

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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Philippine Studies vol. 14, no. 4 (1966): 633–652

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

The Philippine Position on the Vietnam Question*

JOSE D. INGLES

THERE is no more authoritative formulation of the Philippine position on the Vietnam question than the four principles outlined by the President of the Philippines in his radio-television speech of 18 February 1966.

In President Marcos' own words, these principles are:

(1) We desire the establishment of peace in Vietnam at the earliest practicable time. We are, therefore, prepared to initiate or support any moves designed to bring the parties to the negotiating table;

(2) We regard it as essential that the relentless pressure of Communist aggression in Vietnam be stopped.... If we sat by, complacently awaiting the uncertain arrival of peace, we might wake up to find that we had nothing left to negotiate about;

(3) It is our unquestioned obligation as a free people to succor peoples of kindred faith fighting in defense of their freedom. If we did not, we would be disloyal to our own history and ignorant of the meaning of past events; and

(4) Perhaps most important of all, we feel that in aiding Vietnam we are insuring our own future safety...

* This paper was originally delivered as one of the lectures at the Seminar on South East Asia and the Philippines, held at the Ateneo de Manila in July and August 1966, and attended by 20 American teachers from various States of the Union. The Seminar was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

It will be readily seen that the Philippine position is based not only on its own concept of peace and national security but also on broad moral, humanitarian, historical and political considerations.

The concrete manifestations of the national policy are the peace initiatives of the President and the sending of aid to the Republic of Vietnam which has been authorized by Congress. These twin moves have been the subject of intense public debate so much so that it can be said that the people really participated in the clarification and refinement of the objectives of our national policy. This is as it should be in any democracy worthy of the name.

The legal basis for these two aspects of national policy as regards Vietnam is, of course, the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, otherwise known as the Manila Pact of 8 September 1954.

The ultimate objective of a peaceful settlement in Vietnam found expression in the Joint Communiqué of the SEATO Council of Ministers Meeting in London on 5 May 1965, where Member Governments "agreed that every effort should be made to promote a satisfactory and lasting settlement of the conflict that would ensure the right of the South Vietnamese people to pursue their future in peace and complete freedom from external interference." At the SEATO Council of Ministers Meeting in Canberra on 29 June 1966, "all Members expressed their common resolve to do everything in their power to promote the peaceful settlement of the conflict."

However, the Preamble of the Manila Pact proclaims the desire of the Parties to live in peace with all peoples and all governments; and Article I contains an understanding of the Parties to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered.

On the other hand, aid to South Vietnam is an obligation arising out of the Pacific Charter and the Manila Pact.

Economic assistance is envisioned independently of military assistance, the latter being called for only upon the occurrence of certain conditions.

Under Article III of the Treaty, the Parties undertake among others to cooperate with one another in the further development of economic measures, including technical assistance, designed to promote both economic progress and social well-being.

Article IV, paragraph 1, of the Treaty provides that in case of aggression by means of armed attack against any Party or Protocol State, each Party recognizes that it would endanger its own peace and safety and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.

Paragraph 2 of the same article obliges the Parties to consult immediately in order to agree on measures to be taken for the common defense in the event that the inviolability or integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any Party in the Treaty Area or any Protocol State is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area.

The Protocol to the Treaty designated the States of Cambodia and Laos and "the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam" as eligible in respect of the economic measures contemplated by Article III. Article IV, paragraph 3, moreover, expressly provided that no action on the territory of any Protocol State under said Article shall be taken except at the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned.

The SEATO Council of Ministers Meeting in Manila in April 1964, expressed grave concern about the continuing Communist aggression against the Republic of Vietnam, directed, supplied and supported by the Communist regime in North Vietnam, in flagrant violation of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962. They agreed "that the members of SEATO should remain prepared, if necessary, to take further con-

cret steps within their respective capabilities in fulfillment of their obligations under the Treaty." They also agreed "that the defeat of the Communist campaign is essential not only to the security of the Republic of Vietnam, but to that of Southeast Asia. It will be convincing proof that Communist expansion by such tactics will not be permitted."¹

Pursuant to the foregoing declaration, the Congress of the Philippines enacted Republic Act 4162 on 21 July 1964, authorizing the President of the Philippines to send economic and technical assistance to South Vietnam and appropriated ₱1 million for the purpose. At the specific request of the Republic of Vietnam made on 10 August 1964, the Philippines sent a medical and civic action team of 34 uniformed officers and enlisted men to Vietnam which number was later increased to 68.

At the SEATO Council of Ministers meeting in London in May, 1965, the Council noted that in accordance with the Manila agreement of April 1964 Member Governments had given substantial assistance and reinforcement in order to assist South Vietnam in resisting aggression from the North. They agreed, therefore, "to continue and, consistent with their commitments elsewhere, to increase their assistance to South Vietnam." They also agreed that "until Communist aggression is brought to an end, resolute defensive action must be continued."

The Prime Minister of Vietnam had in the meantime requested the President of the Philippines in a letter dated 14 April 1965 "for engineer troops, for transportation companies, and for military specialists" to be assigned "for peaceful and constructive tasks." The Congress having adjourned in 1965 without the Senate being able to take up a House bill appropriating ₱25 million for the purpose, the Vietnamese Government reiterated its request on 2 February 1966, for an engineering battalion with security unit.

Before recommending to Congress the passage of a new Vietnam aid bill, President Marcos announced in all candor,

¹ The French Council Member stated that "under the present serious circumstances it was wise to abstain from any declaration."

basing himself squarely on the Manila and London communiques of the SEATO Council:

Philippine assistance to Vietnam is based on a hard-headed assessment of our national interests. But there is clearly a limit to the kind of assistance that we can give Vietnam, for we ourselves need all our resources, and more, for the internal requirements of national growth. We shall therefore base the scale of our assistance on two considerations— first, on what we can safely afford; and secondly, and within this limitation, on the kind of assistance requested by the Vietnamese Government.

On 18 July 1966, the President signed into law Republic Act No. 4664 appropriating P35 million "to increase Philippine economic and technical assistance to South Vietnam as provided in Republic Act No. 4162 by sending to that country a Civic Action Group consisting of engineering construction, medical and rural community development teams which shall undertake socio-economic projects mutually agreed upon by the Government of the Philippines and the Government of South Vietnam." It was also provided that the Civic Action Group shall be provided with its own security support and that all its personnel shall be drawn from volunteers who shall at all times be under a Philippine command.

It should be noted that Republic Act No. 4664 expressly mentions in its preamble the requests of the Government of South Vietnam for aid from the Philippine Government in consonance with the stand taken by the Philippine Delegation to the Ninth and Tenth SEATO Council Meetings held respectively in Manila on April 13-15, 1964, and London on May 3-5, 1965. So that the President and Congress may be said to have ratified the position taken by the SEATO Council of Ministers at Manila and London *vis-a-vis* the Vietnam question.

By way of footnote, it should be mentioned that the SEATO Council of Ministers meeting in Canberra in June 1966 "observed with satisfaction the increase in military, economic and humanitarian assistance to South Vietnam by Member Governments during the past year, in fulfillment of, or consistent with their obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty." The Council mentioned, among

others, the recent decision of the Philippines to send a construction engineering unit with security support.

Even if the Manila Pact did not exist, however, the Philippines can not but be directly concerned with the situation in Southeast Asia, particularly the Communist aggression in South Vietnam. The Philippines can not be blind to the categorical imperatives of geography, its own historical experience and the prevailing international milieu.

In this rapidly shrinking world made possible by the incredible advance of science and technology, the Philippines has less reason to rely heavily for its defense against aggression on its isolation as an archipelago. The fact that the islands were peopled by successive waves of sea-borne migrations illustrates their vulnerability from the sea. During the Spanish times, a Chinese invasion fleet under Limahong landed fighting forces in Pangasinan in 1575 but were repulsed. The British were more successful and actually occupied Manila from 1762 to 1764. During the Second World War, the Japanese defeated the combined American and Filipino forces and forcibly held the Philippines for four years.

In the present age of guided missiles, the Philippines like any other country, is exposed to nuclear attack against which it has no defense.

Before independence, the Commonwealth of the Philippines became a signatory to the Declaration of the United Nations of 1 January 1942 and subsequently as a founding member to the Charter of the United Nations on 26 June 1945, which was intended to establish a system of collective security.

However, as the last President of the Commonwealth and the first President of the Republic, Manuel Roxas, aptly said:

We will maintain with all our strength and all our power our obligations to the United Nations, and to the causes set forth in the United Nations Charter to which we are a signatory. In the same way, we will maintain friendly and honorable relations with all our neighbors and look forward to the day when peace and security will be maintained by mutual consent and by the collective conscience of mankind. But until that happy day dawns upon us,

we can much more securely repose our faith in the understanding and comradeship which exist between the Philippines and the United States than in the hope of an international morality which, however desirable, is still today in the process of development.

Thus after Philippine independence was proclaimed the Military Bases Agreement and the Military Assistance Pact of March, 1947, were among the first treaties with the United States signed by President Roxas. These treaties were concluded against the background of the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, just as the triumph of Communist arms in mainland China and subsequent Communist aggression in South Korea provided the backdrop for the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Philippines and the United States signed on August 13, 1951.

The defense of the Philippines having been assured by military alliance with the strongest power in the world, the Philippines was able not only to devote its energies to pressing problems at home but also to initiate closer relations with its neighbors in Asia.

Alarmed by the wanton invasion of South Korea, the Philippines sponsored the Baguio Conference in 1950 to forge a closer union among the peoples of Southeast Asia dedicated to the maintenance of peace and freedom in the region through political, economic and cultural cooperation. It was the forerunner of the Manila Pact of 1954 to which the Philippines readily adhered, with a Communist-led uprising at home and the Communist take-over in Indo-China still fresh in her memory.

It is clear that our national policy is against the imposition of the Communist ideology both at home and abroad. Republic Act No. 1700, passed by Congress in 1957, outlawed the Communist Party in the Philippines. Abroad, the national policy further manifested itself in non-recognition of and an embargo on trade with, any Communist state or regime.

President Marcos was thinking in terms of the domestic repercussions of a Communist take-over in South Vietnam when he postulated the principle that in aiding Vietnam we are insuring our own future safety. He said:

The vast sea that separates us from the Asian mainland may provide protection from external Communist aggression but it can hardly provide defense against homegrown Communists. For one thing is certain. If the Reds win Vietnam that victory will signal the re-activation of Communist insurgency all over Southeast Asia, including the Philippines. Almost certainly, it will mean renewed Communist activity in the Philippines.

While we remain confident of overcoming this eventuality if it should arise, we would be forced in the future to divert our energies and resources to a degree a hundred times more than that required now which would otherwise be devoted to the urgent tasks of social and economic development. We feel therefore that assisting Vietnam today constitutes one form of guarantee that Communist activity does not arise in our country again and that our own efforts at material progress shall continue free from the hindrance of Communist subversion.

It was in the same vein that Senate President Arturo Tolentino spoke when he termed aid to South Vietnam as "an investment in our security". He said:

I look at this aid to South Vietnam as a matter of security for the Filipinos in the Philippines.

I will grant that communism may eventually lose in South Vietnam even if we send no aid. And I will admit that our aid alone will not insure victory against communism in that country.

But I say that the defeat of communism in South Vietnam, the frustration of the communist experiment of 'war of national liberation' being staged there, and the consequent setback of Red China in her bid for leadership in Southeast Asia by failure in South Vietnam, would certainly have a demoralizing effect on communist sympathizers and would-be 'liberators' in our own land.

We shall, therefore, be eventual beneficiaries of the defeat of communism in South Vietnam....

On the other hand, Speaker Corneilo Villareal of the House of Representatives considered South Vietnam as the Philippines' first line of defense against Communist aggression. Taking the long view of the repercussions in Southeast Asia of a Communist victory in South Vietnam, he said in sponsoring the original House bill on 11 May 1965:

I have come down from the rostrum, so that I could discuss this bill openly and freely with the Members of this House. The greatest

possible strategic errors that we might commit is to consider the struggle in Vietnam as an isolated question, a development of no important concern to us. This error would be tantamount to conducting our foreign policy on the illusion that the Philippines is not an integral and a permanent part of Southeast Asia and so could afford to go it alone, serenely indifferent to its surroundings.

But whether we ignore it or not, the situation in South Vietnam will affect us. It is already affecting us. The events there have increasingly impinged on our national security, economic development and our way of life. I repeat: it affects our national security, economic development and, above all, our way of life.

South Vietnam today is the focal point of the cold war going on these past twenty years between the free world and the communist bloc. The crisis in Vietnam, characterized by military stalemate and unstable internal situation, is directly linked to a developing crisis in the entire region of Southeast Asia. Should Vietnam fall, or be allowed to fall by default, the political effect on the surrounding countries, including the Philippines, would be incalculable. Increased communist prestige and power in the area would constitute an effective political pressure on all the remaining countries of Southeast Asia, including the Philippines. This, in turn, would inevitably affect our relations with our other neighbors in Southeast Asia.

It is clear that our Congressional leaders were confronted with the stark reality that the situation in Vietnam is in fact part and parcel of the larger conflict between the free world led by the United States on one hand and the Communist bloc headed by Soviet Russia and Communist China on the other. This much has been conceded in numerous pronouncements by no less than the Congress, the President and the Secretary of State of the United States.

For example, the Joint Resolution of Congress of 10 August 1964 authorizing the United States participation in the collective defense of South Vietnam, said in part that "the United States regard as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia."

President Johnson on 12 July 1966 said of the foundations for peace being laid down in Asia:

First is the determination of the United States to meet our obligations in Asia as a Pacific power.

You have heard arguments the other way. They are built on the old belief that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.

They claim that we have business but business interests in Asia; that Europe, not the Far East, is our proper 'sphere of interest'; that our commitments in Asia are not worth the resources they require; that the ocean is vast, the cultures alien, the languages strange, and the races different.

These arguments have been tested, and found wanting.

They do not stand the test of geography: we are bounded not by one but two oceans—and whether by aircraft or ship, satellite or missile, the Pacific is as crossable as the Atlantic.

And Secretary Rusk, testifying before the House of Foreign Affairs Committee on 3 August 1965 said:

...The loss of Southeast Asia to the Communists would constitute a serious shift in the balance of power against the interests of the free world. And the loss of South Vietnam would make the defense of the rest of Southeast Asia much more costly and difficult.

It is evident from the debates in both houses of our Congress that our legislators know only too well that Vietnam has become another probing ground for the Communist bid to over-run the whole of Southeast Asia. As Senator Jose Roy, Majority Floor Leader, said in his sponsorship speech on the Vietnam aid bill on 30 May 1966: "The war in South Vietnam is, certainly, an integral part of the over-all plan of communism for world domination."

Our Congressional leaders are also keenly aware of the real nature of the so-called "wars of liberation" being waged the world over by the Communist camp, stripped of their ideological mask. President Pro-Tempore Lorenzo Sumulong, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, after tracing the conduct of the Soviet Union since Yalta and of Communist China since Korea, came to the following conclusion:

I am therefore compelled to say that the so-called liberation movement of the Viet Congs is but a clever and convenient smoke screen to hide the expansionist designs of Communist China and of the Soviet Union. If South Vietnam falls into the hands of the Viet Congs, there will be no free elections, there will be no government of

the people, for the people, and by the people established in Vietnam, there will be no freedom and independence for the people of Vietnam, they will be converted into another Communist satellite drawn into the orbit and sphere of influence of either Communist China or the Soviet Union.

The war being waged by the Viet Congs is in truth and in fact communist aggression, it is communist infiltration and subversion masquerading under the guise and name of a national liberation movement. To borrow the language of Shakespeare, it is a beautiful flower with a serpent underneath.

It should also be recalled that apart from references to SEATO, it was recognized in the preamble of Republic Act No. 4162 that "the Philippines is committed to the cause of democracy and freedom and is resolved to extend economic and technical assistance to South Vietnam which is now imperilled by the forces of Communism".

In effect, therefore, President Marcos was reaffirming a national policy declared by Congress when he postulated the principle that the relentless pressure of Communist aggression in Vietnam must be stopped.

For his part, Senator Gil J. Puyat, President of the Nacionalista Party, correlated this view with the other principle enunciated by President Marcos supporting a negotiated peace in Vietnam as follows:

...It seems to me that there are two ways we can help bring about peace. The first is to give substance to the President's declaration that we shall actively support reasonable moves leading towards negotiations in Vietnam. The other is to show, by our assistance to Vietnam, that we and the free peoples of Asia are united in our common determination to deprive the Communists of the fruits of wanton aggression. The sooner they realize this the closer we are to a settlement in Vietnam. In this sense, a vote for aid to Vietnam is a vote for peace.

The question of aiding South Vietnam was not disputed in Congress. There was general agreement on the principle enunciated by President Marcos that it is our unquestioned obligation as free people to succor peoples of kindred faith fighting in defense of their freedom. The obligation to aid South Vietnam, aside from being a treaty commitment, could be justified on moral, humanitarian and ideological grounds.

The nature of the aid was the crux of the problem presented to our legislative policy makers. Here was revealed divergencies of approach if not of conviction. This diversity of opinion sprang from different appraisals of United States policy in Vietnam.

It is obvious that no matter how much we may approve the American policy of containment in Asia, that does not make it automatically our own policy or make us joint partners in its implementation. A small country like the Philippines has neither the power nor the means to embark on such an ambitious program so out of proportion to its modest objectives and capabilities.

Senator Jose Roy, Majority Floor Leader, put his finger on this fundamental issue when he said:

Mr. President, in pointing out the stakes of the United States in South Vietnam, it is not my thesis that our national interests are the same as those of the United States. But I submit that the success of the South Vietnamese, the United States and their Allies in stopping Communist subversion and aggression in South Vietnam and in establishing a politically and economically viable state of South Vietnam will enhance our national interests.

Senator Lorenzo Tañada, in his speech of 17 May 1966 posed the following question: "Is it in the national interest for the Philippines to identify itself completely with all aspects of the United States policy in Vietnam by sending soldiers there?"

Senator Juan Liwag, in his speech of 26 May 1966 put the question in another way: "Vietnam is the center of a power conflict. Vietnam is the focal point in the titanic struggle between the big powers. For as far as the United States is concerned, the enemy is not so much the Vietcongs as it is Communist China. China, on the other hand, has interpreted the U.S. moves in Vietnam as being mainly directed against her. Is it our role to intervene militarily in the battle of the giants?"

The Declaration of Honolulu subscribed by President Johnson, Chairman Van Thieu and Premier Cao Ky on 8 February 1966, which has been characterized as a historic turning

point in American relationships with Asia, emphasized the defeat of aggression and the achievement of social revolution as among the goals of the two countries in Vietnam. The seemed to point a way out of the dilemma which confronted our leaders in Congress: should Philippine aid be military or economic? Speaking on the House version of the Vietnam aid bill calling for the sending of an engineer battalion with security troops, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Narciso Ramos testified before the Lower House Committee on Appropriations, on Foreign Affairs and on National Defense on 28 February 1966 as follows:

To cope successfully with the guerrilla war as is now being waged by the Viet Cong, it is axiomatic that the wholehearted support of the people for the Government must first be won. The measures to counter the insurgency should thus consist of a co-ordinated, two-pronged effort: on one hand, to gain and consolidate the support of the masses, thereby isolating the guerrillas; and on the other hand, to defeat the guerrilla by military action and by destroying its bases and sanctuaries. Our engineers will undertake the first phase of this program.

It is worth noting that in Vice-President Humphrey's report of 3 March 1966 on his Asian trip, as submitted to President Johnson, his first recommendation was:

We must pursue two objectives in South Vietnam: to help preserve their independence, which is threatened by Communist subversion and aggression, and to help achieve a social and economic revolution in the lives of the Vietnamese people.

This point of view was emphasized in the sponsorship speech delivered before the House of Representatives on 31 March 1966, by Congressman Pelaez, Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs:

There is, therefore, a second front in Vietnam in the fight against Communism. That front is to build a society in the image of freedom, to help the government of South Vietnam in its efforts to show to the people that it can be better than any government which the North Vietnamese or the Viet Cong or the Communists could give them. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the 'Honolulu Declaration' was to me a happy turn of events. In that statement the heads of state of the United States and South Vietnam expressly declared it to be the prime objective of their common fight not

merely to fight the Viet Congs, not merely to use the military might of the United States to stop the Communists, but above all to build a society in freedom and peace where every man will have the opportunity to live his own life and work out his own destiny.

It is in this field that we can be most effective. I say that if we help in this area of building up a new society in Vietnam, we can be as effective as thousands of American soldiers. We can do things which the Americans cannot do. Destiny has placed us in the same region with affinities of color and race with the Vietnamese. We are all Asians. We can do much in helping build this new society from the grassroots. This is the purpose of the bill before us now.

To be sure when the House bill reached the Senate, several substitute bills were tabled omitting reference to "a battalion of construction engineers with its own security support," and specifying instead civilian doctors, surgeons, nurses, medical technologists and/or civilian teams (such as civic action, rural or community development workers; agricultural technicians, civil affairs specialists, engineers, cooperative experts, etc.). The recommended appropriations varied moreover from P10 to P35 million.

The Senate Committees on Foreign Relations, on National Defense and Security and on Finance, reported a consolidated bill which differed from that finally approved in conference committee in that Civic Action Group "shall consist of an engineer construction battalion, a station hospital with six out-patient rural health teams, and six civic action teams."

It is worth noting that the joint report of the three Senate Committees above-mentioned identified the aid envisioned in the House Bill as well as in all the other substitute Senate bills, as covered by Article III rather than Article IV of the Manila Pact, that is, as economic and technical aid rather than military aid. This notwithstanding, a sizeable minority, more or less identified with the substitute bills, voted against the final version.

The opponents of the measure maintained that the volunteer army engineers to be sent to South Vietnam or at least their security support, could not be other than combat troops,

or that they could not remain non-combatant for long in that troubled land. Senator Jovito Salonga summed up the consequences in his speech of 24 May 1966, as follows:

I believe the distinguished sponsors of this bill realize the gravity and importance of this question. For once it is established that what we are sending there is in fact a military expedition, the greater bulk of which are combatants—pure and simple—then it becomes our solemn duty to tell our people in all honesty that we in Congress are committing our country to war, that we are engaging in an act of hostility—and Hanoi has said so in plain terms—that under the Third Hague Convention of 1907 it is our obligation to declare war, or an ultimatum preparatory to hostilities, that under the Constitution we have sworn to defend and uphold, it is only Congress by 2/3 vote of all the members of each House, that has the exclusive, sole power to declare war (Sec. 25, Article 6), and that this power cannot under any circumstances be delegated to the President of the Philippines....²

However, all the dissenting Senators are on record as favoring the despatch of civilian workers for economic and technical aid to promote economic progress and social well-being of the people of South Vietnam. In his privilege speech of 24 March 1966, Senator Manglapus keynoted the Senate discussions on the Vietnam aid bill by advocating imaginative Philippine participation in the "social revolution" in South Vietnam under Article III rather than Article IV of the Manila Pact.

Senator Ambrosio Padilla, precisely adopting President Marcos' first principle supporting a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, opposed the measure on the following grounds:

Mr. President, while we want to increase our economic and technical assistance to South Vietnam, particularly in our "area of excellence" in the form of medical and humanitarian aid, we must not forget that our objective is not necessarily victory but peace.

² On 27 July 1966 the Supreme Court dismissed a petition to stop the Government from releasing the P35 million intended for the expenses of the Philippine contingent to be sent to Vietnam on the ground that the sending of combatant troops was an act tantamount to a declaration of war. The court ruled that objections to the law were mainly political in character and the allegations in the suit do not make out a prima facie case of unconstitutionality of Republic Act No. 4664.

Therefore, we must pursue and maintain a position that will not make difficult, if not impossible, our posture for peace. Even the United States, which is deeply involved in the escalated war in South Vietnam, is earnestly seeking for peaceful settlement, for a cessation of hostilities and for an honorable peace. This principal objective of peace cannot be logically pursued by our government by sending a military contingent to the war-torn battlefield of South Vietnam.

It will be noted that the same principles have been invoked by both the supporters and opponents of the Vietnam aid bill. It is obvious, however, that the opponents of the measure wished no more than to emphasize by their dissent that they are not in favor of a military solution to the Vietnam problem or at least are opposed to military involvement.

Senator Tañada stressed that the real conflict in Vietnam is the contest for the minds and loyalties of the South Vietnamese people, "a war of ideas which cannot be shot at, bayoneted or pulverized even by megaton bombs." He also pointed to the danger of escalation of the Philippine commitment as follows:

Let the case of the United States and Korea serve as a warning. The United States started with a few soldier-advisers in Vietnam. Now she has two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers there. Korea started with an engineering battalion of 1,500 men. Today, she has a combat division of 18,000 soldiers...

It appears, moreover, that even those who are against military involvement would not oppose the sending of Filipino troops to Vietnam pursuant to a decision of the United Nations. Senator Jose Diokno in his privilege speech before the Senate on 21 February 1966, said:

Under present conditions in this country, and considering the manner in which the war effort is being carried out in South Vietnam, I am opposed to the sending of Filipino troops there, whether we call them combatants or non-combatants. I am *not* opposed to sending more doctors, more nurses, more civic action workers. And if conditions change here or abroad, if, for example, the United Nations should take the position in South Vietnam that it took in South Korea, I would not oppose the sending of such combat troops to South Vietnam as are within our capabilities. But here and now, I am opposed to the sending of Filipino soldiers, whether combatant or non-combatant, to South Vietnam.

It goes without saying that the Philippines is bound to fulfill its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. As a matter of fact the fundamental basis for the Philippine foreign policy goal of peace is the very purpose for which the United Nations was created. That is nowhere better expressed than in the determination of the peoples of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" as stated in the Preamble to the Charter.

As things now stand, both Communist China and North Korea do not recognize the competence of the United Nations to discuss, much less settle, the Vietnam question. Under the circumstances the Soviet Union, apart from other reasons, would not agree to the United Nations taking up the question.

Even if we assume that both the United States and the Soviet Union would be willing to submit the case of Vietnam to the Security Council, it is problematical whether the United Nations would intervene in Vietnam as it did in Korea.

In the first place, South Korea is a United Nations baby while South Vietnam is not. The United Nations recognized the Republic of Korea as the only legitimate government in the peninsula, which is not the case with the Republic of Vietnam.

In the second place, the situation in Korea in 1950 is different from the situation in Vietnam in 1966. The aggression of North Korea was more clear-cut than the present aggression of North Vietnam. Moreover, different rules governed the division at the 17th and at the 38th parallels.

In the third place, the distribution of power in the United Nations in 1966 is different from that obtaining in 1950. The so-called non-aligned nations now form the majority in the United Nations; they are more wary of siding with any power bloc since the abortive attempt to enforce Article 19 at the 19th General Assembly which threatened to wreck the United Nations.

It would seem that the only hope for a negotiated peace in Vietnam would be the reconvening of the Geneva Con-

ference. This is, however, not yet in sight. So far, the Soviet Union has resisted the call of the United Kingdom for the two Co-Chairmen to convoke the Geneva Conference against the wishes of Communist China and North Vietnam.

In the classic statement of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, abstract principles do not decide concrete cases. This holds true in the international as well as in the domestic plane. The more so where relations among states are concerned since the latter are ever jealous of their sovereign prerogative to act according to the national interest which may or may not coincide with the universal good.

The adoption of a particular policy does not necessarily preclude the further consideration of alternatives or the rejection of those which do not bring about the desired objective. Since international politics is never static, today's response may not be adequate to tomorrow's challenge. Events have also a habit of running away with policy. So that national policy if it has to be of any value at all must be dynamic. In this sense, inconsistency of method or tactics should be the least concern of the statesman to whom the national objective is paramount.

The fundamental objective of Philippine national policy *vis-a-vis* the Vietnam question in the words of President Marcos, is still "the establishment of peace at the earliest possible time." This is no idle talk because of the bold initiatives which President Marcos has personally taken in Asia and the moral support he has given to all moves designed to bring the parties to the negotiating table, in particular the appeal of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI.

The President had sent a special emissary to Peking to sound out the possibilities of Asian mediation in the Vietnam conflict. He also sounded the call for all Asian countries to attend a Peace Conference to discuss ways and means of suspending or terminating all hostilities in Vietnam. As the President told the Apostolic Nuncio, the Philippines is ready at all times to cooperate in the attainment of an objective that transcended all faiths and creeds.

It is a source of comfort to the Philippines that, as demonstrated in Vietnam, the United States stands by its pledge that it will instantly repel Communist aggression against the free countries of Southeast Asia.

At the same time, the Philippines cannot remain indifferent to the danger of miscalculation in Vietnam which might trigger off a thermo-nuclear holocaust. Faced with such an eventuality the more prudent course for the Philippines would seem to be to doubly insure its ultimate survival through the promotion of a stable peace in Asia.

The United States has made clear its desire for a just and honorable peace in Vietnam. It has already driven home in no uncertain terms the lesson that aggression does not pay. Would it not be possible under the circumstances for the parties to arrive at a mutually satisfactory accommodation and thus lay the basis for peace without appeasement?

If the South Asian countries, aligned or non-aligned, unite in one voice to urge that further bloodshed be stopped forthwith, it would be a big step towards a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. If nothing else would, this should stir the conscience of the great no less than the small.

More than that, it would serve notice that the nations of Southeast Asia do not relish being mere pawns in the struggle for supremacy of the super-powers. It would also be a protest against the conversion of their region into a veritable cockpit of the ideological conflict.

The first stirrings of the assertion of their national identity by the emerging countries of Asia manifested itself in support of the Indonesian revolution against the return of Dutch rule. The ventilation of the Indonesian question in the United Nations led to a conference of Asian and African nations in New Delhi. Continuing consultation at Lake Success bore fruit in the formation of the Asian-African group in the United Nations.

The first Asian-African Conference held in Bandung in 1955, in which the Asian Members of SEATO were represented, adopted ten principles to guide the relations of the parti-

icipating countries not only among themselves but also with the rest of the world.

Following the Baguio Conference of 1950, however, the Philippines continued to press for a more limited and more cohesive Asian group. A Pacific conference held in Manila in 1961 was the forerunner of ASPAC formed in Seoul in June, 1966. Other Philippine initiatives led to the Bangkok Declaration of 31 July 1961 which laid the foundation of ASA. The Manila Accords of 1 August 1962 gave birth to Maphilindo which was designed to promote and achieve Asian solutions to Asian problems by the Asians themselves.

What seems important for our purposes, however, is that both ASA and ASPAC have gone outside their limited framework of economic, social and cultural cooperation, to pronounce on the highly political question of Vietnam. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Narciso Ramos said in Bangkok during the ASA Foreign Ministers' meeting that all Asian countries should join together in bringing to bear their collective moral authority to put an end to the Vietnam war.

It is against the foregoing background that we should consider President Marcos' peace initiatives to put an end to the travail of the long-suffering Vietnamese people and restore stability in Southeast Asia.

Perhaps out of this ferment and torment, Southeast Asia will at last come into its own!