

The communist plan included proposals for an armistice in Indo-China and a political settlement to be negotiated simultaneously over the whole of Indo-China and all three states would be treated on the same basis. It also included recognition of what they called the liberating regimes, not only of the Viet Minh but also of Laos and Cambodia. We had not heard anything about those latter two regimes before we went to Geneva. It provided for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Indo-China, and for elections in all three countries without any effective international supervision.

It seemed on the face of it, though they are still negotiating these proposals and it is unwise to give final conclusions in regard to them, that this communist plan was designed to bring communist regimes to power. At times it seemed also that the communists were indulging in delaying and obstructive tactics, encouraged no doubt by the military situation in Indo-China. However, Mr. Chairman, negotiations have been continuing during the last ten days since I left Geneva. They have been concerned with these two main considerations: first, the possibility of a negotiated cease fire and, secondly, a political settlement. These negotiations seem now to be at a critical stage. We are being kept carefully and closely informed of them by our delegation at Geneva.

I believe it is too early to predict whether a negotiated settlement can or cannot be reached on honourable terms which would bring an effective end to the hostilities, provide a basis for a workable political settlement, recognizing the interests of the indigenous peoples of the countries concerned, and which would be a wise move in the direction of creating positions of stability in the Southeast Asia area. So long as negotiations are still going on, however, I think it would be unwise and indeed unnecessary for me to speculate on the result of the failure to end the war. Nevertheless whether success or failure results, the problem of general security in Southeast Asia remains.

As I see it, the solution to that problem depends largely on whether the countries most immediately involved can agree on the objectives and principles that should underlie any collective arrangements to maintain and strengthen security in that area. I hope I may be pardoned, Mr. Chairman, if I put forward, on the basis of my own association with this problem in recent weeks, some considerations which in my view affect the search for security in Southeast Asia.

In the first place, I think we must accept the fact that the international communist conspiracy is working for, and has made progress in, securing control of Southeast Asia. We should certainly be aware of the danger to international peace and security in this development, a danger which cannot be exercised by comforting interpretations of Asian communism as merely agrarian reform or as nationalism painted red.

It is true, I think, that the urge for national freedom and for social and economic reform, and not devotion to communism as such, is the mainspring of the greatest revolution of our time, the emergence of the masses of Asia from colonial control, feudal restrictions