SEATO: a Dulles Dud

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

THE SOUTH-EAST Asia Collective Defense Treaty established in Manila the first week of September, is the ill-begotten progeny of the recent futile attempt of the Washington warmongers to keep the Indo-china war going in the face of a world-wide demand that it must cease. It will be remembered that as the Geneva Conference of April 26 was about to meet to settle the war, John Foster Dulles came forward with a plan to have Britain, France, and the United States make an all-out armed intervention in Indo-China. This plot against world peace went so far that as the capitalist press pointed out at the time, President Eisenhower was poised to ask Congress for a war sanction and United States warships were assembled in nearby waters in preparation for the planned fighting.



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THIS WAR PROGRAM collapsed, however, when Britain and France refused to go along with the bellicose Eisenhower and Dulles. The State Department had to settle for a back-door agreement with these two powers to the effect that, once the Geneva Conference had concluded, hopefully a failure, they would then join hands with the United States in the formation of a "united front" pact in "defense" of South-East Asia. S.E.A.C.D.T., what there is of it, is the result of this improvised agreement.

But the new organization falls far short indeed of fulfilling the grandiose hopes that Mr. Dulles originally placed in it. His idea was to cook up an Asian war front, as broad as possible, which would seize upon the first opportunity to open an atomic war against People's China, with a war against the U.S.S.R. looming over the not too distant horizon. But the powers that put their signatures to the Manila agreement went nowhere near that far. The most Mr. Dulles could get them to agree to was to consult in case of an attack (presumably from the Chinese), whereupon each participating country is to act "in accordance with its constitutional procedures."

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PRETTY THIN GRUEL that is for the Washington atom-maniacs, who are so eager for war. But it was the best they could do in the face of the overwhelming peace desire and anti-imperialist sentiment of the immense Asian masses, and also in view of the profound differences in interests and policies of world imperialist powers regarding Asia. The same elementary forces which dealt the European Defense Community (E.D.C.) its deathblow a couple of weeks ago, crippled the new pact at its birth and placed the mark of futility upon it.

If the program of the S.E.A.C.D.T. is feeble from the warmongers' standpoint, the organizational make-up of the conference which spawned it was even more decrepit. Practically all the most important countries in Asia—China, India, Burma, Japan, Indo-China, Indonesia, etc.—were conspicuously absent. Evidently they had no desire to be "saved" by the imperialists. The Manila conference was dominated, from stem to gudgeon, by the three big imperialist powers, the United States, Britain, and France, especially the former. Australia and New Zealand were there as fill-ins, and the Asian multi-millions were "represented by three American puppet states, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Thailand.

It is politically absurd to think of such a heterogenous group of states venturing to speak in the name of Asia and to have the arrogance to presume to defend that continent, contrary to the will of about five-sixths of its inhabitants. The new "collective defense" pact is another of the fantastic political creations cooked up from time to time by the imaginative but highly ineffective Mr. Dulles.

Nor is the S.E.A.C.D.T. strengthened by the fact that the Manila conference adopted a weasel-worded resolution expressing interest in peace and self-determination for the nations of Asia. The cynicism of this declaration stands out when it is understood that the conference was strictly an imperialist affair, and it is the basic purpose of the imperialist powers to win back, under new forms—American-style, their collapsed empires in Asia.

Despite its ridiculous political and military aspects, the S.E.A.C.D.T. nevertheless could be dangerous. This is because the United States, its mainspring, has an enormous military machine which its leaders are itching to throw into action. They are only too quick to seize upon every pretext to increase international tension, in the hope of provoking active hostilities. Their elementary immediate objective is a war against People's China. Therefore, the peoples' peace forces must keep a wary eye upon these maneuvers behind the smokescreen of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty.



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