

# Memorandum of World's Reaction to Developments in Vietnam, September 14, 1963

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MEMORANDUM FOR:  
Mr. McGeorge Bundy  
Special Assistant to the President  
The White House

SUBJECT: World Reaction to Development in Viet-Nam

Some sympathy for the U.S. dilemma in Viet-Nam has emerged in the last week, particularly in Western Europe, but most comment is still critical of U.S. policies. There is virtually no sympathy for the Diem regime, except in South Korea and the Philippines where officials see Diem as the only available anti-communist bulwark. This applies to some extent to Thailand as well.

De Gaulle's oral intervention was criticized widely in France except by the papers traditionally supporting him. It drew only limited comment elsewhere.

## FAR EAST

The situation in Viet-Nam continues to receive major news play but editorial comment has slackened during the past week. Available comment, both media and official, has tended to focus on the question of continued U.S. support for the Diem regime. Reference to the possibility of a neutralized Viet-Nam, as implied by De Gaulle, has been limited. Buddhist groups in Thailand, Burma and Cambodia continues to agitate against GVN treatment of Buddhists. Peking and Hanoi reports now reflect belief that U.S. may eventually replaced Diem but that this will not affect the war.

## WESTERN EUROPE

Viet-Nam crisis remains the subject of continuing and extensive news coverage and considerable editorial comment in the West European press. Comment has been almost totally critical of the Diem family regime. Though not uncritical of some American moves, the majority of non-communist papers display considerable sympathy for the U.S. dilemma, and have offered few concrete suggestions for remedies. Recent news coverage has played up U.S. alleged participation in anti-Diem moves but editorial comment on this subject is not yet available.

## NEAR EAST-SOUTH ASIA

Crisis continues receive substantial news play though volume has dwindled somewhat since the wave of reaction following the imposition of partial law and attack on pagodas on August 21. Scattered editorial and backgrounders in media are relentlessly critical of the Diem regime and continue to view its removal as the only answer if the war against the Viet Cong is to be won. Criticism of U.S. policy has softened somewhat, most editorial comment viewing U.S. as faced with necessity of dealing with "difficult and corrupt" regime with which it has little sympathy while responding to the longer range

necessity of fighting the Viet Cong. De Gaulle proposal of unification has drawn little attention. Three leading Indian newspapers split sharply, one opposing and two supporting it.

#### AFRICA

Only light and scattered coverage of Viet-Nam issue. Except for Algeria, very little comment specifically condemns the U.S. Some Africans view South Vietnamese events in terms of Catholic oppression during the Middle Ages. Neutralization of the country is offered as a possible solution in Tunisia's Jeune Afrique.

#### LATIN AMERICA

South Vietnam situation receiving moderate news treatment. Editorial comment scarce. News treatment often appeared under headlines which point up the disagreement between Washington and Saigon.

#### CONCLUSION:

Virtually no sympathy or support for Diem regime except as noted above. Some sympathy and understanding to increase unless new and violent acts of suppression occur in South Viet-Nam

I conclude that the degree of the dilemma and the complexity of the issues involved is almost as well understood abroad as it is in Washington.

Edward R. Murrow