

By Maj D. K. Morton

**Despite its official denouncement by Peiping as "a Paper Tiger" it presents the military muscle to halt Communism's aggression in Southeast Asia.**

WHEN WORLD WAR II ENDED, the peace which people everywhere desired did not come to Asia. In many parts of Asia a pattern of Communist inspired insurrection and aggression developed, culminating in the violent assault on the territory of South Korea.

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was formed in order that the member nations could counteract the Communist threat in Southeast Asia. In order that we may better understand what Communist Russia wants let us first examine the objectives of the Communists.

#### Communism's Aims

Communism has as its avowed goal world domination.

The threat of Communism exists all over the world today. In the older established governments of the free nations the encroachments of Communism is impeded by the possession of a mature government and a sound economic base. South-

east Asia at the end of World War II was a hot bed of newly formed nations, lacking in stability and therefore ripe for the Communist harvest. Still suffering from the 10 years of Japanese rapine, China fell before Communism's persuasive platitudes. Thus the most populous and one of the most strategically placed areas in the world was removed from the Free World and placed with its enemies. The assault on South Korea spelled out clearly the intentions of the Communists and even closer to the new nations in the south was the bitter fighting in Indochina.

These strongly nationalistic people recognized their danger and realized that separately none of them could meet the enemy, work towards their own goals and undergo normal growth.

Since the end of World War II the right of self-determination has been strongly expressed in Asia, consequently leading to the formulation

of new independent nations. However, at the same time, this area of the world has apparently been chosen for exploitation by the Communists.

#### Determination of the Need for SEATO

All newly formed nations are confronted with a period of initial growth during which time, in order to strengthen their economic structure, they have to possess sufficient strength so that force or threat of force—either military, economical, or political in nature—will not deter them from their own goal or impede their natural growth. For this reason the newly formed nations concluded that their strength could be increased by forming an alliance with other nations which have the same basic national objectives. Because of the threat of Communism in the Asian area, a number of the Southeastern nations determined that an alliance between themselves was not only desirable but absolutely essen-

tial. These nations, together with other nations who have a common understanding of Communist aims envisioned an alliance that would counteract the threat of Communism in Asia.

Preliminary conferences were held involving the following nations: Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States. These conferences led to a common agreement, that an armed attack against any one of them would endanger the "peace and safety" of all, and that such an attack would oblige the others "to meet the common danger in accordance with their constitutional processes."

### The SEATO Treaty

After preliminary matters were settled, final arrangements were made for the forming of a treaty alliance, to take place on 8 September 1954 at Manila.

In general, the United States desired a treaty that would guarantee a united regional defense against further Communist penetration of Southeast Asia. Further, that its guarantees would probably include the protection of Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam. These countries, with their freedom restricted by the Geneva agreement, would not be able to enter military commitments of their own. High hopes were held out for it as a method of curbing Communist aggression and its successes—or lack of it—would depend, in part, on how well its members got along together.

This meeting took place as scheduled and the East and West joined together in signing the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty. Sec-

retary of State John Foster Dulles likened this treaty to an Asian "Monroe Doctrine." With gold pens, the plenipotentiaries of Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom and the United States put their signatures in alphabetical order on a series of documents bound in dark blue leather and, somewhat to their own surprise, found themselves quite impressed by what they had done.

The signatories subscribed to an anticolonialism Pacific Charter sponsored by the Philippines. This charter, hailed by Secretary Dulles as perhaps the "greatest contribution," pledged the Manila powers "by every peaceful means to promote self-government and to secure the independence of all countries whose people desire it and are able to undertake its responsibilities."

SEATO covers an area from West Pakistan to the Pacific Ocean, and as far north as  $21^{\circ} 30' \text{ min}$  (thus excluding Formosa, Hong Kong and Japan). It protects treaty members in the area, as well as any other nations in the area who are willing to join later and are unanimously accepted. A special protocol extends "a mantle of protection" to the Indochina states of Laos, Cambodia and southern Vietnam. The treaty provides, in Article IV, that in event of aggression, each signatory will regard an attack as endangering "its own peace and safety," and will undertake in that event "to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." The US working draft had specified "Communist aggression." But Secretary of State Dulles was persuaded to take out the word "Communist" in order to render the agreement

more attractive to the 4 "Colombo powers" (India, Indonesia, Burma and Ceylon, who had not participated). By separate protocol, the United States stated that it would react only to Communist attacks, in order not to become entangled in affairs between non-Communist Asian nations.

SEATO provides that in cases of political subversion from outside, which threatens to take over a member country, all signers will "consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense." Though the wording is vague, the clause introduced a new kind of commitment in Asian affairs. All 8 treaty makers are put on record as favoring equal rights, self-determination and self-government for Asian peoples.

In analyzing the treaty and its implications, one must first understand that there is no one Asian point of view. There are as many Asian points of view as there are nations and this, of course, complicates matters. All Asian nations are primarily concerned with *independence* and we find that the old system of capitalism, as was applied by the colonial powers, had pushed the Asian nations toward socialism. What is needed in Southeast Asia is an Asian solution. They do not need, nor want, a European or a United States solution. Therefore, SEATO's biggest contribution is perhaps the negative one wherein it leaves the United States free to act there, quickly and decisively, whenever the peril may arise. Moreover, though the facts of strategy have long made plain that America's first frontier of defense is equally on the Mehong as on the Rhine, its official declaration of responsibility for Free Asia's defense puts that reality on paper where all who plan may read—whether friend or foe—and be braver, or more cautious, in accordance.

### Effect of SEATO on Communist Bloc

The treaty had an immediate effect on the Communist bloc and led to a curious coalition by other Asian nations in which they debunked the results. Radio Peking aired Red China's propaganda that the treaty was a "US-made yoke" and the Pacific Charter an "elaborate hocus-pocus." Prime Minister Jawaharlal



**Maj D. K. Morton** presents here an analysis of the factors that led to the formation of the bloc of nations that comprise the SEATO alliance. He states that his reason for writing this article is founded on the belief that the area encompassed by SEATO is an area of prime interest for Marines because of their activities in that corner of the world in the past and at present.

Maj Morton enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1932, and was commissioned in the early days of WWII. He saw action first with the 2d and 3d Parachute Battalions, and later with the 5th Mar Div as a mortar platoon leader, a rifle platoon leader and company commander. During the Korean conflict he served as Chief Air Observer with the 1st Mar Div. Director of the Air Observer School, MCEC at Quantico from 1954 until his detachment in September 1956, he is currently serving with Landing Force Training Unit, Pacific.

Nehru of India called it "very unfortunate" that "Asian Problems, Asian security, and Asian peace were discussed chiefly by non-Asian powers." Premier Nicolai A. Bulganin and Nikita S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party have both consistently criticized the West and non-Communist nations for the formation of "military blocs" and for building up a position of strength.

In order to visualize the entire effect of this treaty on the Communist bloc it is necessary to know and understand the Dulles' theory of the effect of SEATO on the Communists. Dulles likes to compare our Asian security arrangements with the palm and fingers of a hand. The United States is militarily muscled to each geographical finger: South Korea, Japan, Formosa and the SEATO area. The separate treaties binding us to defend these distant regions are not interlocking. But Dulles considers their interaction in case of war implicit. His ultimate goal is to tie all these pacts into a neat bundle through development of a defense agreement between Japan, Formosa and the Korean Republic. But this will require years, not months.

Dulles emphasized to his colleagues at the first meeting of SEATO that there are 3 fronts in Asia. This is interpreted to mean that if Red China starts aggression in the territory covered by SEATO she will have to reckon with retaliation not only from this quarter but also from the strongpoints of Formosa and Korea. He argues that the accumulated power of fingers and hand is too much for Red China to risk facing and, therefore, direct aggression will be prevented. Peiping, he feels, has already demonstrated an unwillingness to face a triple war for it laid low in Indochina and Formosa until a Korean armistice was arranged. The Secretary of State calculates that the Chinese Communists will not simultaneously take on SEATO, Chiang Kaishek's 300,000 men, Syngman Rhee's 20 divisions, and US forces in the Far East, which include 400 warships, 650,000 sailors, soldiers and Marines and 30 squadrons of aircraft.

The effect of this treaty alliance on India and Egypt was indicated by the meeting in February 1955

between Prime Minister Nehru and Egypt's Premier Gamal Adbel Nasser, in Cairo. They agreed, in condemning military alliances and power entanglements which increase tension and rivalry in armaments. Premier Nasser clearly struck at Iraq's "entanglement" with the West in her proposed military alliance with Turkey and Mr. Nehru struck, presumably, at SEATO.

The Soviet Foreign Ministry officially denounced SEATO as being directed against security in Asia and against the freedom and national independence of the Asian peoples. The Ministry concluded with a statement, warning that the initiating states were taking upon themselves "the entire responsibility for actions which are in gross contradiction to the tasks of strengthening peace."

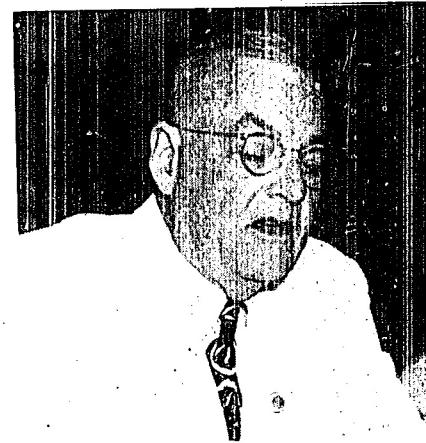
Although opposition to SEATO is loudly voiced by India, we find that Ceylon and Burma lean toward the antineutralist position, but so far have decided against actual association in an anti-Communist pact.

#### Growth of Military Assistance Plans

Initially, SEATO was not given much military worth with respect to defense of the pact nations or of the adjacent areas which would compromise any SEATO nations' security.

When the treaty was signed, SEATO had no military structure. It was to have a council with wide powers for military planning and for economic programs to help Asia's free nations survive. The area to be defended beyond that of the signers was left vague. Instant action was not provided; only that the parties "consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which would be taken for the common defense. . . ." At this time the Communists stated that SEATO had no teeth and that its bark was worse than its bite.

However, within a short time after the treaty was signed the need for concerted effort on the part of the member nations to defend themselves against Communist military forces was fully realized and steps were taken to bring this feature to realization in fact and not in fiction. The matter was discussed amongst themselves and plans were formu-



Wide World  
**Dulles—the 3-front concept**

lated. This is a matter which today receives rapt attention and not merely lip service.

Planning for military defense by SEATO members was implemented by several extremely important meetings which were conducted on 25 February 1955. At this time a military staff group and a committee to deal with problems of the alliance was established.

It was also decided that the secretariat itself would be made up of 8 ambassadors of the member countries' representatives and that under this secretariat would function the military staff group, the body of experts on subversion, and an economic group.

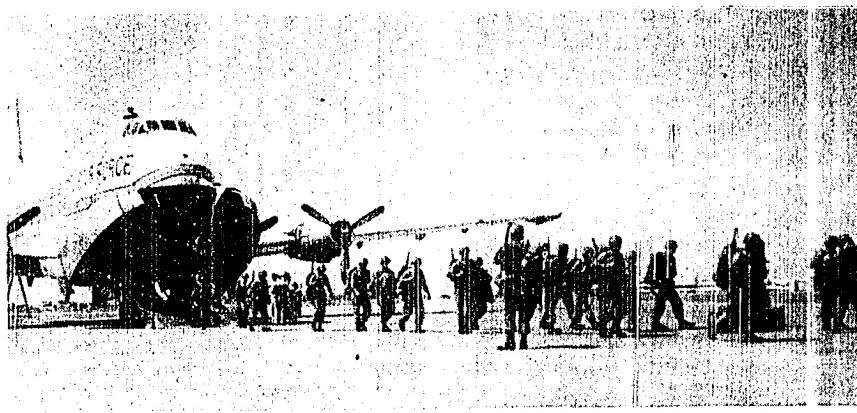
In February 1955 the importance of the military situation to the SEATO nations was indicated by the tasks that were assigned to the meeting at Bangkok. These tasks were precise and deceptively simple. The SEATO nations were to attempt to accomplish the following 3 things:

1) To erect a military barrier against possible overt aggression by Communist China and her satellite in North Vietnam.

2) To set up police training programs and a system of exchange of information useful in combating Communist subversion.

3) To cut the ground from under the Communists by fostering economic development and raising the living standards in Asia.

Planning by the members of SEATO continued and then, on 24 November 1955, during the meeting of the members at Hawaii, they completed an intelligence estimate of the situation in Southeast Asia,



Wide World

### **US Troops land at Bangkok's Don Muang Airport to participate in Operation Firm Link**

approved the work of the technical subcommittees in various fields and examined and approved actual plans for the defense of the area. These plans involve not only mutual assistance for internal security purposes but also the provision of necessary military support in the event of invasion. At this time plans for combined or bilateral training exercises by the military forces of the member states were also approved.

The feelings in respect to the employment of military forces by the SEATO nations, by which to fight and counter Communist aggression in the area, were expressed by the member nation Australia on 6 December 1955. It was pointed out that Australia and Britain are the only nations among the 8 Manila signatories that have troops actually fighting Communist aggression in the area in which the pact is designed to protect. Australian troops are engaged alongside the British against the Red guerrillas in Malaya.

By January 1956 the SEATO military planners had held 14 meetings and at this time Adm Stump (CINCPAC and US delegate to the meeting of military advisers of SEATO) stated that the organization had already accomplished much of the military planning that would normally be undertaken only after aggression had occurred. That the 8 nations were "ready to go ahead with defense action" if any new Communist aggression occurred in that part of Asia. This was the first positive statement indicating that the Manila Treaty had grown "teeth." Adm Stump's statement indicated that the SEATO nations had

drawn up a co-ordinated military plan for Southeast Asia. He stated that SEATO is "designed to prevent external aggression," and can "stop such aggression with the weapons available." He added that this power was also a means of "deterring internal aggression," and that the Southeast Asia defense alliance had moved a considerable way along this line.

After a number of conferences by the SEATO nations, and as a result of the mounting tension created in the southeast Asian area by Communist activities, it was announced in February 1956 that a joint maneuver would be held in order that reassurance could be given to member SEATO nations. The joint maneuver obviously was intended to show Red China that SEATO is more than a "paper tiger," as the Peiping radio has repeatedly called it.

The State Dept evidenced some embarrassment over the arrangements for the 3-power military exercise to take place at Bangkok, Thailand, during February 1956. There was evidence of haste and improvisation, and it is regrettable that better preparations could not have been made. It was hard to blame the government of Pakistan for its refusal to participate on a single week's notice.

The exercise was to be conducted at Bangkok on the invitation of the Thai Government. Approximately 7,000 US Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force men were to take part in the 2-day demonstration, along with ground forces from Thailand and the Philippines. This would be followed by a maneuver at Iwo Jima

by United States forces the following week.

Despite some initial difficulties in formulation of the plans for the SEATO joint military force maneuvers, these plans were firmed up and the military exercise was accomplished. It may be noted that it was necessary to change the maneuvers to what was basically a demonstration and parade.

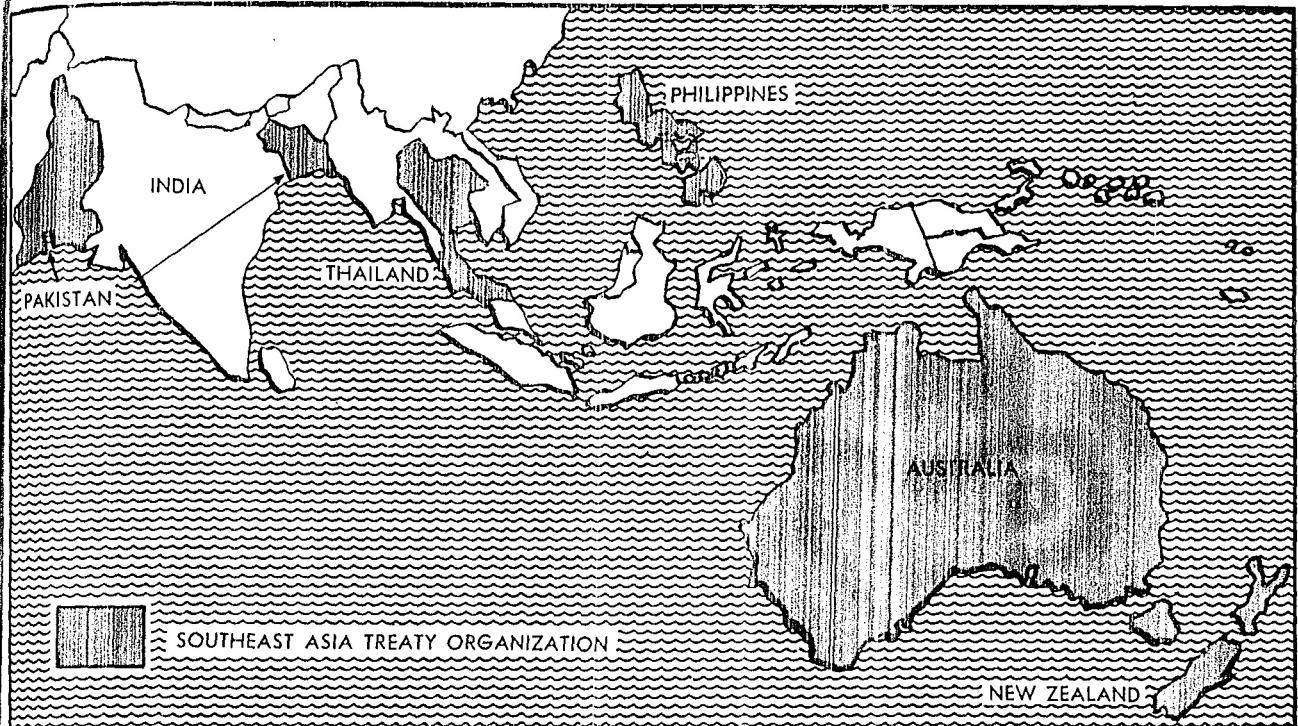
On 15 February 1956 military units of 5 nations opened the first joint maneuver of SEATO in Thailand. Ships of the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand were positioned in the Gulf of Siam off the Thai coast. US Globemasters and Flying Boxcars roared overhead with American troops.

United States and Thai jets provided flying cover at Bangkok's Don Muang Airport for landing operations. The seaplane tender *USS Salisbury Sound* disembarked 650 Filipino troops transported from Manila. This 3-day exercise was named Operation Firm Link and, despite its sketchy nature and questionable military value, it did prove 2 very important points. It demonstrated the mobility of the military forces and also the splendid co-operation among the SEATO nations.

### **The Role of the US in SEATO**

The role of the United States in SEATO can best be determined by the fundamental, strategic and tactical elements of our foreign policy. These are set forth in a number of highly publicized documents and indicate the feelings of the American public. Our fundamental policies which are reflected in our national objectives are: maintenance of peace and national security, and the promotion of our general welfare. In the Atlantic Charter it was set forth that we seek no territorial aggrandizement and that we believed in the principle of self-determination and choice of government by the people of a nation. These tactical policies had previously been spelled out in President Wilson's State of the Union address to the nation in January 1918 when he set forth his now famous Fourteen Points.

Certain other elements of our foreign policy were delineated by President Truman in his October 1945 Navy Day address. At this time a strategic element of our foreign pol-



icy was set forth: that the United States seeks no territorial changes that are not in accord with the people who occupy the area in question. During this address another important element of our foreign policy was stated—that the United States seeks, and believes that all nations should seek economic collaboration between nations, both large and small, in order that freedom from fear and want may be accomplished.

Most recently a reiteration of certain of these elements of our policy was made. This was on 1 February 1956 in the "Joint Statement of Policy" by President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Anthony Eden at which time the following points were stressed:

- Right of the people to choose their own government.
- Economical pursuit of happiness, through mutual benefit of trade (open door policy) and aid to undeveloped countries.
- Collective security to insure the existence of independent countries.
- The rejection of force as a means of resolving disputes and to seek peaceful settlement thereof.

A summation of these various points which are part of our foreign policy, indicates that the US is a strong advocate of the principles of self-determination and of collective security. We realize that, in order

for any nation to enjoy economic prosperity over any span of time, all nations throughout the world must be economically sound. The basic principles underlying these policies are some of the reasons why the US was interested in the formation of SEATO and why the articles of that treaty will be vigorously adhered to by this country.

It is most interesting to note and re-examine that portion of the SEATO treaty, which was a separate protocol, in which the US made it quite clear that it would react only to Communist attacks and would not permit itself to become entangled in any fighting between non-Communist Asian nations. However, the treaty does provide that in cases of political subversion from outside, which threatens to take over a member country, all of the SEATO members will "consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense."

On 23 February 1955, referring to military action contemplated by the United States in fulfilling its SEATO commitments, Secretary of State Dulles emphasized 2 themes—1) the American wish to concentrate its Pacific strength into a central mobile striking force, and 2) utilizing this force to strike at Communist aggression wherever and whenever it might occur.

## Conclusions

The work of SEATO has so far been, of necessity, preparatory. In the forthcoming years it will pass into the fields of achievement. As a result of the collection and collation of information in the economic, social, publicity and labor fields; it will now be possible to take practical steps to advance the work of the organization and of member governments in these fields.

Much has been done to develop understanding and friendship between the peoples of the member nations through exchanges of official and private visits. Moreover, within SEATO itself, a spirit of good fellowship has grown up as a result of the frequent meetings of the representatives of the member countries.

While developing these positive plans for peaceful progress the SEATO countries must increase their capacity to deter would-be aggressors by building up a vigorous collective defense system.

The objectives of SEATO will not be realized until the peoples of the member nations know that their defense against any aggressor is assured; that their social and economic lot has been improved; and that the internal structure of their countries has been so strengthened as to ensure that subversion directed from without cannot succeed. USMC