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COPY **CABLEGRAM**. I.655/74**TOP SECRET**

Dated: 5th June, 1954.

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FROM:

Rec'd: 6th June, 1954.

0900.

Australian Embassy,
WASHINGTON.

560.

TOP SECRET.IMMEDIATE.

Prime Minister from Ambassador.

Collective Defence.

This afternoon I gave Dulles in writing
informal list of views and questions contained in your
365, 383 and 397.

26 May June 4 June
(a) Dulles pointed out in General that
situation in Indo-China was so fluid and uncertain
that firm view as to what to do or how to do it
was impossible. His concept of "United Action" was
naturally different now for example from what
it was when he first made proposal on 29th
March. Situation, both military and political,
had deteriorated considerably since end March,
particularly with the loss of Dien Bien Phu
and its consequent results, and it was impossible
at any one stage to attempt to define with any
precision what "United Action" might involve.
He made the point that the situation might develop
so adversely to our own interests that military
action in Indo-China itself could produce
not result. It was quite impossible with
continually changing circumstances to predict
one day what they thought should or could be done
some other day.

26/5 - (b) With regard to distinction drawn in your 383
between collective defence arrangement and
international military intervention, Dulles
generally endorsed views proposed by Merchant
on 27th May and reported in paragraph 5 of
my 537. United States recognises distinction
between collective organisation and collective
action, but Dulles was at pains to point out that
the two could not be kept in watertight compartments.
Although it might be possible to separate the two
in theory, it was difficult to do in practice. e.g.
if we lost Vietnam altogether, Defence organisation
ultimately set up might have to "intervene" to save
what was left (e.g. Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, etc).
All this, however, was purely speculative, and
it was impossible to give any categorical answers
at this stage as to what extent collective defence
organisation was separate and distinct from
collective military intervention.

(c) Dulles complained that French had been using
"intervention" as a card to play at Geneva. They
wished to avoid "intervention" until they could
no longer negotiate at Geneva, at which stage,
said Dulles, it was possible that the situation
might have deteriorated to a point where
"it would throw too heavy a burden on us" to
attempt to retrieve the situation.

Department's copy

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Attention

Asst. Sec. (DPA) 7/6

Australian Archives

1056

A816/29

19/311/217

Situation in Indo China - Australian policy

1111

CABLEGRAM.

TOP SECRET. 77

V.6573/76

(d) It was impossible to state precisely circumstances in which United States would contemplate military intervention. Paragraph 9 your 388. The only circumstance in which United States could act with any certainty that they would be able to win that of over China. Intervention would be immediate, immediate, immediate.

(e) In the absence of any certainty as to the precise form of activities etc. of collective organisation collective action. Dulles pointed out it was impossible to estimate strength of Asian opinion either for or against. In other words, it was impossible to estimate extent of Asia's support, sympathy or opposition except against backdrop of what it might be decided to do in the circumstances as they may arise at the time.

(f) United States opposed partition because they were convinced that neither Vietnam or the Philippines would propose or accept responsibility for partition of country. United States was not necessarily opposed to military engagement since this is a possibility. The partition and the division of authority would be different from partition. Partition is a term "partition" as such was something different from "division of authority." Power had permanent character while latter was ad interim and would necessarily lead to partition.

2. Paragraph 2 your 387. It was obvious from my discussion with Dulles that it was not possible to obtain categorical or reasonable definitive answers to questions raised in your 365 and 383. Dulles continuously stressed changing character of problems. Military and political objectives of internationalisation of military operations in Indo-China were incapable of succinct determination except in relation to existing circumstances. Since these circumstances were rapidly changing - and adversely to ourselves - purpose of intervention and objectives to be achieved and capacity to achieve them were also constantly changing. There was no satisfactory way of dealing with these changing circumstances except in context of joint and constant discussion between powers concerned. I gathered they felt that bilateral discussions were not achieving much, the best way of finding desired answers and clarifications being for nations concerned to sit down together.

3. Main concern of Americans at present is to make early start on formal talks on collective defence/collective action. They feel that if we wait for all difficulties and obstacles to solve themselves "ambulando", before we sit down together, we will never arrive at any solutions and will in fact find ourselves overtaken by events in Indo-China. It is therefore, vitally important for all nations concerned to meet now with a view to discussing the problems involved and working out solutions together. To the contention that 10 power conference should not be held until various issues are clarified and various conditions fulfilled, the Americans would reply that conference itself would as its initial task attempt to have these issues clarified and these conditions fulfilled.

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Australian Archives

1057

A816/29

19/311/217

Situation in Indo China - Australian policy

1111

-3- CABLEGRAM.

TOP SECRET. 76

I.6573/74.

4. I am satisfied from what Dulles said that agreement to consult upon problem generally would in no way involve us in committing us in any way to action in Indo-China especially since he stressed more than once that situation might develop in which it was not practicable to intervene in Indo-China because of events over which neither United States nor anyone else had any control. He made it clear that if we were speaking of collective defence in South East Asia, we had to meet circumstances as they existed at the time discussions took place.

5. We have endeavoured as best we can to obtain answers to questions you have put. If there are any other specific matters on which you would like to seek clarification, I shall be glad to try to obtain it.

PRIME MINISTER,
MIN. AND DEPT. E.A.
MIN. AND DEPT. DEFENCE,
P.M'S.

6th June, 1954.

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1058

A816/29

19/311/217

Situation in Indo China - Australian policy