

Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen

July 25, 1969

THE PRESIDENT. [1.] As Ron Ziegler [Press Secretary] has already told you, the remarks today will be for attribution but not direct quotation, and for background.¹

¹The text of these remarks was later released for publication in this volume.

For your further information in that respect, Marshall Green [Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs] will brief the members of the press who desire to have background on the Philippines and Indonesia. He will be with us through those two stops. For the balance of the stops, Henry Kissinger will be available to brief you if you desire him to do so.

Insofar as the plans are concerned, there are no changes in schedule to announce; I have seen some speculation about changes in schedule. I have no present plans to go to Vietnam. I should say, however, that Ambassador Bunker² will be coming to Bangkok along with the Ambassadors from the other Asian countries that we will not be visiting, and I intend to have a conversation with him there which will be apart from the conversation I will have with the other Ambassadors on the general situation in the area.

²Ellsworth Bunker, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam.

There is also a possibility that General Abrams will be able to come over with Ambassador Bunker to Bangkok for that meeting.

UNITED STATES ROLE IN ASIA

[2.] Now, insofar as this phase of the trip is concerned, and I will speak first to the Asian phase and then later and briefly to the Romanian phase, I think that the backgrounder that you have already had from Henry Kissinger and the general statements that have been made from the State Department have covered it pretty well. I think what would be of greatest interest to you before we go to your questions is to give you the perspective that I have with regard to Asia and America's role in Asia.

As you know, my background here goes back a few years. It was in 1953 that I first visited this area. That trip was very extensive, with the usual 4 days in each country, a so-called state visit in each country. It provided an opportunity to meet the leaders, but more than that to know the countries in a very effective way.

In the 16 years that have passed, however, since that time, the changes have been very dramatic. I have returned to Asia, as you know, on a number of occasions since then, and particularly to the countries that we will be visiting on this trip. Consequently, I have kept up with later developments and also, with the exception of President Yahya [Gen. Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan] in Pakistan, I know each of the Asian leaders that I will be meeting and will be able to speak to them from that background.

Insofar as the general purpose of a trip like this, I can understand some of the speculation to the effect that: Why does a President of the United States think he learns anything by spending 1 day each in an Asian country--or, for that matter, as we did earlier, in a European country?

The answer is, and I might indicate what will be my general policy for the balance of my service in the White House, that I think a 1-day trip is just as valuable as 4 days. In other words, if you take a 1-day trip, and concentrate, as I do, on very little protocol and a great deal of face-to-face conversation, an individual, in meeting the leader of the other country, will gain as much as if he stretches it out over a period of 4 days. I have been through both experiences and, therefore, am somewhat knowledgeable in that respect.

I feel, too, that when one considers the time that is available to a President in these periods, that it is essential, in order to cover all the ground that needs to be covered, to limit, first, the amount of travel and the amount of time that is taken for each one of the stops. I mention that only as some of the reasoning that has gone into my decision with regard to covering a great deal of ground in a very short period of time--in this case, going around the world and, in the space of about 8 days, after the moon shot, covering a number of countries.

Now, insofar as the individuals are concerned, having met all of these leaders previously, I suppose the question could be raised, and with good reason, that once you know a leader then contact with ambassadors would be sufficient. However, I have found it in my previous travels in Asia, and in Europe as well, that as these situations change it is vitally important to have a renewed contact with the leader in each of the countries involved, a renewed contact because his attitudes may change. And in that way, when I read, as I do read day after day, the cables that come in from all over the world, I can have a much better understanding of what those cables mean, the nuances, if I have more recently had a direct contact, face-to-face, with the individual involved, the individual leader involved.

That is one of the reasons why I am a great believer in visits of this sort, where they are consistent with and can be taken at a time that will fit in with other very demanding parts of our schedule.

Now, a word about what is a very consuming interest in Asia. A consuming interest, I say, because it is one that I have had for a number of years, and one that now, as I look at the perspective of history, becomes even more imperative.

The United States is going to be facing, we hope before too long--no one can say how long, but before too long--a major decision: What will be its role in Asia and in the Pacific after the end of the war in Vietnam? We will be facing that decision, but also the Asian nations will be wondering about what that decision is.

When I talked to Prime Minister Gorton [of Australia], for example, he indicated, in the conversations he had had with a number of Asian leaders, they all wondered whether the United States, because of its frustration over the war in Vietnam, because of its earlier frustration over the war in Korea--whether the United States would continue to play a significant role in Asia, or whether the United States, like the French before, and then the British, and, of course, the Dutch--whether we would withdraw from the Pacific and play a minor role.

This is a decision that will have to be made, of course, as the war comes to an end. But the time to develop the thinking which will go into that decision is now. I think that one of the weaknesses in American foreign policy is that too often we react rather precipitately to events as they occur. We fail to have the perspective and the long-range view which is essential for a policy that will be viable.

As I see it, even though the war in Vietnam has been, as we all know, a terribly frustrating one, and, as a result of that frustration, even though there would be a tendency for many Americans to say, "After we are through with that, let's not become involved in Asia," I am convinced that the way to avoid becoming involved in another war in Asia is for the United States to continue to play a significant role.

I think the way that we could become involved would be to attempt withdrawal, because, whether we like it or not, geography makes us a Pacific power. And when we consider, for example, that Indonesia at its closest point is only 14 miles from the Philippines, when we consider that Guam, where we are presently standing, of course, is in the heart of Asia, when we consider the interests of the whole Pacific as they relate to Alaska and Hawaii, we can all realize this.

Also, as we look over the historical perspective, while World War II began in Europe, for the United States it began in the Pacific. It came from Asia. The Korean war came from Asia. The Vietnamese war came from Asia.

So, as we consider our past history, the United States involvement in war so often has been tied to our Pacific policy, or our lack of a Pacific policy, as the case might be.

As we look at Asia today, we see that the major world power which adopts a very aggressive attitude and a belligerent attitude in its foreign policy, Communist China, of course, is in Asia, and we find that the two minor world powers--minor, although they do have significant strength as we have learned--that most greatly threaten the peace of the world, that adopt the most belligerent foreign policy, are in Asia, North Korea and, of course, North Vietnam.

When we consider those factors we, I think, realize that if we are thinking down the road, down the long road--not just 4 years, 5 years, but 10, 15 or 20--that if we are going to have peace in the world, that potentially the greatest threat to that peace will be in the Pacific.

I do not mean to suggest that the Mideast is not a potential threat to the peace of the world and that there are not problems in Latin America that

concern us, or in Africa and, of course, over it all, we see the great potential conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, the East-West conflict between the two super powers.

But as far as those other areas are concerned, the possibility of finding some kind of solution, I think, is potentially greater than it is in the Asian area.

Pursuing that line of reasoning a bit further then, I would like to put it in a more positive sense: When we look at the problems in Asia, the threat to peace that is presented by the growing power of Communist China, the belligerence of North Korea and North Vietnam, we should not let that obscure the great promise that is here.

As I have often said, the fastest rate of growth in the world is occurring in non-Communist Asia. Japan, in the last 10 years, has tripled its GNP [gross national product]; South Korea has doubled its GNP; Taiwan has doubled its GNP; Thailand has doubled its GNP. The same is true of Singapore and of Malaysia.

The record in some of the other countries is not as impressive. But consider the Philippines where there are very grave problems, as you will learn when you are there, political problems and others. One of the brighter spots is that when I was in the Philippines in 1953, it was a major importer of rice. Today, as a result of "miracle rice," it no longer has to import it. Some progress is being made in an area like that.

When we look at India and Pakistan and the terribly difficult and traumatic experience they have had, because of their conflict with each other more than with the problems they have had from the outside, the picture tends to be rather black.

But India's rate of growth as a result of 2 good crop years, and a reasonably good one this year, has been at 6 percent. If we can get the population problem--if they can--under better control the promise for the future, of course, is rather bright.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, they are emphasizing growth in manufacturing. They are growing at the rate of 10 percent per year in manufacturing and from 1965 to 1970 their agricultural production will go up 21 percent.

When you visit these two countries, even in the brief visits that we have, when you see the poverty which strikes you in the face, if you have not seen it before, with a tremendous impact, you will wonder whether there is a great deal to hope for. But all I can say is that having seen what it was in 1953 and seeing what it was again in 1967, the amount of progress that has taken place, even in those countries where the rate has not been as high as others, is a very, very formidable thing to see.

So, what I am trying to suggest is this: As we look at Asia, it poses, in my view, over the long haul, looking down to the end of the century, the greatest threat to the peace of the world, and, for that reason the United States should continue to play a significant role. It also poses, it seems to me, the greatest hope for progress in the world--progress in the world because of the ability, the resources, the ability of the people, the resources physically that are available in this part of the world. And for these reasons, I think we need policies that will see that we play a part and a part that is appropriate to the conditions that we will find.

Now, one other point I would make very briefly is that in terms of this situation as far as the role we should play, we must recognize that there are two great, new factors which you will see, incidentally, particularly when you arrive in the Philippines--something you will see there that we didn't see in 1953, to show you how quickly it has changed: a very great growth of nationalism, nationalism even in the Philippines, vis-a-vis the United States, as well as other countries in the world. And, also, at the same time that national pride is becoming a major factor, regional pride is becoming a major factor.

The second factor is one that is going to, I believe, have a major impact on the future of Asia, and it is something that we must take into account. Asians will say in every country that we visit that they do not want to be dictated to from the outside, Asia for the Asians. And that is what we want, and that is the role we should play. We should assist, but we should not dictate.

At this time, the political and economic plans that they are gradually developing are very hopeful. We will give assistance to those plans. We, of course, will keep the treaty commitments that we have.

But as far as our role is concerned, we must avoid that kind of policy that will make countries in Asia so dependent upon us that we are dragged into conflicts such as the one that we have in Vietnam.

This is going to be a difficult line to follow. It is one, however, that I think, with proper planning, we can develop.

TRIP TO ROMANIA

[3.] One word about Romania. Let me just answer some of the speculation about Romania by pointing out that this trip to Romania is not directed toward the Chinese or toward the Russians, but toward the Romanians.

I do not believe that the President of the United States should be able to accept an invitation to visit a Western European country, but should automatically have to decline an invitation to visit an Eastern European country.

I have said that this is an era, I hope, of negotiation rather than confrontation. It will be more difficult, of course, to develop the communication with Eastern European Communist countries than with the Western European countries, but I think it is time that a beginning be made.

We will have discussions of bilateral issues with President [Nicolae] Ceausescu, the problems of Europe, East-West relations. But this trip under no circumstances should be interpreted as an affront to the Soviet Union or as a move toward China.

It will, if it works out, I trust, set the stage for more openings of this type with countries in Eastern Europe where it would be mutually beneficial to the United States and the other country involved.

QUESTIONS

U.S. MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS IN ASIA

[4.] Q. Mr. President, sir, on the question of U.S. military relationships in Asia, if I may ask a hypothetical question: If a leader of one of the countries with which we have had close military relationships, either through SEATO or in Vietnam, should say, "Well, you are pulling out of Vietnam with your troops, we can read in the newspapers. How can we know that you will remain to play a significant role as you say you wish to do in security arrangements in Asia?" What kind of an approach can you take to that question?

THE PRESIDENT. I have already indicated that the answer to that question is not an easy one--not easy because we will be greatly tempted when that question is put to us to indicate that if any nation desires the assistance of the United States militarily in order to meet an internal or external threat, we will provide it.

However, I believe that the time has come when the United States, in our relations with all of our Asian friends, be quite emphatic on two points: One, that we will keep our treaty commitments, our treaty commitments, for example, with Thailand under SEATO; but, two, that as far as the problems of internal security are concerned, as far as the problems of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, that the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves.

I believe, incidentally, from my preliminary conversations with several Asian leaders over the past few months that they are going to be willing to undertake this responsibility. It will not be easy. But if the United States just continues down the road of responding to requests for assistance, of assuming the primary responsibility for defending these countries when they have internal problems or external problems, they are never going to take care of themselves.

I should add to that, too, that when we talk about collective security for Asia, I realize that at this time that looks like a weak reed. It actually is. But looking down the road--I am speaking now of 5 years from now, 10 years from now--I think collective security, insofar as it deals with internal threats to any one of the countries, or insofar as it deals with a threat other than that posed by a nuclear power, I believe that this is an objective which free

Asian nations, independent Asian nations, can seek and which the United States should support.

INTERNAL THREATS TO ASIAN COUNTRIES

[5.] Q. Mr. President, when you speak of internal threats, do you include threats internally assisted by a country from the outside, such as we have in Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT. Generally speaking, that is the kind of internal threat that we do have in the Asian countries. For example, in Thailand the threat is one that is indigenous to a certain extent to the northeast and the north, but that would not be too serious if it were not getting the assistance that it was from the outside. The same is true in several of the other Asian countries.

POSSIBILITY OF SUMMIT MEETING WITH SOVIET UNION

[6.] Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that you hoped that your meetings in Romania would open the way to other meetings involving Eastern Europe. Is it your hope that you would eventually be invited to Moscow to talk with the Russians perhaps within the next 6 months or so?

THE PRESIDENT. As far as any meeting with the Soviet Union is concerned, summit meeting, I have stated my position previously. And I think it would be well to restate it again.

I do not believe that any summit meeting with the Soviet Union is useful unless a subject of major interest to both powers is to be discussed with some promise of finding a solution or at least making progress on that particular problem.

I believe, for example, as I look over the history of summitry with the Soviet Union, that while, in all administrations, we have had the best of intentions, that summitry has not been particularly helpful. I would say this with regard to the spirit of Geneva, the spirit of Camp David, the spirit of Vienna, and the spirit of Glassboro.

I feel that where the Soviet Union is concerned, for example, today, there are three major areas where a summit meeting could be useful. If, for example, the time had come when we could make a breakthrough in the Mideast and a summit meeting with the Soviet Union would play a significant part, I think that could be considered. I do not anticipate that, incidentally. We are too far apart at this time to suggest that that is on the way.

The second area, of course, is in the field of arms control. I had, as you know, a long discussion with Mr. [Gerard C.] Smith just a few days ago, just before leaving, the day before leaving. As far as arms control is concerned, at this time, the place and the forum in which the discussion should take place is at the ambassadorial level. There may come a time when a summit meeting may be the device which will make the breakthrough that we need to make on arms control. And in that case, I would, of course, favor an arms control.

Then at the top of the list, of course, I would put the problem of Vietnam where, if a summit meeting would serve a useful purpose insofar as Vietnam is concerned, naturally we would welcome that opportunity. That poses, as we all know, however, a very significant problem because whether the Soviet Union can be of assistance in Vietnam is somewhat dependent on its evaluation of whether such assistance should be so publicly provided as a summit, of course, would indicate.

RELAXATION OF RESTRICTIONS WITH COMMUNIST CHINA

[7.] Q. Mr. President, it has been suggested that we have relaxed trade and travel restrictions to China as a backdrop to your Asian trip, and that this may cause some disquiet in those countries which fear Communist China. Can you say whether there was any connection between your trip and those relaxations, and what accounted for the timing of them?

THE PRESIDENT. No. As a matter of fact, suggestions for relaxing restrictions vis-a-vis Communist China--incidentally, suggestions going considerably beyond those that I adopted--have been before the National Security Council for the past 3 months. As far as these two matters that you refer to, one, of course, as you know, dealt simply with the purchase by tourists of commodities of \$100 or less; the more significant one dealt with the travel restrictions. I have always felt that with Communist China or with any country in the world, that an exchange of persons is very valuable for us,

and I would trust also for them.

This is a policy I have announced previously, and it is one that I was simply implementing at this time. It had no relationship to the timing of this trip. I see no reason why any of the countries should be concerned.

PROSPECTS FOR ADDITIONAL TROOP REPLACEMENTS

[8.] Q. Mr. President, as a background to your thinking on Vietnam, even though we recognize it is not to be a major subject of discussion, could you tell us what sort of reports you had from General Wheeler about the prospects for additional replacement of American troops, and on the question of whether the fighting has eased to the point where we can make some deescalation move ourselves?

THE PRESIDENT. I would rather not comment on that at this time. If, after my conversations with Ambassador Bunker and possibly with General Abrams, I feel that some comment would be appropriate, I will make it then.

But I should, Mr. Scali [John A. Scali, ABC News], correct one impression which I should not have left, and that is that Vietnam will not be a major subject for discussions. In each of the Asian countries I am going to raise with the Asian leaders the question of the extent to which they would be willing to participate in the international supervisory bodies for elections in South Vietnam and for the policing of cease fires provided we are able to get any kind of acceptance on the part of the North Vietnamese and the VC [Vietcong] on our May 14th proposal.

I believe, for example, that the international supervisory bodies which, as you know, Mr. Thieu has also agreed to--that they should primarily be made up of and come from Asian nations, and the Asian nations that I visit I know will all be interested in this subject. I want to get their views on that.

U.S. WITHDRAWAL AND ASIAN SECURITY

[9.] Q. Mr. President, do you anticipate in that connection that during your talks with the Asian leaders you are going to have to spend any significant amount of time perhaps convincing them that your plan for withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam will pose no threat to their security?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, one of the reasons for this trip is to leave no doubt in the minds of the leaders of non-Communist Asia that the United States is committed to a policy in the Pacific--a policy not of intervention but one which certainly rules out withdrawal--and regardless of what happens in Vietnam that we intend to continue to play a role in Asia to the extent that Asian nations, bilaterally and collectively, desire us to play a role.

I think that some reassurance is needed because Vietnam is on the minds of all the Asian leaders. I believe, incidentally, that I will not have difficulty in providing that reassurance because from the report that I did get from General Wheeler, he tells me that the troop withdrawals have been accepted by the Thieu Government and by the military in South Vietnam with not only very good grace, but that they have responded very effectively in meeting their own requirements and in handling their own defense. I think that I can give some reassuring comments to those Asian leaders who might raise the question.

FUTURE INVOLVEMENT IN ASIA

[10.] Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that you felt that perhaps 5 years or 10 years from now the Asian nations could collectively take care of their regional security problems. What is our policy to be in the meantime if a Vietnam-type situation does occur?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I would rather not speculate about one occurring. Each of these countries, as you, of course, know from your studying the background materials and as you will note when you visit it, poses an entirely different question. I would simply say we are going to handle each country on a case-by-case basis but attempting to avoid that creeping involvement which eventually simply submerges you--incidentally, I don't say that critically of how we got into Vietnam, but I do know that we can learn from past experience, and we must avoid that kind of involvement in the future.

Let me put it this way. I recall in 1964 some advice that I got from Ayub Khan, who was then the President of Pakistan. This was before the United States had any significant troop commitment in Vietnam. I asked him what his view was as to what our role should be. He said, "Well, the role of the

United States in Vietnam or the Philippines or Thailand or any of these countries which have internal subversion is to help them fight the war but not fight the war for them." Now, that, of course, is a good general principle, one which we would hope would be our policy generally throughout the world.

TROOP WITHDRAWALS FROM THAILAND

[11.] Q. Mr. President, the last time we met with you, you mentioned that it was your hope that we might be able to withdraw all our combat troops, ground combat troops, in South Vietnam by the end of next year. In the light of that, I wonder if you have any plans for withdrawing the troops that we now have, or some percentage of them, from Thailand, and could you tell us what you are going to tell the Thais about that?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I would tell the Thais first. But it is certainly, of course, a proper question.

We are reviewing, as you know, not only our civilian personnel abroad, where I announced a cut a few weeks ago, but our military personnel abroad, including Thailand.

This is a matter, however, which will be discussed with the Thais, but it would not be appropriate to make any announcement as to what we were going to do until we have discussed it.

MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN ASIA

[12.] Q. Mr. President, in looking at the situation post-Vietnam, and in countries other than Vietnam, would it seem to you that in terms of our military strength, the military men that we put into these other countries to help them, or military assistance or economic assistance, that in Asia, generally, we would have more or less of this type of assistance and aid in the years down the road than we have now?

THE PRESIDENT. Less. Yes. If I get your question correctly, you mean more or less a military type of assistance?

Q. Both in the military and the nonmilitary. There are really two parts to this assistance problem, the economic part and the military part. And I was wondering from your discussion whether you would see us having a greater expenditure and a greater involvement in those respects or a lessened involvement as we look down the road.

THE PRESIDENT. What I would see would be that the military involvement, the military assistance, military aid programs and the rest, and particularly the commitment of military personnel--that that type of program would recede.

However, as far as economic programs are concerned, and particularly those of a multilateral character--and here we have some new ideas that we will be expanding on in the months ahead--I would say that the level of U.S. activity would be adequate to meet the challenge as it develops, because it is very much in our interest in terms of economic assistance, economic assistance through loans and other programs, to help build the economies of free Asia.

Let us consider, for example, what has happened to South Korea, what has happened to Taiwan, what has happened to Thailand, what has happened to Japan, all of whom we have assisted enormously economically. All of them now, or virtually all, are on their own feet, at least from an economic standpoint, and are very good customers of ours.

Let us consider Indonesia for just one moment. Indonesia has been through a terribly difficult experience as we all know.

Incidentally, I found in reading my statistics here that in 1965 the rate of inflation was 635 percent in Indonesia and it is zero now. I want to find out from Mr. Suharto [President of Indonesia] how he did it.

But, nevertheless, here is Indonesia with 117 million people, and the greatest, richest resources of any country in Asia. It is very much in the interest of the United States, which has a minimal economic program in Indonesia, to participate in some way in the economic development of Indonesia. That

will give you an indication of my thinking.

EXISTENCE OF SECRET DEFENSE AGREEMENT WITH THAILAND

[13.] Q. Mr. President, there has been quite a bit of speculation in the papers lately, both in Washington and in Thailand, as to whether or not there exists some sort of secret defense agreement between the U.S. and Thailand.

I was wondering, could you shed any light on the existence or nonexistence of such a thing and whether we have any similar arrangements with any other countries that might commit us beyond what your hopes might be?

THE PRESIDENT. There is no secret defense agreement with Thailand. We, of course, as you know, have the SEATO Treaty. We will keep our commitments under that treaty. We had the Rusk-Thanat Khoman communiqué which simply spelled out the treaty. We will, of course, keep our commitments set forth there as well.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Minister of Foreign Affairs for Thailand Thanat Khoman were delegate leaders to the 13th meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. The text of the final communiqué issued on April 3, 1968, at the close of the 2-day meeting is printed in the Department of State Bulletin (vol. 58, p. 515).

But as far as any secret commitments are concerned, we not only have none in any of these nations, I can assure you, and I will make none-- incidentally, I told Senator Fulbright [J. William Fulbright of Arkansas] that the other day, too--reassured him.

USE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY TACTICS

[14.] Q. Mr. President, on the question of creeping involvement and the advice that Ayub Khan once gave you, could you tell us if there is any future in Asia for American counterinsurgency tactics as they have developed since 1960?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, there is a future for American counterinsurgency tactics only in the sense that where one of our friends in Asia asks for advice or assistance, under proper circumstances, we will provide it. But where we must draw the line is in becoming involved heavily with our own personnel, doing the job for them, rather than helping them do the job for themselves.

Now, I know I begged the question with that answer but I intend to do so. I intend to do it because I think that there is one American trait which we saw in Korea, we have seen it in Vietnam, and we see it pretty much around the world: We do things, we think, rather well. And particularly in the military field, where we are pretty advanced, we think that we can do it better than to try to teach somebody else to do it.

That may be the easy answer at the outset, but it is the wrong answer in the long run. I want to be sure that our policies in the future, all over the world, in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the rest, reduce American involvement. One of assistance, yes, assistance in helping them solve their own problems, but not going in and just doing the job ourselves simply because that is the easier way to do it.

MR. ZIEGLER. This will have to be the last question.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CAPABILITY OF COMMUNIST CHINA

[15.] Q. Mr. President, could you give us your impression or evaluation.

THE PRESIDENT. We will take another 5 minutes. I don't mean the question will be 5 minutes. [Laughter]

Q. I will make it very short.

THE PRESIDENT. No, no. That is all right.

Q. Could you give us your evaluation of Red China's economic-political capability of inspiring further wars of liberation in the Asian nations? Are they able to continue that?

THE, PRESIDENT. Red China's capacity in this respect is much less than it was 5 years ago, even 10 years ago. Because of its internal problems, Red China is not nearly as effective in exporting revolution as it was then. I think a pretty good indication of that is the minimal role that Red China is playing in Vietnam as compared with the Soviet Union.

Three years ago, Red China was furnishing over 50 percent of the military equipment, the hardware, for the North Vietnamese. Now it is approximately 80-20 the other way around.

There may be other reasons for that coming about, but part of it is that Red China has enough problems within.

Another point I would make in that respect that bears on this, how things have changed in Asia: In 1953, in country after country that I visited--and I was in every one that we are visiting here and all the others as well, the ones that Secretary [of State William P.] Rogers is going to visit on that trip--among most of the intellectual leaders and among many government leaders, there was a real question as to what was the best path for progress, a question as to whether communism, as it was developing in Red China, a Communist system, was a better way to progress, or whether a non-Communist system was the better way.

Now, one of the significant developments that has occurred over these past 16 years, with all the bad things that have occurred, including the war in Vietnam, has been that that situation has reversed itself. The appeal of the Communist philosophy, for example, in Pakistan, in India, in Indonesia, in Japan, in any one of these countries, is less today than it was 16 years ago, 10 years ago, 5 years ago.

On the other hand, I would have to say that the effectiveness of subversive activities in many of these countries has not abated to the same extent. It can be on the upgrade. But as we look at the whole of Asia today, it is significant to note that what we have going for us more than anything else is this enormous rate of growth in non-Communist Asia as compared with Communist Asia. You compare Hong Kong with Communist China, you compare Taiwan with Communist China, you look at Japan with 100 million people, with a greater GNP than China with 700 million people, looking clear around the perimeter, from Japan through India, we find that free Asia's record of growth is a very significant factor in affecting the thinking of those who have to make the determination as to which path they are going to take.

AVOIDING FUTURE WARS IN ASIA

[16.] Q. Mr. President, sir, when you say that the United States is going to continue to play a major role in Asia, that this is one message that you intend to take with you on this trip, my impression, from the thrust of your remarks today, is that another message is no more Vietnams. Is that impression correct, sir?

THE PRESIDENT. Certainly the objective of any American administration would be to avoid another war like Vietnam any place in the world. You may recall--and, of course, it was called campaign oratory, I said it and so did my opponent, Mr. [Hubert H.] Humphrey, during the campaign--that we should develop a policy that would avoid other Vietnams.

I realize it is very easy to say that. I will be quite candid when I admit that to develop the policies to avoid that is taking an enormous amount of my time and those of my associates.

But what we can do is to learn from the mistakes of the past. I believe that we have, if we examine what happened in Vietnam--how we became so deeply involved--that we have a good chance of avoiding that kind of involvement in the future.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TROOP WITHDRAWALS IN AUGUST

[17.] Q. Mr. President, do you intend to make it clear to the Asian leaders that if the lull in Vietnam continues, you will announce a substantial

withdrawal of U.S. forces in August?

THE PRESIDENT. No, I will not make any announcement of, and no decision on, troop withdrawals on this trip, and, of course, I would not make any disclosures of plans in that respect to Asian leaders prior to the time that we had discussed it with the Government of South Vietnam and then made the announcement jointly.

As you do know, we are reexamining, as I indicated we would, our whole troop commitment in Vietnam during the month of August, and we hope to be able to make an announcement sometime during the month of August with regard to troop withdrawal.

But that is one of the matters that I have still under study, under consideration, that I will be discussing with Ambassador Bunker, that I did discuss with General Wheeler, and that I may discuss with General Abrams.

MILITARY TACTICS IN VIETNAM

[18.] Q. Mr. President, is there also a pending question as to whether your administration will change its policy of maintaining maximum military pressure on the enemy in Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT. We have been reexamining, since the time this administration came into office, our military tactics in Vietnam, and one of the subjects that I have discussed at great length with General Wheeler and General Abrams has been the character of our commitment and the tactics that should be used. I defer, naturally, to military men as to the conduct of a war because they are more expert than I am in this field.

However, when we are in the process of negotiations, then military tactics become part of the negotiations and, therefore, we are reevaluating our tactics in Vietnam, having in mind the fact that we have a parallel action going along in the negotiating field.

If we have any changes in this respect, I, of course, will announce them. Reporter: Thank you, Mr. President.

Note: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. at the Top O' The Mar Officers' Club in Guam.

Citation: Richard Nixon: "Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen," July 25, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140>