

Highlights of the Period

South Vietnam, the secret Pentagon account contends, is essentially the creation of the United States, and the formative years were those of the Truman and—in particular—the Eisenhower Administrations.

Here, in chronological order, are key events—actions, decisions, policy formulations—of this period.

1945-6

Ho Chi Minh writes series of appeals for U.S. support to President Truman, Secretary of State; no indication, account says, of any reply.

1950

U.S. recognizes Bao Dai regime, not Ho; French ask military aid; Secretary of State Dean Acheson says alternative is "extension of Communism" throughout Southeast Asia "and possibly westward." Aid decision, account says, meant U.S. was "thereafter" directly involved "in the developing tragedy in Vietnam."

1954

National Security Council urges President Eisenhower to warn that "French acquiescence" in negotiated settlement would end U.S. aid to France. Suggests U.S. might continue war to "military victory."

French ask U.S. air strike with disguised planes. President's nonintervention decision still tentative. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles says he will give "broad hint" to French that U.S. intervention is possible with preconditions. Eisenhower orders draft Congressional resolution Defense Department prepares memo on required U.S. forces.

Joint Chiefs of Staff memo says Indochina is "devoid of decisive military objectives."

June—Col. Edward G. Lansdale of C.I.A. arrives Saigon to head team of agents for "paramilitary operations" and "political-psychological warfare" against North.

August—National intelligence estimate terms chances for strong regime in South poor. National Security Council finds Geneva accords "disaster" completing "major forward stride of Communism," study says. Joint Chiefs' memo says "strong, stable civil govern-

ment" is "absolutely essential" basis for U.S. military-training aid. But Mr. Dulles feels military-training program is "one of the most efficient means" of stabilizing regime. With President's approval of Council recommendations for direct economic, military aid to South Vietnam, "American policy toward post-Geneva Vietnam was drawn," account says.

October—Lansdale team in "delayed sabotage" of Hanoi railroad; contaminates oil supply for city's buses for "gradual wreckage" of motors, distributes fake Vietminh leaflets; recruits, trains, equips two teams Vietnamese agents.

December—Gen. J. Lawton Collins, U.S. special representative, urges removal and replacement of Ngo Dinh Diem as leader or "re-evaluation of our plans" for area aid. Mr. Dulles replies he has "no other choice but to continue our aid to Vietnam and support of Diem."

1955

April—Mr. Dulles, after meeting with General Collins, cables embassy in Saigon to seek Diem alternative.

May—Mr. Diem, with Lansdale aid, quashes sect uprising, Saigon. Mr. Dulles cancels cable. National Security Council draft statement — its "main features" conveyed to Mr. Diem—suggests he insist on free elections by secret ballot with strict supervision. Communists in Germany had rejected those conditions; "hopefully the Vietminh would follow suit," account says.

December—Mr. Dulles, in cable to embassy, says U.S. should not act "to speed up present process of decay of Geneva accords" but not make "slightest effort to infuse life into them."

1956

U.S. sends 350 additional military men to Saigon; account says this "example of the U.S. ignoring" Geneva accords.

1960

National intelligence estimate predicts "dissatisfaction and discontent with the Government will probably continue to rise" and these "adverse trends," unchecked, "will almost certainly in time cause the collapse of Diem's regime."