

Internal Defense and the Foreign Service

by U. ALEXIS JOHNSON

RECENTLY we have heard much of such concepts as counter-insurgency, counter-subversion, developing societies, underdeveloped countries, modernization, nation-building, and so on, and we will hear more of them. Some of us may wonder what, if anything, all of this means to us as Foreign Service officers. Much of this may sound far removed from our concerns, and remote from the traditional problems of diplomacy. Perhaps some of these terms may strike us as belonging more in a learned treatise than in a discussion of the practical realities of the problems that we will be facing in our careers. However, my purpose is to attempt to set a framework in which we can consider these problems and to demonstrate the very practical reality they will continue to have for each of us.

I discuss this not as a theoretician, for frankly I am a very indifferent theoretician, but rather as someone who has in the past faced very practical situations in the field, and who is today attempting to help face them in Washington. In the field, as an ambassador to what is known as a developing country, I have been faced with the task of melding into a cohesive whole a country team staff of hundreds of persons—some coming directly to a military advisory group from field commands or staff duty, others coming from business or college staffs to an economic assistance mission, others coming with a newspaper or a public relations background to do an information job in an entirely new environment—county highway engineers coming to a technical advisory group, policemen and detectives from American towns coming to advise a foreign police force, and so on. It is no easy job to impart to such a group a common sense of purpose. Even with the best will on the part of everyone, it is difficult for each to see the whole and for each to see his relationship to the common effort.

We have a President and Administration who have perceived the dimensions of this problem and have acted. Unpublicized and quiet reorganizations have been taking place to draw together more effectively the Washington agencies backstopping the field operations, and to develop in Washington that common sense of purpose and common approach that must first be achieved before it can be reflected in the country team.

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It has been recognized as never before that what we in the United States are seeking in the less-developed world is not the building of military forces for their own sake, or economic development for its own sake, or pro-American propaganda for its own sake, but rather the use of all of the available resources for assisting these new nations in building the kind of society and government that can maintain itself, develop in step with the modern world and, above all, remain free from domination or control by Communist forces hostile to us. United States interests do not require satellites, colonies, or subservience to all of our ideas. I am convinced that our interests are well served if foreign peoples and lands are truly independent, and if that remains the objective they seek for themselves. Thus we have a basis for truly mutual cooperation.

TO DEVELOP a coordinated command in Washington and integrated country teams in the field, we must devote considerable time and effort to describing, first, the situation in which the United States finds itself in dealing with the less-developed world; second, the nature of the Communist threat to that world; and third, the approach we are seeking to take in cooperating with these countries in meeting the threat that Communism presents to their internal security; in other words, our program for counter-subversion. It has become increasingly clear that under present circumstances the threat these countries face is now not so much invasion from without as destruction from within. It behooves us better to organize and equip ourselves to cooperate with these countries in meeting this latter danger. This of necessity involves the totality of political, military, economic, social and psychological responses—both our own and that of the country with which we are working—to all forms of Communist-inspired, indirect aggression, from subversion up through the spectrum of violence to outright insurgency and guerrilla warfare. It includes the fundamental element of anticipation—the measures we can take to assist in strengthening and fortifying the weak spots in vulnerable societies not yet under attack, as well as those where violence has actually erupted.

The background of the insurgency problem since World War II is familiar. The aftermath of that war found large areas of the world in a state of economic distress and political turmoil. Through the Marshall Plan and successor economic aid programs, we were able first to assist in stabilizing the situation in Western Europe and then gradually to lay the groundwork for the economic resurgence and prosperity which characterizes western Europe today.

In the less-developed world the factors leading to instability were far more pronounced. In large parts of the world, the colonial empires of the European powers were in the process of liquidation. More than forty new countries have thus far been formed from these empires in the seventeen short years since the end of the Second World War. In many of these countries there has been left behind a residue of anti-colonial feeling and a disposition to look for assistance and guidance to sources other than the West. In some areas the transition from colonial domination to independence was, and still is, attended by prolonged and bloody conflict. Nearly everywhere the transition caused profound political, economic and social problems as the new countries grouped for economic viability and political security.

In spite of the political genius of many of our early leaders, we all know of the travail through which the United States passed between attaining our own independence and true establishment as a nation.

ADDITIONAL to the problem of these new nations in the last decade have been the tensions generated by the so-called revolution of rising expectations. Throughout the world large parts of the population, whose way of life had remained unchanged for centuries, have become exposed to the material goods and way of life which we in the United States take for granted. The peasantry and urban workers who have been submerged or apathetic for centuries are no longer disposed to tolerate the economic inequities and social injustices of the past. In many countries an underemployed and disoriented intellectual class has been attracted to Marxism in their reaction against the old way of life. These forces exert continuous pressure on their governments and frequently subject them to impossible demands.

As a result, we face a world which, even if Communist and Sino-Soviet influence were absent, would still be wracked by stresses and strains, and would still be fertile ground for political turmoil and even violence. It is in this atmosphere that the free institutions of the less-developed world have come under subtle and continuing attack by the Communists.

Since World War II it has been the strategy of the Communist movement throughout the world to exacerbate tensions wherever they are found, to exploit local grievances, and to try to divert local revolutionary movements into channels of their own. In the less-developed world, the Communists in effect seek to confiscate the revolutionary process and convert it to their own ends. Inasmuch as they approach each situation with a ready-made philosophy that has a certain appeal to the impoverished coolie, peasant and unskilled worker of societies emerging from colonial domination, and since they do not scruple to wave the banner of nationalism and anti-colonialism whenever it suits them, they have frequently been successful in generating support among the ignorant and deluded. They have also succeeded in enlisting the tacit or active assistance of some of the intellectuals of these countries. However, they have rarely succeeded in developing any mass base of support and of the more than forty free countries formed since World War II none has succumbed to Communism.

The Communists have not hesitated to resort to violence

themselves or to infiltrate and support the politically motivated violence and insurrection of other groups. Indeed, it is part of the Communist philosophy to support so-called "Wars of National Liberation" wherever found, since these are considered to be halfway stages in the process of evolution to Communism.

Thus in Malaya, the Communists first infiltrated and then took over the main anti-Japanese underground movement, and then carried out their campaign of terrorism against the British in the guise of an anti-colonial war of liberation. They were defeated.

In Viet-Nam, the liberation movement was captured by Ho Chi-minh and his Marxist disciples who emphasized the patriotic and nationalist side of the movement to build up a base of popular support.

In Cuba, Fidel Castro rose to power on the wave of an anti-Batista revolutionary movement which increasingly became dominated by Communists.

Thus, when tensions reach a breaking point and the Communist conspiracy is able to move we are confronted with open violence or guerrilla warfare in which nationalist, anti-colonialist and Communist motivations become inextricably mingled. The war in South Viet-Nam is not essentially different in character from earlier situations in Greece, Malaya and the Philippines.

It is clear from the history of insurgent movements that their effectiveness has in large part been related to two factors: first, the ability of small guerrilla forces economically to employ a minimum amount of force and violence to create widespread insecurity; and second, their ability to obtain physical and moral support from the populace at large. From the first of these principles stems their use of terrorism, artificially generated riots in urban centers, and guerrilla tactics in the countryside. From the second stems the principle of cultivating good relations with the peasantry, villagers and local community, and espousing local grievances. You will recall how Mao Tse-tung describes the peasantry as the sea in which his fish, that is the guerrillas, must swim. In Viet-Nam the Viet Cong have, on the whole, followed this principle in the areas they control. They are ruthless in dealing with informers and "traitors," but pay for food and supplies, avoid trampling on crops and damaging property, and try not to disrupt the life of the local community.

THE THREAT we face is therefore complex and varies in character with the area where it appears. It is always a reflection of local conditions, because the Communists are never strong enough to mount an effort of their own; they have to exploit local grievances and feed local expectations to augment their capability. Again, Cuba is an outstanding example of how a tiny core of dedicated Marxists rode to power on a wave of popular resentment against an unpopular dictatorship. As we have seen in Southeast Asia and Latin America, the threat only becomes a military one when the situation has gotten out of hand and the regular framework of society is no longer able to withstand the combination of internal stresses and Communist subversion. For this reason the countermeasures that we and our friends in the underdeveloped world must take to defeat the threat cannot be

limited to military measures alone; it will always be too late if resort must be had to military measures.

Our strategy in the face of this threat must therefore be all-inclusive in scope and directed as much toward the roots of subversion and insurgency as toward its overt manifestations. It must be directed toward the psychological and logistic base of insurgent activity as well as toward its operations. Here, however, we must distinguish between our long-term strategy in the less-developed world and the shorter-range measures specifically aimed at defeating subversion and insurgency. The two are normally compatible, but given our time frame and not unlimited resources, long-term economic planning must sometimes give way to shorter-range measures focused directly on the immediate threat. This we have, for example, been required to do in Viet-Nam.

Our basic national policy calls for the development of a community of free and independent nations, each evolving according to its own individual character and at its own pace. To protect less-developed societies from the threat to their growth posed by Communist subversion and insurgency, we are seeking better to plan and orchestrate the whole range of military, political, economic and social measure devised to assist the governments of the less-developed world to protect themselves. In this connection we must always remember that the primary responsibility for a country's internal security is that of its own government; we can only be of real assistance to governments that have the will and capacity to help themselves, for no matter how great the magnitude of our effort, it is still that of an outsider.

The main elements of our approach to this problem consist of four principal requirements, each of which embraces a wide spectrum of specific actions and measures:

First a political and economic appraisal—a searching and comprehensive analysis of the points of strength and vulnerability in the societies of the less-developed world so that we may see them in their totality as living human complexes. Only in this way can we suggest practical remedies. This means looking through a society rather than only at its outward forms; it means addressing ourselves systematically to the problem of when and how a developing society may be in danger.

Next is the development of measures designed to strengthen the vulnerable points of the society under attack and to remove or at least ameliorate those grievances and causes of popular discontent which the Communists exploit.

Third is the development of effective police and military capabilities in friendly countries to maintain internal security, to protect the populace from intimidation and violence, and to suppress subversive insurgency wherever found so that a society may develop in an orderly manner. This embraces our whole military assistance effort and the equally important public safety program of AID to strengthen and improve local police forces and constabularies.

Finally there is the mobilization of the local government's resources, effectively employed through political, economic and psychological measures, to support the military and internal security capabilities.

To implement these measures and make them successful requires a utilization of resources and an orchestration of effort to which many branches of our Government can con-

tribute. Each element of an Embassy Country Team has a function to perform in assisting the local government to defend itself.

In most cases, the United States effort abroad will consist primarily of advice, assistance, and the training of local civilian administrators and police, paramilitary and military forces to improve the domestic internal defense capabilities. Because of the peculiar nature of internal warfare, its deterrence and suppression require a blend of military and non-military countermeasures and corrective actions. In a very real sense there is no line of demarcation between military and non-military measures.

OUR CIVILIAN agencies have primary responsibility for formulating plans and programs designed to assist in dealing with the basic causes of unrest, to cope with those threats which have not attained military proportions, and to deal with the non-military aspects of those threats which have attained military proportions. The Defense Department and military services have the primary responsibility of contributing to the military aspects of assisting in the internal defense of friendly nations. The interrelationship of all these aspects is so intimate and, of course, so closely related to our over-all foreign policy problems and objectives, as to require careful direction and coordination by the Department of State. We in the Department of State are very conscious of the responsibility which this totality of effort imposes on us.

In the field, the President has made it clear that he looks to the Ambassador fully to assume leadership and responsibility for an integrated and coordinated program of assistance and cooperation in internal defense. It is also the Ambassador's responsibility and that of the field personnel of the Department of State to try to develop a proper understanding of the factors behind any dissidence and unrest in the countries to which they are accredited. In this area, the service attachés also have an important role. Equally important, of course, is the perspective and judgment which we in Wash-



"Mr. Ambassador, the election results are in if you'd care to see them."

ington are able to bring to bear in evaluating the information furnished to us by the field.

With respect to our cooperation in strengthening the military and internal security capabilities of these countries we must utilize our military assistance program to assist in developing the military establishments of these countries into effective instruments for coping with the real threat that may confront them. A country threatened by imminent or even potential insurgency cannot afford to perpetuate obsolete, though perhaps traditional, forms of military organization. In many areas local governments are confronted with the problem of breaking up conscript armies, organized along bulky regimental and divisional lines, into small units armed with modern light equipment which are capable of suppressing bandits and insurgents in remote and inaccessible areas. This is not an easy task because these changes strike at the root of long-established conventions, even at the promotion system. It is also important that the military establishments of these countries not be regarded or used as instruments of oppression. The search for civic-action projects must be carried out in such areas as road and school construction, sanitation, flood control, and communications to develop the unused potential of local military forces and bind them more closely to the population.

Great importance is also attached to the improvement of the internal security capability of local police and constabulary forces. These, of course, constitute the first line of defense against subversion, political violence and even insurgency. An effective police force, trained in public service concepts and employing modern technology, should be able to contain popular disorders without the excessive use of violence and also cope with conspiracy and subversion. Obviously the police and military assistance programs in any one country must be most closely coordinated as each must support the other. The successful British operations in Kenya and Malaya were essentially police actions, even though the units on occasion employed military tactics.

With respect to other programs, those of the Agency for International Development and the United States Information Agency are particularly important. In critical areas AID administers such civilian internal defense assistance programs as the police programs, the installation of village alarm and communications systems, the furnishing of emergency economic assistance to areas under attack, and the provision of technical assistance and guidance in such fields as transportation and sanitation. These specific measures are accomplished within the over-all AID program for cooperating in the development of economic and social conditions of sufficient strength and vitality to sustain a country's government and institutions. As the coordinator of both military and economic assistance, AID in Washington also exercises the important function of coordinating U.S. economic assistance and military civic action projects in critical areas within countries which are likely targets of Communist subversion and infiltration. This involves AID in the important task of establishing or rearranging priorities, for our resources are limited, and frequently urgent requirements of an internal defense nature must override a carefully worked out economic development plan.

The USIA plays an extremely important role in the internal defense effort by furnishing equipment and technical assistance to the local government in the field of public information and internal communications. One of the primary problems in less-developed countries is to achieve mutual understanding and a community of interest between the government and the populace, especially those living in outlying areas. In some regions, the dissemination of public information programs over the government radio, and the distribution of receiving sets to remote villages, may be the only effective way of countering Communist propaganda. In some critical areas this technical assistance function outweighs in importance USIA's traditional function as the arm of the United States public information activity.

We now come to the most sensitive area of all, which is the mobilization of effort by the local government and its adoption of measures aimed at eradicating or at least minimizing the grievances and causes of unrest being exploited by the Communists. Here we leave the relatively safe confines of military and economic assistance and enter the delicate province of a country's internal affairs. To bring about some degree of social, economic and political justice, or at the very least to ameliorate the worst causes of discontent and redress the most flagrant inequities, will invariably require positive action by the local government. In some cases only radical reforms will obtain the necessary results. Yet the measures we advocate may strike at the very foundations of these aspects of a country's social structure and domestic economy on which rests the basis of the government's control.

IT IS THEREFORE our duty and responsibility within the formal limits imposed by diplomatic propriety, to persuade a government under actual or imminent threat of subversion or insurgency to take remedial measures before it is too late. This calls for the utmost skills of our profession for it is always a difficult task and sometimes an impossible one.

It is obvious that to exercise proper direction and control over U.S. programs as complex and diverse as those that I have described, each administered by a separate department or agency of the Federal Government, requires tight coordination both at home and in the field. It is the task of the Ambassador, working in close collaboration with the MAAC Chief, the USOM Director, and the Public Affairs Officer and all other elements of his Mission to provide such coordination.

In Washington we have the additional task of coordinating our programs in many different countries, as well as departmental programs within a particular country. Here we continually face the problem of establishing priorities in money, material, and manpower, for our resources are limited.

Despite the hazards and difficulties of dealing with such complex problems, we have one great advantage which the Communists lack. In virtually every country of the earth we are working in a voluntary and willing partnership with governments and societies anxious to preserve their independence and to live at peace in a world community based on respect for the integrity of the individual. We cannot believe that such ideals can be less attractive than the totalitarian images projected by the advocates of a collectivist order.

*The dangers
which exist can
be turned into
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prosperous and secure Western Europe in the post-war period will be key to overcoming the inherent instability and unpredictability of the multipolar era into which the whole of Europe is now entering.

The United States will also face a new set of challenges over the next decade in its relations with the developing world. Here, too, the post-war struggle between liberal democracy and Communist or statist ideologies for the hearts and minds of the peoples of the Third World appears to be moving in ways favorable to the West. But we should be realistic about the underlying meaning of the trend toward democracy and the movement toward free market reforms that we are witnessing today throughout much of the developing world. The fact is that the trend is against incumbent governments everywhere, of all political stripes—governments which are overwhelmed by the problems of overpopulation, unemployment, and stagnant economic growth.

Clearly, many of the problems of the developing nations are of their own making. But if they are willing to undertake the necessary reforms, we in the West must respond with creative approaches to the debt problem and with a level of investment which many of these countries formerly shunned but now urgently solicit. If we should fail to respond adequately to the debt crisis, we may find the trend toward democracy in the developing world to be short-lived. We may also find that some of the fragile nation-states of the Third World will collapse into their ethnic or regional components, while those who are well-armed may seek external solutions to their internal problems. And we may find instability in the developing world brought to the very doorstep of the West, both in Europe and the United States.

Finally, there is a further host of problems we are going to face as we move into the next century which will exceed the ability of the United States or any single nation to resolve, and which will, therefore, require a collective approach. These include the problems of weapons proliferation, international drug-trafficking, terrorism, and the imperiled state of the world environment. These are problems which do not respect borders and for which national or strictly unilateral solutions do not exist.

If Mikhail Gorbachev is sincere when he

says that we have to set aside our ideological differences and military competition in order to address the fundamental threats to the survival of the planet, he will find in the United States a ready partner. But most of the problems to which I refer—problems which are likely to dominate the international agenda in coming years—do not lend themselves to solution in a strictly East-West framework. Take, for example, the problems of pollution and weapons proliferation. We in the industrialized world now find ourselves in the awkward position of asking the developing nations to eschew methods of economic development which we ourselves practiced in the not-too-distant past, and which account in part for our current prosperity. Similarly, we are asking many of these same nations to forego the production of weapons which we ourselves possess, and which contribute to our security in a dangerous and unpredictable world.

Clearly, East-West cooperation will be fundamental to resolving many of the underlying political and regional tensions which are at the root of transnational problems such as terrorism and weapons proliferation. The challenge of eradicating drug-trafficking and eliminating the threat to the world environment, in particular, are international in scope and will require the cooperative efforts of those nations wealthy enough to mobilize the necessary resources.

I have not intended to paint a bleak picture of the type of international environment that awaits us in the next decade and into the next century. The period of transition through which we are now passing can be managed successfully if we but understand the fact that we are facing a different set of challenges from those to which we have become accustomed over the past 40 years. We are militarily strong today. We are strong economically. And we are on the verge of seeing our democratic values triumph in places which would hardly have been imaginable only a few years ago. But the positive and indeed revolutionary changes which are sweeping the world today are reversible, and they cannot be sustained by the efforts of the United States alone. They can, however, be sustained, and the dangers which exist turned into opportunities, if the Western democracies renew their commitment to a collective and cooperative approach to the major issues which confront the world. And this will require American leadership of the highest order. □