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Saigon, Viet Nam

Saigon, South Viet Nam--A delicate diplomatic tug-of-war is infiltrating into this already battleweary country.

The Vietnamese government's counter to the Mansfield Report, calling it ~~it~~ "particularly unfair, is the most recent development in high-level American-Vietnamese differences. The government statement, issued ^{(in the name of} the Personalist Community Bloc in the National Assembly, was the first official reaction ~~to the report~~ to the report and the government's first admission that the Mansfield Report on Vietnam existed. Previous newspaper accounts ~~highlighted~~ carried highlights of the comments on the Philippines.

~~The~~ American officials here "breathed a sigh of relief" when first ~~reading~~ reading the Mansfield Report, thinking that it would not exacerbate the United States-Vietnamese relations. But this week's statement from the National Assembly group indicated that the report had some stinging effects.

The appeal in the Mansfield Report for a "great mobilization of selfless Vietnamese leadership" was countered by the statement of the Personalist Community Bloc that "it is the inalienable right of the government...to accept into its midst only the elements it deems irreproachable.../"

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An influential Vietnamese government official once explained, "Dien (President Ngo Dinh Dien) doesn't worry if the American press is against him. He worries only if the American press and the American government are against him." The Mansfield Report, the first high-level, ~~State~~ bipartisan doubt case on the Vietnamese effort, was, more significantly, written by a commission headed by "an old friend" of the Dien Regime. It was Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) who in 1955 urged the United States to support the newly-independent country.

"The Mansfield Report is sort of in the same wave length as the whole mood of everything in Vietnam," one official explained. "There's a tendency that's been developing for two or three months for a harder American attitude. There's a hardening of our relationship (with the Vietnamese government)—subtly—almost invisibly."

At the heart of the differences is the Impatient American, a fast-gliding, man-on-the-go/ who wants to win the war and win it fast. "The American attitude is why walk when you can run," one American laughed. "The Vietnamese attitude is why walk when you can sit."

Or as Gen. Paul D. Harkins, head of the Military Assistance Command, expressed it, "We (Americans) know that Rome wasn't built in a day, so we put on a night shift."

Yet, the harder the Americans push, the louder the Vietnamese screams of infringement of national sovereignty. A vague, un-named slap at the Mansfield Report was made by President Dien's powerful sister-in-law, Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu, when she explained, "Let the Free World understand,
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then, that in this impious war imposed on us by the communists...it is not possible that our right of initiative be questioned or our self-determination... be slighted."

Once described as "a female Charlie Bartlett," Madame Nhu is often used as an unofficial government spokesman for anti-American remarks, which counter the Communist propaganda line calling Diem a puppet of ~~America~~ the United States.

The Mansfield Report added to Vietnamese fears that the American government would shift their support from the Diem regime. President Diem's brother and influential political advisor, Ngo Dinh Nhu, is reported to have recently told one American official that the government feared either an American policy of neutrality for South Viet Nam, as in Laos, or an American-inspired coup d'etat.

Two weeks ago, a prominent Saigon lawyer, Truong Dinh Dau, was taken into custody on charges of embezzlement, according to the semi-official government news agency. However, usually reliable Vietnamese sources said the reason for the arrest of Dau, former ~~governor~~ governor for the Rotary Club of for Southeast Asia, was "politics. He was too friendly with Americans."

The struggle between the Vietnamese government and American officialdom here is admittedly ~~so~~ shadowy, mostly unseen, unmentioned. Yet, prior to the Mansfield Report, these developments had already surfaced. In early February, the Vietnamese-language weekly, Nhan Quyen (Human Rights), charged that "wherever leading authorities or elements refuse to ^{yield} ~~yield~~ to Americans, do not agree to be under their sway, do not close their eyes to let Americans take away economic resources, the United States immediately thinks about a ~~coup~~

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coup d'etat and rebellion plots." The editor, Ha Duc Minh, claimed to be a ~~member~~ member of Nhu's political party. Surprisingly, in a country where the local press is ~~government-controlled~~ government-controlled in varying degrees, the paper was not suspended until the end of February.

In mid-February, U. S. Ambassador Frederick E. Holting, Jr., countered by calling for a "bridge of ~~understanding~~ understanding" and appealed for "a mutual sense of tolerance toward each other, and a mutual confidence in our purposes." He added, "We should never try to 'out smart' each other in this joint enterprise we are involved in."

Two weeks later, the assassination of the Mansfield Commission hit Viet Nam.