

# Memo of Eisenhower-Dulles Talk On the French Cease-Fire Plan

Memorandum by Robert Cutler, special assistant to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, May 7, 1954.

At a meeting in the President's office this morning with Dulles, three topics were discussed.

1. Whether the President should approve paragraph 1b of the tentative Record of Action of the 5/6/54 NSC meeting, which covers the proposed answer to the Eden proposal. The Secretary of State thought the text was correct. Wilson and Radford preferred the draft message to Smith for Eden prepared yesterday by MacArthur and Captain Anderson, and cleared by the JCS, which included in the Five Power Staff Agency Thailand and the Philippines. Radford thinks that the Agency (which has hitherto been not disclosed in SEA) has really completed its military planning; that if it is enlarged by top level personnel, its actions will be necessarily open to the world; that therefore some Southeast Asian countries should be included in it, and he fears Eden's proposal as an intended delaying action.

The President approved the text of paragraph 1b but suggested that Smith's reply to Eden's proposal should make clear the following:

1. Five Power Staff Agency, alone or with other nations, is not to the United States a satisfactory substitute for a broad political coalition which will include the Southeast Asian countries which are to be defended.

2. Five Power Staff Agency examination is acceptable to see how these nations can give military aid to the Southeast Asian countries in the cooperative defense effort.

3. The United States will not agree to a "white man's party" to determine the problems of the Southeast Asian nations.

I was instructed to advise Wilson and Radford of the above, and have done so.

2. The President went over the draft

tralia, NZ, Thailand, Associated States, Philippines) in order to enlist their participation.

I then summarized possible objections to making the above proposal to the French:

a. No French Government is now competent to act in a lasting way.

b. There is no indication France wants to "internationalize" the conflict.

c. The US proposal would be made without the prior assurance of a regional grouping of SEA states, a precondition of Congress; although this point might be added as another condition to the proposal.

d. US would be "bailing out colonial France" in the eyes of the world.

e. US cannot undertake alone to save every situation of trouble.

I concluded that some PB members felt that it had never been made clear to the French that the US was willing to ask for Congressional authority, if certain fundamental preconditions were met; that these matters had only been hinted at, and that the record of history should be clear as to the US position. Dulles was interested to know the President's views, because he is talking with Ambassador Bonnet this afternoon. He indicated that he would mention

of the speech which Dulles is going to make tonight, making quite a few suggestions and changes in text. He thought additionally the speech should include some easy to understand slogans, such as "The US will never start a war," "The US will not go to war without Congressional authority," "The US, as always, is trying to organize cooperative efforts to sustain the peace."

3. With reference to the cease-fire proposal transmitted by Bidault to the French cabinet, I read the following, as views principally of military members of the Planning Board, expressed in their yesterday afternoon meeting:

1. US should not support the Bidault proposal.

2. Reasons for this position:

a. The mere proposal of the cease-fire at the Geneva Conference would destroy the will to fight of French forces and make fencesitters jump to Vietminh side.

b. The Communists would evade covertly cease-fire controls.

3. The US should (as a last act to save IndoChina) propose to France that if the following 5 conditions are met, the US will go to Congress for authority to intervene with combat forces:

a. grant of genuine freedom for Associated States

b. US take major responsibility for training indigenous forces

c. US share responsibility for military planning

d. French forces to stay in the fight and no requirement of replacement of US forces

(e. Action under UN auspices?)

This offer to be made known simultaneously to the other members of the proposed regional grouping (UK, Aus-

these matters to Bonnet, perhaps making a more broad hint than heretofore. He would not circulate any formal paper to Bonnet, or to anyone else.

The President referred to the proposition advanced by Governor Stassen at the April 29 Council Meeting as not having been thoroughly thought out. He said that he had been trying to get France to "internationalize" matters for a long time, and they are not willing to do so. If it were thought advisable at this time to point out to the French the essential preconditions to the US asking for Congressional authority to intervene, then it should also be made clear to the French as an additional precondition that the US would never intervene alone, that there must be an invitation by the indigenous people, and that there must be some kind of regional and collective action.

I understand that Dulles will decide the extent to which he cares to follow this line with Ambassador Bonnet. This discussion may afford Dulles guidance in replying to Smith's request about a US alternative to support the Bidault proposal, but there really was no decision as to the US attitude toward the cease-fire proposal itself.