



## 'Gallant Asian Allies Paid to Fight by U.S.

WASHINGTON—For years, Lyndon Johnson and Dean Rusk, and then Richard Nixon, have talked sanctimoniously about those gallant Asian nations, potential dominoes all, who see the danger of communism and who fight by our side. Now, it turns out, there is not a single Asian nation which fights by our side unless we make it financially profitable for its leaders to do so. The report of Sen. Stuart Symington's subcommittee, made public this week, is devastating in its testimony of how the division of Thailand's soldiers in Vietnam was bargained for, bought and paid for by the United States in a transaction more reminiscent of the soybean futures market than the defense of the Free World.

For the presence of a division of Thai soldiers of doubtful fighting ability, American taxpayers have paid in excess of \$200 million, plus side arrangements whose cost we may never know. And while this money was being paid, the whole transaction was concealed behind a barrage of lies—all having to do with SEATO, the common defense and the Nixon doctrine.

Consider the case, for instance, of the Express Transportation Organization, a struggling Thai corporation showing red ink until it was taken over by the Thai government in 1965. The government put in leading generals as members of the board of directors, and their managerial talent proved so great that the company soon landed a contract with the U.S. government. The contract was to haul our ammunition in Thailand, and we paid \$35 million a year, on which thrifty management was able to earn a net profit of \$8 million, even after paying each of the directors \$1,000 a month, three times their military salaries.

soldiers in Vietnam are paid—by

American taxpayers—a larger combat bonus than is paid American soldiers. We pay all the expenses of the Thai division, and we have dumped more than \$2 billion as well into the Thai treasury as a bonus for something called "economic and social development."

Thailand is a country that "stands on its own two feet, handling its own problems," President Nixon said in a toast to Thailand's king and prime minister in Bangkok. Somebody somewhere must have snickered.

The State Department — which connived for years to conceal this scandal from the American people—now defends it on the grounds that we have always helped our allies, as we did England in World War II. The explanation makes plain the corrosion of our national soul. It is as though Winston Churchill, instead of proudly asking, in public, "Give us the tools, and we will finish the job," had slyly and secretly sought from FDR an arrangement whereby he, Field Marshal Montgomery and Anthony Eden could have been personally enriched—perhaps by a secret landing fee for each U.S. bomber.