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## 5 ASIAN NATIONS DISCUSS INDOCHINA

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Views Differ on Approaches  
to New Regimes as  
ASEAN Talks Open  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, May 13—Five Southeast Asian nations that have subscribed to the goal of the region's neutralization began their first high-level meeting here today since the end of the Vietnam war with widely divergent ideas on how to approach the Communist regimes in Indochina.

In a sense, it was the moment for which they had been trying to prepare themselves since late 1971 when their loose regional grouping—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, called ASEAN, first proclaimed its wish to see the region turned into a “zone of peace, freedom and neutrality.”

The war's end came more suddenly than any of them had expected and they were still groping for a common program when their foreign ministers assembled here for their annual meeting. Among the five ASEAN nations — Indochina, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines — there seemed to be at least three views on what was needed to be done to adjust to the new situation.

For Malaysia's Prime Minister, Abdul Razak, the end of war was a “historic opportunity” to press ahead with the neutralization proposal, which his government drafted and has advocated more wholeheartedly than any of the other members of the group.

If Mr. Abdul Razak has any fears about what Hanoi's attitudes to the rest of the region may prove to be, he wasn't admitting them. Peace was being restored to southeast Asia, he told the conference in a welcoming address, and it was time to discard “ancient fears born of the cold war.”

The neutral zone envisioned by the proposal includes the whole of Indochina and Burma in addition to the nations now in the group. The Malaysian seemed, therefore, to be advocating an early approach to the victorious Communist regimes.

The Thai Foreign Minister, Chatichai Choonhavan, seemed equally eager to plunge ahead. Thailand, which allowed the United States to build air bases on her territory for bombing Indochina, was more intimately involved in the American war effort than any of the other ASEAN nations. But now, as the country nearest to Indochina, she seems to be veering in a neutralist direction.

Thailand's ultimate stance is still in doubt. There were three Governments in Bangkok in the first three months of this year, and even though American troops are being withdrawn, it is far from clear that the Thai armed forces are ready to dispense with the American security guarantee.

But Mr. Chatichai said his Government welcomed the war's end and was ready now for “friendly relations with all countries, especially our neighbors, professing good intentions toward Thailand.”

Indonesia and Singapore obviously found the positions of Mr. Abdul Razak and Mr. Chatichai diplomatically premature and risky. They were understood to have prevented the approval of a draft “blueprint” for the neutralization of the region—a document that has evolved slowly over the last several years—on the ground that its publication now would simply invite a swift rejection from the Indochina states—Cambodia, Laos and North and South Vietnam.

Singapore's Foreign Minister, Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, advocated a cautious approach. He said that the end of the war did not necessarily mean the withdrawal of the United States from Asia, and that there was still a chance to influence Washington in its search for a new policy.

Singapore's minister said of Indochina that ASEAN should not give the impression “that we are alarmed, that we are weak” and ready to do anything necessary to win the favor of the communist governments. “They should be wooing us too,” he said.