had a chance at the time of the Vientiane Agreement of 1957; but the Eisenhower administration had killed the idea then and again in 1960. In 1962 coalition labored under terrific disadvantages which had not existed five years ~~earlier~~ earlier - the Pathet Lao army, no longer an ill-equipped rabble of 1800 men, now had 20,000 soldiers armed with Soviet weapons; Pathet Lao ministers now controlled not just Economic Planning but Information, Transport and Public Works; and there was a Soviet Embassy in Vientiane.

(Note: There are other reasons the "settlement" did not work, the most important of which is that Washington didn't want it to, under Kennedy as under Eisenhower. Mr. Schlesinger notes the cabinet posts held by the Pathet Lao - but not by Washington's Nosovan, an odd omission considering the importance of the ministries of Interior, which controlled the police, and War or Defense, which, of course, controlled the Armed forces. He has noted the new strength of the Pathet Lao (without indicating this was the knowledge of the US government in 1961 rather than at the 1965 time of the book, and he has implied that, despite this increase of more than a thousand percent in its manpower and vast improvement in its equipment, it

was fear of US troops in Thailand rather than a desire for settlement and peace that "forced" it into an accord. But this oversight is no greater than forgetting to record the earlier theft of an "election" from Souvanna Phouma by the then US-supported forces.

In addition, Hanoi was now deeply committed to the policy of supplying the Viet Cong rebels in South Vietnam through the Laos corridor.

As a result, the Geneva settlement on Laos never went into effect. The Pathet Lao representatives soon withdrew from Vientiane and resumed their effort to take over the country by force; the International Control Commission failed to close the corridor to South Vietnam or otherwise assure neutralization; and Laos fell into a state of de facto partition. The Soviet Union did not - perhaps could not - fulfill its pledge to secure compliance by the communist states.

(Note: With but 100 pages to record these events, Mr. Schlesinger has no space for an exposition of why the Pathet Lao representatives "withdrew from Vientiane," as he puts it, "and resumed their efforts to take over the country by force." Had he, with his longer view of history and more civilized concept of politics, been in their place, Mr. Schlesinger would perhaps have found a more satisfactory way of coping with the assassination of their ministers by Phoumi Nosovan's (read CIA-Washington's) Armed Forces who, fearing their own skill, had physically prevented any assistance from reaching the victims and had even, by force, kept the head of the government, Souvanna Phouma, out until they were certain the ministers had bled to death. But Mr. Schlesinger did, nonetheless, expect the Soviet Union to "secure compliance by the (unnamed) Communist States," whose lack of compliance or its significance he finds unworthy of exposition. Considering the nature of the US compliance, this is perhaps fortuitous. Thus, it is also worthy of note that, ~~in~~ it follows, Mr. Schlesinger does not state by whom there was "the systematic violation of the Geneva agreement" and he gives Kennedy full credit for the "strategy" that "brought clear gains." One might have thought the resumption of civil war and the nullification of the Geneva agreement something less than a "clear gain". But for Souvanna Phouma the choice was simple - to join forces with the Pathet Lao or with Phoumi Nosovan - who controlled most of Phouma's army. It thereupon, in 1965, developed that Phoumi, whose major distinction as a general was a marked unwillingness to fight and whose secondary attribute was an incapacity to do so, no longer served any purpose for the US and he did, in fact, flee to sanctuary in Thailand.

Yet, despite the systematic violation of the Geneva Agreement, the new policy brought clear gains. The Kennedy strategy ended the alliance between the neutralists and the Pathet Lao. Souvanna, Kong Le and other neutralist leaders became, as Winthrop Brown and Harriman had foreseen, the defenders of Laotian independence no longer against the United States but now against communism. The result was to localize the crisis, stop an imminent communist take-over, place the Pathet Lao in the role of breakers of the peace, block the wouthward expansion of China and win the American position international support. By 1965, General Phoumi, after the / failure of his last intrigue, had fled the country; William Sullivan was now American Ambassador in Vientiane; and Souvanna Phouma was receiving active American assistance in Laos and

stoutly supporting American policy in South Vietnam.

The result expressed Kennedy's ability to see the world in terms more complex and realistic than total victory or total defeat. Laos was neither won nor lost, but it was removed from the area of great-power confrontation. The Laos experiment illustrated both the advantages and problems of neutrality.

(Note: In the light of prevalent conditions at the time of the appearance of Mr. Schlesinger's book, there might be some question about whether, in fact, the crisis has been "localized" and the unanimity of "international support" for the "American position," but there should be no doubt, as Mr. Schlesinger states, that Harriman and the US ambassador had accurately foreseen the effects of "the Kennedy strategy". By the end of 1965, it was no longer true that Laos had been "removed from the area of great-power confrontation". And to say that in "stoutly supporting American policy in South Vietnam" Souvanna Phouma illustrated "neutrality" is to redefine the word. Mr. Schlesinger's semantics are like his "facts" and his "history".

pp.518/9

.... Moreover, he had no doubt about the value to the United States of neutralist support in the various disputes with the Soviet Union.

This led to considerable White House interest in a meeting of unaligned nations, called by Nehru, Tito, Nasser and Sukarno for Belgrade in early September 1961. George McGeen, as head of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, responded to our concern. But elsewhere in State there was the usual indifference, if not opposition, to the whole idea of taking special trouble with the third world. When we suggested a presidential message to the conference, State was very cold. A few days before the conference opened, I learned that the Department was about to inform Belgrade no message would be forthcoming.

p.519 With the President's approval, I succeeded in stopping the cable and asked Alexis Johnson at State to call a meeting to reconsider the decision. The meeting later in the day was almost a travesty of those Foggy Bottom seances which haunt one's memory. The men from the Department arrived with a whole series of feeble reasons for doing nothing. As Tom Sorensen of USIA and I knocked one down, they clutched for another, until, as Sorensen said later, he / was sure that someone would argue that the cable would cost \$12.20 and the Department couldn't afford it.

Finally Carl Rowan, who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and plainly unsympathetic with his colleagues, scribbled an excellent draft on a yellow pad. At the end of the day, Alexis Johnson called to say that he was prepared to back the message if we would agree on a few changes. Most were trivial and unobjectionable, but, when he suggested that a passing presidential expression of good wishes be deleted, this seemed to carry caution to the point of inanity. Johnson, who was good-natured about these matters, consented not to press for this final excision, and the message went out. It was probably worth the effort - at least Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the sagacious editor of Foreign Affairs, who covered the Belgrade meeting, told us later that it had been a success and its omission would have been a serious error.

pp.524/5

.... He smiled and was briefly gay with Mrs. Kennedy. But when the talk turned to Vietnam during luncheon, he (Nehru) fell into remote silence. It was heavy going, then and later.

They all went back to Washington in the afternoon for a state dinner in the evening. It was the first big affair of the autumn, and the staff had forgotten to open the flue in the fireplace on the first floor. The smoke poured into the room, causing confusion and smarting eyes. My wife and I were among the party of about twenty-five, too many for the family dining room on the second floor but a little too few for the state dining room. During dinner Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, assailed the President about American policy, praised Krishna Menon, the professional anti-American of New Delhi, and otherwise elevated the mood of the evening.

p.525

The President, unperturbed, gave one of his graceful and witty toasts. "We all want to take this opportunity to welcome you to America, Mr. Prime Minister," he began, "though I doubt whether ~~xxxxxx~~ any words of mine can embellish the welcome already ~~xxxxx~~ extended to you by Larry Spivak." Nehru listened without expression. ... In conversation he displayed interest and vivacity only with Jacqueline. (When I mentioned this later to the President, he said, "A lot of our visiting statesmen have that same trouble.")

The private meetings between the President and the Prime Minister were no better. Nehru was terribly passive, and at times Kennedy was hard put to keep the conversation going. The President talked a good deal more about Vietnam, but the Prime Minister remained unresponsive. At one point Nehru expressed doubt about the American commitment to disarmament, citing Eisenhower's valedictory warning about the "military-industrial complex." Was it not a fact, he asked, that powerful interests would bring enormous pressures to bear against any policy that threatened an end to arms production? Kennedy, instead of indulging in statesmanlike banalities about American hopes for peace, answered frankly that his visitor did not know the half of it, that the pressures were indeed enormous; he named particular Congressmen, generals and industries. But even this candor failed to elicit much response. It was, the President said later, like trying to grasp something in your hand, only to have it turn out to be just fog.

(Note: What could or should Nehru have said to this?)

pp.527-8

.... It seemed obvious that our condemnation of aggression would have greater force if at the same time we dissociated ourselves from the Portuguese empire. But the State Department political officers resisted. It finally turned out that Salazar had requested that we keep things to the narrow issue of aggression and that the Department had assured our ambassador in Lisbon the night before that we would not raise the colonial issue. This commitment, undertaken without White House consultation, tied our hands at the United Nations. The State Department, over Stevenson's protest, insisted that he cut out the allusions in his speech to Portuguese colonialism, and this made the speech when delivered at the Security Council seem all the more unfeeling to the Indians.

p.528

It was one of Adlai's most effective efforts. He began with a pleasing picture of Krishna Menon, "so well known in these halls for his advice on peace and his tireless enjoinders to everyone else to seek the way of compromise," standing on the border of Goa rallying his troops at zero hour. Stevenson then called for a withdrawal of the invading forces and concluded that, "if the United Nations is not to die as ignoble a death as the League of Nations, we cannot condone the use of force in this instance and thus pave / the way for forceful solutions of other disputes." These remarks infuriated the Indians. Indeed, Stevenson himself in a few days began to feel he might have gone a little far.

(Note: Apparently the use of force is proper only when it is by the US)

pp.532/3

Indonesia won its independence in 1949. Indochina, after an especially nasty war, in 1954. ~~After the Geneva Agreements of 1954, now consisted of two hostile states, with North Vietnam stimulating and supporting a civil war south of the border.~~ ... In Indochina, Cambodia and Laos went their separate paths; and Vietnam, divided by the Geneva Agreements of 1954, now consisted of two hostile states, with North Vietnam stimulating and supporting a civil war south of the border.

.....
1. Sukarno

p.533

..... His deep mistrust of the white west was understandably compounded in the case of the United States by his knowledge that in 1958 the CIA had participated in an effort to overthrow him. ~~His mistrust of the United States was compounded by his knowledge that in 1958 the CIA had participated in an effort to overthrow him.~~

..... And he (Kennedy) was also anxious to strengthen the anti-communist forces, especially the army, in order to make sure that, if anything happened to Sukarno, the powerful Indonesian Communist Party would not inherit the country. ...

p.536

.....
2. Diem

All under-scor-

Most intractable of all was the problem of Vietnam. In the end this was to consume more of the President's attention and concern than anything else in Asia. The American commitment to the Saigon government was now of nearly seven years' standing. After the Geneva Agreements of 1954 had split Vietnam along the 17th parallel, President Eisenhower had written Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam pledging American support "to assist the Government of Viet-Nam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means." ...

ing added

..... The commitment to South Vietnam, like the parallel attempts to make the languid country of Laos a bastion of western power, followed directly from the Dulles conception of the world as irrevocably split into two unified and hostile blocs. In such a world, the threat of communism was indivisible and the obligation to oppose that threat unlimited. The moral imperative was reinforced by a popular construction, or misconstruction, of the Munich analogy, soon reformulated by Joseph and Stewart Alsop for Southeast Asia as the 'domino' theory. "You have a row of dominoes set up," Eisenhower explained to a press conference, "you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is that it will go over very quickly. So you have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences." "If . . . Indochina passes into the hands of the Communists," he told a doubting Winston Churchill, "the ultimate effect on our and your global strategic position . . . could be disastrous. . . . We failed to halt Hirohito, Mussolini and Hitler by not acting in unity and in time."

p.537

..... A more discriminating view might have regarded Ho Chi Minh, the boss of North Vietnam, less as the obedient servant of a homogeneous Sino-Soviet bloc than as a leader of nationalist communism, historically mistrustful of the Chinese and eager to preserve his own freedom of action. It might have taken a more relaxed attitude toward the evolution of Vietnam; and it might have decided to draw the American line on the Siamese side of the Mekong River, where both the political and military foundations for an American position were a good deal stronger. But abstractions prevailed, and the commitment was made. Dulles's anti-

colonial mood, moreover, required it to be in the main an American commitment, lest our effort in South Vietnam be tainted by suspicions of European imperialism. And, after Washington accepted Diem's refusal to take part in the all-Vietnam elections promised by the Geneva Agreements for 1956, it became increasingly a commitment to one man.

p.538

?

Whether we were right in 1954 to undertake this commitment will long be a matter of interest to historians, but it had ceased by 1961 to be of interest to policy-makers. Whether we had vital interests in South Vietnam before 1954, the Eisenhower letter created those interests. Whether we should have drawn the line where we did, once it was drawn we became every succeeding year more imprisoned by it. Whether the domino theory was valid in 1954, it had acquired validity seven years later, after neighboring governments had staked their own security on the ability of the United States to live up to its pledges to Saigon. Kennedy himself, who had watched western policy in Vietnam in the early fifties with the greatest skepticism and who as President used to mutter from time to time about our "overcommitment" in Southeast Asia, had no choice now but to work within the situation he had inherited. Ironically, the collapse of the Dulles policy in Laos had created the possibility of a neutralist solution there; but the survival of that policy in South Vietnam, where the government was stronger and the army more willing to fight, left us in 1961 no alternative but to continue the effort of 1954.

It cannot be said that Diem had altogether kept his side of the bargain, especially in the performance of "needed reforms," nor can it be said that the Eisenhower administration brought this omission very urgently to his attention. Diem, a profound traditionalist, ran a family despotism in the oriental manner. He held power in his own hands, regarded opposition as treason, showed disdain for the shallow institutions of western democracy and aimed to restore the ancient Annamese morality.

.....

.... On the military side, our advisers, many of them veterans of the Korean War, conceived their mission as that of training a conventional army designed, not to fight guerrillas, but to repel a Korean-style invasion from the north. They accompanied this by a systematic barrage of self-serving reports - all too reminiscent of the French military a few years before - about the commendable efficiency of this army and its capacity to control any situation. Cheered by such bulletins, a Senate committee concluded in 1960, "on the basis of the assurances of the head of the military aid mission in Vietnam, that the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) can be phased out of Vietnam in the foreseeable future."

pp.541/50

.... A counterinsurgency plan for Vietnam, prepared in the winter of 1960 and approved by Kennedy in early 1961, proposed an extensive program of military and social reforms; if these recommendations were carried out, the report said, the war could be won in eighteen months. A Vietnam Task Force, set up in April, reduced the report to forty points; Frederick Nolting, a Foreign Service officer who had been consul general in Paris, was sent to Saigon as ambassador, his predecessor being accounted too anti-Diem; and in May the Vice-President visited in Saigon as part of a general tour of Southeast Asia.

Johnson was accompanied by Jean and Stephen Smith, the President's sister and brother-in-law, and his primary purpose was to reassure Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, Diem in South Vietnam and Sarit in Thailand that the new American policy toward Laos did not signify a general intention to

~~WITNDRA~~

withdraw from the area. After a stop in Taiwan, where he was pleasantly surprised to find Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang talking about social progress like old New Dealers, he went on to Saigon. There, in the interests of reassurance, he somewhat imprudently hailed Diem as the Winston Churchill of South Asia. ~~xxx~~ ...

p.542

.... "Our mission arrested the decline of confidence," he reported to Kennedy on his return. "It did not - in my judgment - restore any confidence already lost. . . . If these men I saw at your request were bankers, I would know - without bothering to ask - that there would be no further extension on my note." Time was running out, and "the basic decision in Southeast Asia," he told Kennedy, "is here. We must decide whether to help these countries to the best of our ability or throw in the towel in the area and pull back our defenses to San Francisco and a 'Fortress America' concept. More important, we would say to the world in this case that we don't live up to our treaties and don't stand by our friends. This is not my concept. I recommend that we move forward promptly with a major effort to help these countries defend themselves."

p.543

.... Diem in particular viewed the Americans with a mandarin's disdain and increasingly ~~xxx~~responded to their advice by the simple but powerful device of doing all the talking himself. What perhaps began as a tactic soon became a disease. By 1961 Diem's compulsive talking was becoming legendary; survivors would vie with each other in accounts of conversations lasting six or seven or twelve hours and would exchange dodges intended to help trapped victims extricate themselves from the presidential flow.

p.544

Diem seemed unwilling or unable to undertake, for example, the programs of rural reform designed to close the gap between the president's palace in Saigon and the people in the villages. Most likely the whole conception of seeking 'popular support' seemed to him one of those western delusions with no relevance to life in Asia. / In his view it was the moral obligation of the people to respect their government....

p.545

.... Instead, there seemed a strong case for trying the Johnson approach and making an increased effort to stabilize the situation in South Vietnam. Early in October Kennedy sent General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow on a mission to Saigon to see if this could be done. Reminding them of his own visit to Indochina in 1951, he charged them to find out whether we were better off now than the French had been then - whether Vietnamese nationalism had turned irrevocably against us or still might serve as a basis for the fight against communism.

p.546

The very composition of the mission - headed by a general, with a White House aide as deputy and no figure of comparable rank from the State Department - was significant. It expressed a conscious decision by the Secretary of State to turn the Vietnam problem over to the Secretary of Defense. ...

.... Their collective answer to Kennedy's question was that South Vietnam had enough vitality to justify a major United States effort. The trouble, as Taylor and Rostow diagnosed it, was a double crisis of confidence: doubt that the United States was really determined to save Southeast Asia; doubt that Diem's methods could really defeat the Viet Cong. To halt the decline, they recommended increased American intervention - in effect, a shift from arm's-length advice to limited partnership. While only the Vietnamese could finally beat the Viet Cong, Americans at all levels, Taylor and Rostow argued, could show them how the job was to be done.

The report concentrated on military matters. In addition to a variety of recommendations designed to get the Vietnamese Army to take the offensive, Taylor proposed that American troops perform certain ~~his~~ tasks, like airlift and air reconnaissance, which the Vietnamese were not prepared to undertake; he even envisaged sending an American military task force - perhaps 10,000 men - capable of conducting combat operations for self-defense and perimeter security and, if the Vietnamese Army were hard pressed, of providing an emergency reserve. As for Diem, the report gave a candid account of his political and administrative idiosyncrasies but rejected any idea that he be replaced. While it outlined a number of desirable political reforms - especially broadened participation in government and more work in the villages - it relied mainly on the expectation that the new system of limited partnership could work de facto changes in Diem's methods of government and gradually narrow the gap between the regime and the people.

p.547 Taylor and Rostow hoped that this program would suffice to win the civil war - and were sure it would if only the infiltration from the north could be stopped. But if it continued, then they could see no end to the war. They therefore raised the question of how long Saigon and the United States could be expected to play by the existing ground rules, which permitted North Vietnam to train and supply guerrillas from across the border and denied South Vietnam the right to strike back at the source of aggression. Rostow argued so forcibly for a contingency policy of retaliation against the north, graduated to match the intensity of Hanoi's support of the Viet Cong, that "Rostow Plan 6" became jocularly established in the contingency planning somewhere after SEATO Plan 5.

The Taylor-Rostow report was a careful and thoughtful document, and the President read it with interest. He was impressed by its description of the situation as serious but not hopeless and attracted by the idea of stiffening the Diem regime though an infusion of American advisers. He did not, however, like the proposal of a direct American military commitment. "They want a force of American troops," he told me early in November. "They say it's necessary in order to restore confidence and maintain morale. But it will be just like Berlin. The troops will march in; the bands will play; the crowds will cheer; and in four days everyone will have forgotten. Then we will be told we have to send in more troops. It's like taking a drink. The effect wears off, and you have to take another." The war in Vietnam, he added, could be won only so long as it was their war. If it were ever converted into a white man's war, we would lose as the French had lost a decade earlier.

.... "The trouble with the State Department," Harriman said as we dined with Galbraith one autumn evening before his return to New Delhi, "is that it always underestimates the dynamics of revolution." Someone wondered whether the removal of Diem would not be the answer. "Our trouble," replied Galbraith sagaciously, "is that we make revolutions so badly."

p.548 General Paul Harkins, as the new American commander in Saigon, and Ambassador Nolting worked closely together. Both saw Diem as the key to success, and both were convinced that attempts to bring pressure on him would be self-defeating. The proper policy in their view was to win Diem's confidence by assuring him unswerving support and then try to steer him gently and gradually toward reform; if Diem felt this backing to be anything less than wholehearted, the policy would not work. This became known, in the phrase of Homer Bigart of the New York Times, as the period of "sink or swim with Ngo Dinh Diem."

.... The appeal to the peasants was concentrated in the so-called strategic hamlet program, launched by the regime in April.

This idea, adapted from the British experience in fighting the guerrillas in Malaya, called for the relocation of peasants into fortified villages, surrounded by barbed wire fences and ditches filled with bamboo spikes. The theory was that the hamlets would give the peasants protection and a sense of security, control the movement of people and supplies through the countryside and cut the Viet Cong off from their primary sources of food, intelligence and recruits. Village defense units would arise to fight the enemy. Each hamlet would elect its political representatives by secret ballot. And each hamlet would eventually become the unit for education, medical care and the distribution of pigs, fertilizer and low-interest agricultural loans. It was an idyllic conception. Ngo Dinh Nhu made the strategic hamlet program his personal project and published glowing reports of spectacular success, claiming 7 million people in 7000 hamlets by the middle of 1963. One might have wondered whether Nhu was just the man to mobilize the idealism of the villages; but Nolting and Harkins listened uncritically to his reports and passed them back to Washington, where they were read with elation.

In military matters the enlargement of the American presence appeared to have even more encouraging effects. The advisers flocked in with the weapons of modern war, from typewriters to helicopters. They worked with local 'counterparts' in all sections of the government in Saigon. In the field, they lived with the Vietnamese Army, helped plan military actions and sometimes participated themselves. ...

.... "Every quantitative measurement we have," Robert McNamara said on his first visit to Vietnam in 1962, "shows we're winning this war." Maxwell / Taylor, when he returned for a fresh look ~~after~~ a year after his first visit, thought he detected "a great national movement" rising to destroy the Viet Cong. No one could doubt a widespread and substantial improvement in the military situation. In Washington, the President, who had other matters on his mind, accepted the cheerful reports from men in whom he had great confidence. His 1963 State of the Union message summed up the mood at the turn of the year: "The spearpoint of aggression has been blunted in South Vietnam."

(Note: Interestingly enough, a historian, so much of whose life and work are concerned with treaties and other arrangements between nations, does not mention those provisions of the Geneva agreement, which the US committed itself to honor, that had to do with the presence of foreign troops in Vietnam, or even that the ~~accord contained~~ accord contained such provisions. Could it be because even the transparent and invalid pretenses by which the elections were denied could not possibly be invoked, because it placed a specific maximum on the number of foreign troops in "advisory" roles, and Kennedy was in naked contempt and violation of it? Or that, on return from his mission as vice president, ~~HE~~ L B J recommended open military invasion by the US? either knowing nothing about the agreement or, worse, caring naught about it. Or, is it related to LBJ's military actions in Vietnam after becoming president?

And what credentials this background gave the respected advisors for their subsequent roles, here not indicated.

A 1000 DAYS

SE Asia

p.552 In the mid-fifties he had begun to see in Algeria the same pattern of colonial decay he had already inspected in Southeast Asia; and he feared that French intransigence would have the same outcome of uniting the nationalists with the communists. ...

pp.574/5

In January 1961 Kennedy inherited a Congo still in chaos, divided among the Kasavubu government in Leopoldville, the Gizenga group in Stanleyville and the pro-Belgian secessionist regime of Moise Tshombe in Elisabethville. Overshadowing everything was the prospect that Soviet meddling in the chaos might lead to a Russian base in the heart of Africa. From the start the new President had a simple and constant view: that, unless the United Nations filled the vacuum in the Congo, there would be no alternative but a direct Soviet-American confrontation. As one crisis after another flared up in the months to come, he used to say that, if we didn't have the UN operation, the only way to block Soviet domination of the Congo would be to go in with our own forces. The UN could not bring the great powers together in the Congo, but at least it could keep them apart.

A 1000 DAYS

Cuba - Internal

p.606 He (Kennedy) often envied the communist capacity to mobilize popular idealism, especially of the young. I remember his remarking almost wistfully about Cuba: "Each weekend 10,000 teachers go into the countryside to run a campaign against illiteracy. A great communal effort like this is attractive to people who wish to serve their country." ...

p.614 For by the spring of 1962 the reality of the quarrel between the Soviet Union and China was beginning to become clear to everyone (except the aficionados of the 'Sino-Soviet bloc' in the Department of State). In traveling around Latin America, Asia and Europe in January and February of 1962, I was struck most of all, as I reported to the President on my return, "by the extent to which, since my last foreign travel, the Russo-Chinese tension has become a dominating issue throughout the world."

p.615 The pluralist world, indeed, was inherent in the stand-
still thesis he had set forth to Khrushchev in Vienna - a
thesis which implied that nations should be free to seek their own
roads to salvation without upsetting the balance between the super-
powers. ...

.....
p.617 There were indeed grounds for optimism in the spring of 1962.
Not only was the communist empire itself faced by incipient
crack-up, but the Russians had receded from Berlin and Laos, had made
a botch of things in Africa and had their troubles at home. "I'm
not so much impressed by the challenge of their system," Kennedy told
Stewart Alsop about this time. "The most impressive thing they have
done is their achievement in space. But there is a lot that is not
so impressive." In the meantime, we had enormously strengthened our
military position, we were making substantial progress in the third
world, we were watching Western Europe grow every month in strength
and vitality and we hopefully discerned a new spirit in our own society.

p.618 Moreover/- as David Ormsby Gore used to urge on the President and the Attorney General - a new generation was emerging in the Soviet Union with values and aspirations of its own, and with this new generation the dialogue would be easier.

A 1000 DAYS

Kennedy's Beliefs

p.640

.... And in domestic, as in foreign, affairs, Kennedy never believed in humiliating an opponent or cutting off his retreat. ...

A 1000 DAYS

Missile - Background

p.642 The market decline continued, if at a more stately pace, until the end of June 1962, and the business campaign against the administration intensified. ...

p.644 One Sunday in May 1962 he took Andre Malraux out to Glen Ora for luncheon, and, as Kennedy later described it, they fell into a discussion of the persistence of mythology in the contemporary world. "In the nineteenth century," Malraux said, "the ostensible issue within the European states was the monarchy vs. the republic. But the real issue was capitalism vs. the proletariat. In the twentieth century the ostensible issue is capitalism vs. the proletariat. But the world has moved on. What is the real issue now?" ...

p.645 In another few days he decided to make this the theme of a major address at the Yale Commencement. ...

The central issues of our time, Kennedy said in New Haven, "relate not to basic clashes of philosophy or ideology but to ways and means of reaching common goals." As every past generation had to dis-enthrall itself from an inheritance of truism and stereotype, "so in our own time we must move on from the reassuring repetition of stale phrases to a new, difficult, but essential confrontation with reality."

For the great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie - deliberate, contrived and dishonest - but the myth, persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the cliches of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.