

*Allen S. Whiting*

## A Diplomat Rebuffed

The recent rejection of G. McMurtrie Godley, former ambassador to Laos, by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the post of assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs was attacked by the White House as "retribution for diligent execution of instructions." Secretary William P. Rogers charged the action reflected "disagreement with policies which Ambassador Godley was directed to carry out rather than Ambassador Godley's personal qualifications." Both statements, together with other accusations of "McCarthyite tactics," not only misstate the facts but mislead the public on the significance of what is potentially one of the most important assignments in the Department of State.

First, the facts. On the same day the committee voted 9-7 against Godley, it approved, by 12-3 vote, William H. Sullivan's nomination as ambassador to the Philippines. Sullivan was Godley's immediately predecessor in Laos and, in that capacity, literally laid the basis for the CIA-U.S. Air Force war which, by the end of Godley's tenure in Vientiane, had spawned nearly 300,000 refugees in a nation of just under 3,000,000 people. Sullivan's evasions and obfuscations under repeated congressional questioning exceed in quantity and quality those of Godley. The Pentagon Papers show Sullivan's early enthusiasm for escalation in Indochina when Godley was still fighting the Congo war with mercenaries.

Both men bear a singular responsibility for the most destructive and prolonged "secret war" in American history. However in his prospective post in Manila, Sullivan will be more of an instrument of policy, whereas Godley's nomination was for a position of potential policy influence.

It is admittedly difficult to conceive of any State Department official, including Secretary Rogers, influencing policy under the ubiquitous ascendancy of Henry Kissinger and his NSC staff. However it has not always been thus. The last incumbent of the post, Marshall Green, played a critical role in developing the "Nixon Doctrine" and in nurturing the nascent rapprochement with Peking in its early stages. However harshly the White House may have treated Green by virtual exile to Australia, whether because of interpersonal friction or pique over his reported opposition to the Cambodian invasion of 1970, it cannot deny his important part in policy formulation prior to that time.

Reviewing the occupants of that post since 1961 puts the Godley nomination in perspective. After nine months of the Kennedy administration the White House replaced Walter McConaughy with Averell Harriman. McConaughy's renowned "stand pat" conformity contrasted with the "crocodile" (as Harriman's admirers dubbed him), whose snap and bite soon inspired ideas and innovation from lower levels in what had become the most demoralized branch of the Foreign Service. Harriman's brilliant use of junior officers, such as Sullivan and Charles T. Cross, combined with his statesman's vision and courage to produce the 1962 Lao-tian settlement. His sense that past China specialists had been wronged prompted his appointment of Edward E. Rice as deputy and his creation of a third deputy's position for Green, then consul general in Hong Kong.

Harriman's successor, Roger Hilsman, carried less political clout but was no less active a stimulus to policy. His role in promoting "counter-insurgency" and the overthrow of Diem is well documented. His major speech on China policy in December 1963 was the first to break the long line of denunciation begun by Secretary Acheson in

1949 and cemented in place by Secretary Dulles. His opposition to bombing the North and to formal ground involvement in the South, however, proved Hilsman's undoing. After he resigned in March 1964, the Far East bureau was given to William P. Bundy in an effort to smooth ruffled feathers, particularly in the Pentagon, from which Bundy came to State. In this post Bundy became a principal architect of escalation. So effectively did he enrich the concept of "graduate pressure" that he remained in the position well into 1969. Bundy's lawyer's advocate role so frustrated dissenting specialists in the department that Undersecretary of State George Ball was able to tap the specialists' expertise for a series of vigorous memos opposing escalation that subsequently proved remarkably prophetic.

Thus the assistant secretary for East Asian Affairs can be a prime referent for policy advice to higher levels. Whether he is passive or active, whether he sees loyalty primarily upward to superiors or downward to subordinates; and whether he has a sense of alternative futures, or lives in the immediate present and past—whichever way he works he will contribute to the perspective of policy as well as to its implementation.

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Before his entry into the bureau as Bundy's deputy in 1967, Godley's only experience in Asia was a short stint in Cambodia from 1955 to 1957. His subsequent position provides no promise of the breadth or depth of perspective so essential at this time of potential transition in U.S. responsibility, in contrast with others commanding far wider contact and proven understanding of this vast and varied region.

Less publicized but only somewhat less important in this regard is the White House nomination of William B. Kintner as Ambassador to Thailand. Bangkok is the most important assignment in Southeast Asia, now that we have disengaged militarily from South Vietnam. Kintner, no Asian expert, is one of the foremost specialists on "protracted conflict," long advocating hard-line views for which he and his colleague, Professor Robert Strausz-hupe at the University of Pennsylvania, became notorious in the cold war decades. Kintner's strongly held views; when authoritatively voiced in his prospective role directing the vast complex of CIA and Pentagon forces operating in and out of Thailand, could prove to be a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the mere fact of fighting guerrillas has the effect of widening the insurgency. The tempest in a Thai-pot manifested by the so-called "second Vietnam" insurgency, to date numbering less than 5,000 guerrillas, could easily be exaggerated and provoked by Kintner's posture.

Apparently the White House remains schizophrenic about the efficacy of the "Nixon Doctrine," the Chinese threat, and the degree of U.S. commitment commensurate with U.S. interests. Its frantic bombing in Cambodia and its nomination of Kintner contrast with the highly publicized flying of China's "ambassador" Huang Chen to San Clemente and the raising of the U.S. flag in Peking. This situation suggests there is ample room for Godley elsewhere in the department or among the more than one hundred embassies outside of Asia. Surely there must be better candidates for the highest policy position responsible for American policy in East Asia.