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Study Said to Show Diem, Not U.S., Barred '55 Vote

The New York Times is restrained by a Federal court from publishing its own articles on the Pentagon study. The following dispatch is based on an article in The Washington Post and was distributed by The Associated Press to all its newspapers, radio and television subscribers.

WASHINGTON, June 18 (AP)—The Washington Post said today that a Pentagon study asserts there was no connivance in 1955 between the United States and the Saigon Government to prevent the elections throughout North and South Vietnam that had been agreed upon by the 1954 Geneva Conference.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, feared that such elections could lead to a coalition government and eventual Communist takeover, but it was Ngo Dinh Diem, Diem, the South Vietnamese Premier and later President, who was responsible for their not being held, according to The Washington Post account.

The report, written by Chalmers M. Roberts and appearing in The Post's later editions today, was described as based on "sections of the Pentagon study on the origins of the Vietnam war, made available to The Washington Post."

There was no indication in The Post's article how the study had been obtained or whether it was the same, or part of the same secret, multivolume Defense Department documents used by The New York Times for a series of articles on the Vietnam conflict.

However, The Post sent an advisory message to the editors of papers subscribing to its news service, saying: "Your attention is drawn to the fact that the study on which this article 'Vietnam report' is based is the subject of the Government's injunction action against The New York Times in Federal Court in New York. In the judgment of The Washington Post editors, nothing in this article could be used to the injury of the United States."

The parts of the study disclosed by The Post today contained little not already known and published over the years since the Eisenhower Administration.

But these points were made: It was Mr. Diem, later assassinated, who was responsible almost alone for heading off the national elections that the Geneva Conference had provided for, by refusing to deal with the Communists in North Vietnam.

An Army report dealing with a National Security Council position paper in early 1954 on the need of preventing a Communist take-over in any of the Indochinese regions said that the United States would need seven divisions plus air and naval support to win a ground war in Indochina. Fifteen years later, at the height of United States involvement, in April, 1969, there were nine American divisions and a total force of 543,000 men in Vietnam.

That Security Council position paper, approved by President Eisenhower, was based on what has been called the "domino theory"—the view that if one part of Indochina fell to the Communists and there was no Western intervention, the rest would fall, leading to danger for allies of the United States in the rest of Asia and Europe.

President Eisenhower, although approving the planning of the position paper, refused to intervene in the Indochina fighting to aid the French in their war against the Communist Vietnam without allied participation and congressional approval. The British refused to participate in any such operation.

Dulles Message Reported

As outlined by The Post, the Pentagon study indicates a reluctance on the part of President Eisenhower and particularly Secretary Dulles to take a step that they thought could lead to Communist domination.

Regarding the Vietnamese elections, The Post quoted in part from what it said was a July, 1954 cablegram from Mr. Dulles to involved United States diplomats: "Thus since undoubtedly true that elections might eventually mean unification under Ho Chi Minh this makes it all more important they should be only held as long after cease-fire agreement as possible and in conditions free from intimidation to give democratic element best chance.

"We believe important that no date should be set now and especially that no conditions should be accepted by French which would have direct or indirect effect of preventing effective international supervision of agreement insuring political as well as military guarantees."

The Geneva accords in 1954 called for elections for all Vietnam, with July, 1956, finally set as the date. Once the elections were scheduled, the United States ceased active opposition, but Mr. Dulles according to The Post's article, was unhappy nevertheless.

He is described in The Post account of the Pentagon documents as having said that a recent joint declaration by President Eisenhower and the British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, was going "down the drain with our apparent acquiescence."

U. N. Supervision Urged

That declaration called for unifying divided nations with elections supervised by the United Nations, something not provided for by the Geneva agreements.

While opposing the elections, The Post story said, Mr. Dulles also originally was against partitioning Vietnam. But the newspaper quotes a 1955 report from a French diplomat at the Geneva talks to U. Alexis Johnson, now Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, who was a member of the United States delegation:

"There had been conversations between Vietnamese and Vietnam Communist in which Vietnam had made it clear that only two alternatives were coalition government or partition."

Mr. Dulles is quoted as having said at that same time that United States opposition to de facto partition was being examined.

But in the end it was Premier Diem almost alone who stopped the elections and any possibility of a coalition government with the North Vietnamese, according to The Post's account of the Pentagon report. The paper quoted what it called a summary part of the papers:

"As the deadline for consultations approached 20 July 1955, Diem was increasingly explicit that he did not consider free elections possible in North Vietnam, and had no intention of consulting with the Communists concerning them.

'U.S. Did Not Conive'

"The U.S. did not—as is often alleged—connive with Diem to ignore the elections. U.S. State Department records indicate Diem's refusal to be bound by the Geneva accords and his opposition to pre-election consultations were at his own initiative.

"However, the U.S., which had expected elections to be held . . . shifted its position in the face of Diem's opposition, and of the evidence then accumulated about the oppressive nature of the regime in North Vietnam."

The summary itself then quotes a State Department study, The Post said, to the effect that the United States position was to leave elections up to the Vietnamese without any outside interference.

Part of the problem facing the United States in Indochina through the nineteen-fifties involved allied support for any possible United States intervention on behalf of the crumbling French empire.

As The Post tells the story, the Pentagon documents show Mr. Dulles as having been very critical of the British position regarding intervention.

After Foreign Minister Anthony Eden told Secretary Dulles in April, 1954, according to the account, that he feared military intervention in Vietnam would be "a bigger affair than Korea," Mr. Dulles is said to have summarized his feelings, in part:

"UK attitude is one of increasing weakness. British seem to feel that we are disposed to accept present risks of a Chinese war and this, coupled with their fear that we would start using atomic weapons, has badly frightened them."

Although The Post's account of the documents shows a generally hard approach by the United States Government in line with Mr. Dulles's thinking, the documents indicate that President Eisenhower took a careful approach.

In a memorandum The Post describes as having been written by Robert Cutler, the President's special assistant for National Security Council Affairs, Mr. Eisenhower is quoted as having told Secretary Dulles:

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