

The change of regime in South Vietnam provides the United States with a rare opportunity to redefine its policies in that area.

American recognition of the new regime is amply justified by Saigon's pledges of political freedom and more effective prosecution of the war. But we must remember that the government set up by South Vietnam's new military rulers is a "provisional" one, made up of generals and civilian technicians. American support should remain provisional as well. The rebirth of political forces after many years of dictatorship may bring confusion and division, but it is still a necessary process. Its development should not be frozen too early by engagements from Washington that could quickly make the United States as much a prisoner of the new regime as it was of the old.

The recommendation of American aid, for example, might well be done piecemeal, tied not only to a redefinition of aid programs, but to rapid movement toward a broadly based government capable of enlisting wide popular support. The appointment of an advisory "Council of Sages," drawn from South Vietnam's political and intellectual elite, is useful but only as a first step.

Most urgent for the United States is the need for redefinition of goals. Vigorous military effort is necessary but it is not enough. Political, economic and social reforms are of at least equal importance in an anti-guerrilla war. And there is an important role, too long ignored, for international diplomacy.

Such concepts as a negotiated settlement and "neutralization" of Vietnam are not to be ruled out. Americans often forget that South Vietnam owes its existence as an independent entity to the settlement negotiated at Geneva in 1954 by France, Britain, Russia, Red China and, in part, by the United States. That settlement barred foreign bases and alliances for Vietnam and, in effect, established a neutral Vietnam guaranteed by the major powers. The two parts (North and South) were to be unified after elections that have never been held.

The effect of the Geneva settlement, pending reunification through free elections, was to end hostilities and partition Vietnam into a Communist North and a non-Communist south. It was the resumption of Communist warfare in South Vietnam in 1959, in violation of the Geneva settlement, that brought American troops in.

Secretary Rusk performed a valuable service in pointing out some of these facts last week. His policy declaration now needs to be carried one step further.

The objective of the United States in Vietnam never has been to destroy the Geneva Settlement, and ~~now~~ the time may well be ripe now to try to restore <sup>it</sup> by negotiation. Military effort alone may not suffice to achieve the American objective. It would be unrealistic to believe that the Geneva accords can be restored without a return, at some point, to the international conference table.