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“IT COSTS US SOMETHING”: MIKE MANSFIELD AND THE EFFORT TO EVALUATE
THE AMERICAN FOREIGN AID PROGRAM IN SOUTH VIETNAM, 1953-1960

By

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“SAIGON, Vietnam—Settle back, take a grip on your chair, and today let us take up the Magnificent Goof known as ‘Radio Vietnam’—which, in one electronic nutshell, will give you the whole fantastic story of what’s happening to your tax millions out here.”¹ So began the third article of a six-part series written by reporter Albert M. Colegrove and syndicated in newspapers across the United States in July of 1959 by the Scripps-Howard media company.² Each day for six consecutive days, a new story appeared under the banner headline: “Our Scandal in Vietnam,” and each story focused on a different example of waste or mismanagement of the multi-billion-dollar U.S. foreign aid program in the Southeast Asian country.

The saga of Radio Vietnam, according to Colegrove, went like this: after South Vietnam, officially known as the Republic of Vietnam, gained independence from France in 1954, the new state inherited a small three-station radio chain. As part of a technical assistance program to the young nation, American telecommunication advisors presented a plan to grow the radio network with a series of low-powered local stations, thereby connecting the predominately rural citizenry with news from the capital in Saigon. The information minister for South Vietnam, Tran Chanh Thanh, would have none of it, however. Instead of local stations, Thanh demanded a 100,000-watt shortwave transmitter that could broadcast directly to the United States. Recognizing a sympathetic audience in the fight against communist North Vietnam, Thanh wanted to keep the plight of his country fresh in the minds of the American people. When the American advisors suggested a 100,000-watt transmitter might be overkill, Thanh refused to agree to the proposal for local stations. A secondary plan called for a new \$25,000 transmitting station in Saigon, only

¹ Albert M. Colegrove, “Our Scandal in Vietnam: Your Tax Dollars Tossed Away on Radio Boondoggle,” *Washington Daily News*, Jul. 22, 1959.

² In 1959, Scripps-Howard owned 18 daily newspapers with markets in Washington D.C., New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Knoxville, Memphis, Fort Worth, El Paso, and Denver. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Distribution Data Guide*, vol. 6 (1), Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959.

to find out after construction was complete that the antenna tower had been built too close to the airport. Next came the firing of the director of Radio Vietnam after he embezzled more than \$400,000 of American aid money and burned all his records in a literal dark alley. The new director brought his own fixation to the role, insisting that Radio Vietnam needed the ability to jam all communist broadcasts from North Vietnam, not only in the south, but in all of Asia. While U.S. administrators denied his request just as they had denied the request for the 100,000-watt transmitter, they did agree to finance a project to air condition Radio Vietnam's Saigon studios for \$27,000. Unfortunately, the contractor was paid in advance and skipped out halfway through the job. The air conditioners sat disconnected from the ducts, and the studios stayed stifling.

Colegrove's tale of Radio Vietnam eventually came full circle, after South Vietnam saw its hopes for a high-powered transmitter raised and then dashed again. A man named Abbott Washburn, the deputy director of Voice of America, the state-owned international broadcasting agency, happened to be consulting in Saigon and promised to gift the fledgling country a 50,000-watt transmitter from the U.S. Information Agency that could at least reach North Vietnam to counter communist messaging.³ South Vietnamese officials were jubilant. After his return stateside, however, Washburn discovered that he could not legally "donate" the transmitter. To save face, the United States Operations Mission, the aid division of the U.S. Embassy in South Vietnam, sandwiched \$100,000 into the budget to purchase the equipment later. At the time of Colegrove's reporting, American advisors had managed to convince South Vietnamese officials to move forward with the original plan to construct the local stations.⁴

³ During the Cold War, the State Department and the U.S. Information Agency oversaw Voice of America broadcasts as part of foreign policy, transmitting worldwide and aiming to counteract communist propaganda. For an overview of VOA, see Alan L. Heil, *Voice of America: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁴ Colegrove, "Radio Boondoggle."

In the weeks and months before Scripps-Howard published Colegrove's exposé, Congressional debate over the Foreign Aid Authorization Act for 1960 resulted in increased media coverage of the United States' foreign aid program writ large. Since the end of World War II and the implementation of the Marshall Plan for Western Europe, foreign aid had come to occupy an uneasy position in the arsenal of American foreign policy. Many politicians and their constituents believed that foreign aid should be a temporary tool, contingent on extraordinary circumstances, like the crisis of global war, rather than a permanent expenditure furnished indefinitely by the American taxpayer. In 1951, three years into the Marshall Plan, a Gallup poll asked Americans where they thought the U.S. government could cut down its spending. Only seven percent answered to reduce aid to foreign countries.⁵ In 1959, the same year that Colegrove was writing, that figure had risen to 17 percent.⁶ Yet, when Gallup asked Americans if they knew how much money President Dwight D. Eisenhower requested from Congress for foreign aid, only six percent could offer an informed answer.⁷

Confusion over the obscure and complex nature of foreign aid was not limited to the American public. Throughout the 1950s, many members of Congress grew increasingly restive over the state of American foreign aid policy. One of these was Senator Mike Mansfield, a Democrat from Montana, who would go on to serve as the longest-running Senate Majority Leader in that chamber's history. At the time of Colegrove's reporting, Mansfield was serving as the Majority Whip as well as a key member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He also happened to be one of the few legislators who had been calling for reform of foreign aid practices since the early 1950s. Three months before Colegrove's articles appeared, Mansfield

⁵ George Gallup, "Survey #480-K," *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 2, 1949-1958 (1972): 1016.

⁶ Gallup, "Survey #612-K," *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 3, 1959-1971 (1972): 1605.

⁷ Gallup, "Survey #596-K-I," *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 2, 1949-1958 (1972): 1546.

gave a speech highly critical of foreign aid administration, stating that the only certainty about the \$60-70 billion spent on foreign aid since the end of World War II was that it cost Americans money. With no specific objectives by which to judge that expenditure, Mansfield argued that neither the Senate, the House, the Eisenhower Administration, nor the American people could have any way of knowing whether the appropriations were worth the price. Most tellingly, Mansfield charged the Eisenhower Administration with ignoring evidence of corruption and mismanagement of elements of foreign aid that bordered on the scandalous.⁸

In 1959, Americans had little idea that a small country in Southeast Asia would come to dominate U.S. foreign policy for the next decade and a half or that more than 58,000 Americans would lose their lives in a conflict half-way around the world, exposing searing and indelible fault lines in American society and state policy in the process.⁹ At the time of Colegrove's reporting, there were only a handful of correspondents posted in Vietnam, multiple potential hot fronts in an increasingly entrenched Cold War, and a media landscape that was changing in fundamental ways. As scholars like Sam Lebovic and Matthew Pressman have demonstrated, not only did the late 1950s coincide with a contested rise of the interpretive news story over straightforward, factual coverage of what elite actors said and did, but the midcentury was also a time when certain elements of the media challenged the very definition of freedom of the press and attempted to expand legal protection over the quality, diversity, and accuracy of news.¹⁰ Although the second attempt was largely a failure, the rationale behind both of these

⁸ Speech, "A New Approach to Foreign Aid," by Mike Mansfield, May 15, 1959, Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 40, Folder 27, Mike Mansfield Papers, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Montana, Missoula, MT.

⁹ "Vietnam War U.S. Military Fatal Casualty Statistics: Electronic Records Reference Report," National Archives and Records Administration, n.d., <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics>.

¹⁰ Sam Lebovic, *Speech and Unfree News: The Paradox of Press Freedom in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016) and Matthew Pressman, *On Press: The Liberal Values That Shaped the News* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

consequential efforts lay in the belief that an increasingly modern and complex world necessitated changes in the way mass media functioned in the world's largest democracy.

It was against a media backdrop still largely stitched together by consensus, however, that Scripps-Howard published Colegrove's series. The exposé followed a spate of favorable coverage of the foreign aid program in Vietnam that had recently appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, and *Business Week*. In fact, the *Business Week* feature was so positive that the director of the International Cooperation Administration, the main agency for foreign aid, sent a copy of it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, believing it to be much "more balanced in its treatment" than Colegrove's "sensationalism."¹¹

Members of the loyal press pool were hardly the only ones caught off-guard by the articles, and officials in the State Department quickly issued denials of Colegrove's claims. Within a day of the first article, however, Senator Mansfield had already called for an "immediate exploration" of the situation.¹² The timing of the series was highly significant. Only twelve days prior to its publication, the Senate had passed the Foreign Aid Authorization Act for 1960, which appropriated \$3.5 billion for foreign aid, yet declined to address any of the reforms the Montana senator had proposed.¹³ By mid-August 1959, less than two weeks after the publication of Colegrove's reports, foreign policy subcommittees in both the House and Senate convened public and executive session hearings to probe the reporter's allegations. Colegrove and various officials and representatives, some of whom had been recalled from South Vietnam specifically to participate in the hearings, gave sharply conflicting testimony. The House subcommittee conducted a succinct and mostly uncritical examination of the affair, but the

¹¹ Letter, James W. Riddleberger to J. W. Fulbright, Jul. 21, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 30, Mike Mansfield Papers.

¹² Oland D. Russell, "Mansfield Asks Prompt Probe of Viet Nam Aid," *Washington Daily News*, Jul. 21, 1959.

¹³ "Roll Call Vote on Foreign Aid Bill," *Washington Post*, Jul. 9, 1959.

Senate subcommittee under Mansfield's chairmanship decided to continue the investigation with in-country interviews that would take place in the fall of 1959. After the initial hearings, publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* reported official rebukes of Colegrove and rebuttals of his specific charges given by State and Defense Department personnel, including the ambassador to South Vietnam and the director of the United States Operations Mission.¹⁴ These leading newspapers did not, however, furnish much of their own analysis of the administrative concerns at the heart of Colegrove's charges. As one Senate aide predicted, the mainstream papers were expected to rely heavily on the subcommittee's findings. If the subcommittee ultimately rebuffed Colegrove's claims, the staffer believed that the "executive branch, the *New York Times*, and perhaps, the *Washington Post*, would find in [that conclusion] proof that just about everything is right with the aid-program, and therefore Congress should increase the appropriations."¹⁵

This paper argues that the Colegrove exposé and the political response to it represent an important juncture, one in which the vastness, complexity, and nascency of the American administrative state intersected with foreign policy, the Cold War, associational governance, and changes in the media landscape to both obscure and shape public opinion about foreign aid. Politicians like Mike Mansfield were able to cultivate credentials as nebulous as "foreign affairs expert" based partially on the fact that no one, including the senator himself, could answer the question of how to measure foreign aid's successes and failures. Although fiscal conservatives in Congress, mostly Southern Democrats, began to express discomfort about annual increases in

¹⁴ E. W. Kentworthy, "3 Top Officials Deny 'Scandal' in Aid from U.S. to Vietnam," *New York Times*, Jul. 31, 1959; Gardiner L Bridge, "Full U.S. Aid Inquiry in Viet-Nam Proposed," *Washington Post*, Aug. 1, 1959.

¹⁵ Memorandum, "Draft Report on Vietnamese Inquiry," Frank Valeo to Mike Mansfield, Sep. 10, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 30, Mike Mansfield Papers.

foreign aid as early as 1946, year after year throughout the 1950s, foreign aid bills continued to pass with commanding majorities and relatively minor reductions in appropriation. It was not until 1963 that Congress enacted any significant cuts to foreign aid, when it slashed President John F. Kennedy's appropriation request by 34 percent, the largest reduction in the history of the program up to that point. Five years later in 1968, Congress again set a record by approving only \$1.76 billion for the next fiscal year, the lowest amount since World War II. Finally in 1971, a foreign aid bill failed to pass for the first time ever.¹⁶ The fact that these developments coincided with the escalation of the Vietnam War are undeniable.

Yet, despite Mansfield's dire predictions in 1959 that the American public would become so disillusioned with the deficiencies of foreign aid administration that it would "swamp" the entire undertaking, Gallup polling from the 1960s reveals that public support for foreign aid remained above 50 percent throughout the decade.¹⁷ What's more, when pollsters asked Americans if they thought foreign aid should be conditional on the receiving country's support of American foreign policy—particularly in Vietnam—45 percent said the United States should cut off aid completely to any nation that did not support our foreign policy in Southeast Asia, and another 30 percent said that the amount of aid should be reduced.¹⁸ An examination of Colegrove's interpretive journalism, the efforts of politicians like Mike Mansfield to restructure foreign aid practices, and shifting public opinion about the foreign aid program and the American state building efforts in Vietnam does not yield a neat throughline from media spotlight to public outrage and Congressional reform. Still, a searching look at the reaction to

¹⁶ Historian Joseph Frye offers a succinct overview of Congressional appropriations battles over foreign aid in his book *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002) 251-254.

¹⁷ Gallup, "Survey #667-K," "Survey #706-K," and "Survey #724-K," *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 3, 1959-1971 (1972): 1802, 1932, 1995.

¹⁸ Gallup, "Survey #724-K," *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 3, 1959-1971 (1972): 1995.

Colegrove’s reporting—from politicians, the media, and the public—reveals much about the contingent, confusing, and associational nature of foreign aid in the first decade and a half after the Marshall Plan. As Mansfield lamented in 1959, “We list indiscriminately as foreign aid the cost of a squadron of fighter planes given to an unsteady government somewhere and the cost of assigning a public health expert to a nation with a malaria problem. The effects of these actions on us and others may be as different as night and day. The only thing they may really have in common is that both cost us something.”¹⁹ This paper analyzes perceptions of that cost in the context of Vietnam and the Cold War.

There is vast and ever-expanding scholarship of the Vietnam era. This project contributes to research of American foreign policy and state building efforts in Vietnam before the ground war in the areas of development, political, and diplomatic history.²⁰ It also joins studies of the media, American administrative state, associational governance, and the Cold War as viewed through the complex lens of the Vietnam conflict.²¹ Although Colegrove’s reporting and the subsequent Congressional hearings it inspired are included in several histories of American involvement in Vietnam, the episode generally receives little more than a passing

¹⁹ Mansfield, “A New Approach to Foreign Aid,” May 15, 1959.

²⁰ On state-building and development in South Vietnam, see James M. Carter, *Inventing Vietnam: The United States and State Building, 1954-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jessica Elkind, *Aid Under Fire: Nation Building and the Vietnam War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016); John Ernst, *Forging a Fateful Alliance* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998). On diplomacy and congressional politics during the Vietnam era, see Joseph Frye, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002); Andrew L. Johns, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010); Kathryn C. Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007). On the history and origins of foreign aid more broadly, see David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); John Norris, *The Enduring Struggle: The History of the U.S. Agency for International Development and America's Uneasy Transformation of the World* (Latham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

²¹ On media, see Lebovic, *Speech and Unfree News*; Pressman, *On Press*; Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (ed.), *Media Nation: The Political History of News in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). On associational governance, see Brian Balogh, *The Associational State: American Governance in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

mention.²² In other instances, such as historian Joseph Frye's monograph *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations*, Congressional contestation over foreign aid is covered extensively, but from a regional perspective, such as that of Southern Democrats, who increasingly advocated as a bloc for the conversion of foreign aid expenditures to direct military defense spending throughout the 1950s and 1960s.²³ Journalist Don Oberdorfer's biography of Mike Mansfield likewise provides an in-depth look at the Montana senator's efforts to reform foreign aid and the outsized role he played in advising three different presidents on Vietnam policy, but as a biography, its focus is narrow and does not necessarily examine larger historical questions.²⁴ In bringing together the Colegrove affair, Mansfield's efforts to reshape foreign aid administration, and public perception of the foreign aid program in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this paper provides a unique perspective of a Cold War moment. It was a moment in which politicians like Mansfield attempted to balance the weight of secrecy and accountability on the scales of a modern democracy, while also collecting capital to build a reputation. In Mansfield's case, knowledge of a topic as seemingly unknowable as the inner workings of foreign aid helped sustain his career. At the same time, every day Americans were trying to make sense of the obscurity surrounding foreign aid, evolving geopolitics, and humanitarian need abroad to understand their government and their own position in the world.

* * *

For Mike Mansfield, a life-long interest in Asia began after he ran away from his home in Great Falls, Montana. At fourteen years old, Mansfield lied about his age to enlist in the Navy

²² See, for example, Chapter 6 of William Conrad Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

²³ Frye, *Dixie Looks Abroad*.

²⁴ Don Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield: The Extraordinary Life of a Great American Statesman and Diplomat* (Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Books, 2003).

during World War I. After his discharge at the end of the war, Mansfield quickly re-enlisted, first in the Army and then the Marines. The latter sent him briefly to the Philippines and China, and although his military service in China lasted little more than a week, it was enough to captivate him. Mansfield then returned to Montana and worked as a miner before continuing his education. After earning his master's degree, Mansfield taught East Asian and Latin American history at Montana State University in Missoula until he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1942.²⁵ Thus, Mansfield arrived in Washington with a semi-established reputation as an Asian affairs specialist. After serving five terms in the House of Representatives from Montana's First Congressional District, Mansfield's constituents elected him to the U.S. Senate in 1952.

Mansfield's transition from the House to the Senate coincided with the dawning of the Cold War and the origins of the modern American foreign aid program.²⁶ Yet as the countries receiving U.S. foreign aid shifted from Europe to Latin America, Asia, and Africa in the 1950s, opposition to the program, particularly from Southern legislators, began to solidify. Scholars like Joseph Frye contend that racism and the belief that non-white people would not use aid funds wisely were important components of that fiscal conservatism.²⁷ After Mao Zedong led the

²⁵ In 1965, the Montana state legislature renamed the university the University of Montana. Montana State College in Bozeman then became known as Montana State University.

²⁶ At the close of World War II in 1945, President Harry Truman extended the U.S. Export-Import Bank's lending authority to provide financial assistance from the government to American businesses exporting goods and services abroad. That same year, Congress allocated \$550 million for the United Nations' Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. The following year, in 1946, the legislature approved a \$3.75 billion loan to the United Kingdom for its efforts to rebuild after the war, and in 1947, Truman declared his namesake doctrine, effectively outlining a course for the next 40 years of foreign policy, when he pledged American support for democracies around the world facing the threat of communism. Even as Southern fiscal conservatives in Congress began to criticize the Truman Doctrine and foreign aid spending, the Economic Recovery Act of 1948, more commonly known as the Marshall Plan, and its \$13 billion aid package ultimately commanded solid support in both legislative chambers, in part because Southerners saw the measure as an opportunity to recoup historic markets in Western Europe for American cotton and tobacco products. From 1947 to 1948, the U.S. spent another \$400 million on assistance to Greece and Turkey to quash communist uprisings. Then in 1949, Truman outlined his Point Four Program for technical assistance and economic aid to underdeveloped countries, and Congress passed the Mutual Defense Assistance Act, which appropriated \$1.3 billion to fund the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. For more, see Joseph Frye's *Dixie Looks Abroad*.

²⁷ Frye, *Dixie Looks Abroad*, 254.

communists to victory in China in 1949 and war broke out on the Korean Peninsula in 1950, other Southern lawmakers pointed to these developments as proof that foreign aid was futile. They began to argue for the conversion of foreign aid dollars to pure defensive military spending, eventually forming the close political alliance with the Pentagon that Frye and others have termed the “Dixie-Defense coalition.”²⁸ In return for solid protection of the Department of Defense budget, the South became home to seven out of ten of the largest defense contractors in the postwar years and the region most critical of foreign aid.

Nevertheless, the 1950s came with heightened American interest in Southeast Asia, and Mike Mansfield emerged as one of the leading Congressional authorities on matters of the region. In February 1950, the Truman Administration formally recognized the State of Vietnam, yet also made the decision to extend aid to the French in the fight to reestablish their colonial empire in Indochina. While many in his administration disdained the connection with colonialism, Truman believed America could still display commitment to the ideals of the Atlantic Charter and self-determination, while at the time pursuing U.S. goals for mutual security in both Southeast Asia and Europe. The desire to maintain a strong post-war alliance with France and the geopolitical conditions of Cold War convinced Truman and his advisors that French colonial revival was preferable to an extension of communist influence.²⁹

The issue of regional free trade in Asia likewise took on a greater significance. With communist China’s markets off limits, American policy makers sought to ensure trade remained open between Japan and Southeast Asia, as they believed that Japan’s post-war recovery depended on imports from its neighbors. It was in this context that political and economic stability in Southeast Asia became one of the primary U.S. goals for the region. By aiding the

²⁸ Frye, *Dixie Looks Abroad*, 237-238.

²⁹ Carter, *Inventing Vietnam*, 20-23.

French in Indochina, the U.S. sought to achieve this stability, while attempting to maintain a critical distance from the bald imperialistic motives which governed France's actions in the area. Aid to the French in Indochina began in 1950 with \$10 million and the establishment of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Saigon to oversee continued investments. By 1954, the amount had climbed to \$354 million for that year alone, and still Vietnamese revolutionaries led by communist Ho Chi Minh dealt the French a decisive defeat in the spring at Dien Bien Phu. This effectively severed the French will to fight on in Indochina and ended that phase of the war.³⁰

In September 1953, only eight months before the French capitulated at Dien Bien Phu, Mansfield traveled to Europe and Indochina on a Senate study mission and concluded that the military prospects of the French and the non-communist forces in Indochina were improving.³¹ It was a prime assignment for a freshman senator, and one of its main objectives was to assess the role of American aid in the defense against international communism. In his report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mansfield emphasized that continuing American development assistance in Indochina was justified and essential to U.S. security, heavily endorsing both domino theory and France's conduct of the war. Indeed, his attribution of France's motives, that she "is carrying on that war... [to] guard our flank in the common struggle... against communist aggression throughout the world" bordered on the obsequious and contrasts sharply with later statements he made to distance himself from any appearance of support of colonialism.³² In the

³⁰ Carter, *Inventing Vietnam*, 23-24.

³¹ "Report of Senator Mike Mansfield on a Study Mission to the Associated States of Indochina: Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos," U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Oct. 27, 1953, Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 64, Folder 12, Mike Mansfield Papers.

³² *Ibid.*

context of his contentious election to the Senate less than a year prior, it is unsurprising that Mansfield adopted the hardline rhetoric of a staunch anticommunist.³³

Despite his praise of the French, Mansfield also raised concerns in his report about the state of American foreign aid, both in Indochina and elsewhere. Specifically, he believed that the program needed stricter administration, as “some informed observers in the area believe that present procedures and undertakings are unduly wasteful.”³⁴ Foreshadowing the Colegrove allegations in even starker terms, Mansfield wrote in a second report that technical and economic aid, as contrasted with military aid, faced widespread criticism on the ground in Indochina. During his visit, Mansfield encountered both locals and project administrators who were aggravated about incompetent personnel, poorly planned projects, and the payment of “incredible” prices for land and local services, with the “consequent enrichment of a few speculators and labor contractors.”³⁵ He concluded that only a thorough and careful investigation of the situation could determine the validity of such claims.

In addition to boosting Mansfield’s authority as a subject matter expert vis-à-vis Vietnam, this study mission served to reinforce the Montana senator’s belief that some sort of reorganization in the executive branch was necessary for more competent administration of foreign aid. Evaluating the conflicting lines of authority and the overlap of effort that characterized the administration of foreign aid, Mansfield began to argue that all disparate agencies engaged in various non-military aid programs should be abolished and their duties

³³ During that campaign, some of Mansfield’s detractors gave him the nickname “China Mike,” criticizing him as soft on China and on communism. Senator Joseph McCarthy was one of Mansfield’s most active critics, even descending on Montana to stump for Mansfield’s opponent. Though he triumphed at the polls, Mansfield won his first senate race with the smallest margin of victory of his entire political career. Oberdorfer describes this episode in Chapter 6 of *Senator Mansfield*.

³⁴ Mansfield, “Report on a Study Mission to the Associated States of Indochina,” Oct. 27, 1953.

³⁵ “Report of Senator Mike Mansfield on a Study Mission to France, Italy, Nepal, and Indochina,” U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Nov. 27, 1953, Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 64, Folder 12, Mike Mansfield Papers.

centralized under the State Department.³⁶ Lastly, the trip convinced Mansfield that excess personnel abroad constituted a “major irritant” to locals. Confronted with the “seeming luxury and ease” of the lives American aid workers compared to their own standard of living, Mansfield observed that European recipients of U.S. aid became resentful of American presence and thought it likely that the same trend would continue in Southeast Asia.³⁷

As Mansfield grew more outspoken about the foreign aid program and the situation in Indochina throughout the 1950s, his constituents frequently wrote to him expressing both support and opposition to burgeoning public expenditures abroad. Neil Livingstone of Helena sent Mansfield his views in 1951, stating that, although he was “not familiar with the many ramifications and needs of foreign countries,” \$8.5 billion dollars in the next fiscal year was too much. Speaking for the National Affairs Committee of the Helena Chamber of Commerce, Livingstone and other members felt the amount of aid should be capped at \$5 billion and urged Mansfield to do his part in “securing a balanced budget on a pay-as-you-go basis.”³⁸ The existence of a “national affairs committee” of the local chamber of commerce, in and of itself, speaks volumes about the political culture of civic life in a place like Helena, Montana, in the early years of the Cold War, but Livingstone’s own admission of what he did not know of foreign affairs is also telling. America’s role in the post-war order was confusing, but Livingstone somehow felt solid in his belief that \$5 billion as opposed to \$8.5 billion was enough to get the job done. Nor were the members of Helena’s Chamber of Commerce the only ones to form a national affairs committee at the local level. George Schotte, of the Butte Chamber of Commerce

³⁶ Speech, “Termination of MSA Program,” by Mike Mansfield, Jun. 30, 1953, Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 37, Folder 9, Mike Mansfield Papers.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Letter, Neil Livingstone to Mike Mansfield, Jul. 24, 1951, Mss 065, Series IV, Box 21, Folder 2, Mike Mansfield Papers.

National Affairs Committee, contacted Mansfield in 1957 to express his dissatisfaction with the excesses of foreign aid. With his letter, Schotte enclosed the chamber's three-page report of recommendations for the improvement of the foreign aid program for Mansfield's consideration.³⁹ Others, like Enid Matthews, were against cuts to foreign aid until "we have achieved something nearer to parity with Russia and our allies are more securely on their feet."⁴⁰ Similarly, Fred Riggs telegraphed: "Situation Asia Europe critical. Please oppose further cuts [to] aid bill."⁴¹

As Americans were trying to make sense of their government's new leadership role in world affairs, the French gradually withdrew from Indochina. The 1954 Geneva Conference divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel, and the United States began its descent in earnest into entanglement in Southeast Asia. Yet even as foreign aid to Vietnam increased, Eisenhower's administration declined to adopt Mansfield's suggestions about its administration. According to the Geneva Conference, free elections were to take place in Vietnam in 1956, presumably reuniting the country. Realizing that "free elections" would most likely install Ho Chi Minh and a communist victory, the United States backed South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem's decision to cancel a vote altogether on the grounds that legitimate elections were not possible in the communist North. Historian James M. Carter argues that this decision transformed the American aid mission in Vietnam, giving it a larger purpose than ever before. It now sought to create a whole new state, a whole new South Vietnam.⁴²

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³⁹ Letter, George Schotte to Mike Mansfield, Mar. 30, 1957, Mss 065, Series XIII, Box 29, Folder 5, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁴⁰ Letter, Enid Matthews to Mike Mansfield, May 15, 1952, Mss 065, Series IV, Box 19, Folder 5, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁴¹ Telegram, Fred Riggs to Mike Mansfield, Jun. 2, 1952, Mss 065, Series IV, Box 19, Folder 8, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁴² Carter, *Inventing Vietnam*, 44.

Depending on the interpretive lens, the story of U.S. involvement with the rise and fall of Ngo Dinh Diem as the leader of South Vietnam could be told in various measure as a fateful misapplication of containment policy, a paternalistic and quixotic experiment in nation building, a public relations campaign with a murderous twist ending, or a decision to stay the course for lack of any viable alternatives. Scholars have adopted all of these and more in the vast literature that exists on Diem and the eight years he spent at the helm of South Vietnam before a U.S.-backed coup saw him deposed and assassinated by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in 1963.⁴³ Diem is a central figure, yet his points of intersection with Mansfield, the American foreign aid program, the media, and American public perception have been lesser explored.

Given the cascading ramifications of Diem's administration and overthrow in the unfolding of the Vietnam conflict, the chain of events that led to his rise to power seems fortuitous in the extreme. Diem was a staunch nationalist, anticommunist, and Catholic, who had previously served as a cabinet minister under French rule. He went into exile during the first phase of the French-Indochina war, and while he lived abroad, he met an academic and former Asian language specialist with the U.S. military named Wesley Fishel. In 1951, Fishel took a post at Michigan State University and got Diem appointed as a consultant on Southeast Asia with the university's government research bureau, which was established with technical assistance funds. From there, Diem's connections snowballed, and he soon found himself on the radar of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Douglas, known for his passionate

⁴³ See, for example, Jessica M. Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and 1950s Southern Vietnam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Edward Garvey Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Geoffrey Stewart, *Vietnam's Lost Revolution: Ngô Đình Diệm's Failure to Build an Independent Nation, 1955-1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Seth Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950-1963*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

politicking from the bench, was a strong anti-colonialist who opposed American foreign aid to France and became one of Diem's earliest and most ardent promoters.⁴⁴

On May 7, 1953, Douglas hosted a breakfast meeting in Washington, D.C., where he introduced Diem to both Mansfield and then-Senator John F. Kennedy. Douglas presented Diem to the senators as a "Third Way" candidate for leadership of Vietnam, an option who was both anti-colonialist and anti-communist, and Douglas's advocating for Diem didn't stop there. He also introduced Diem to the deputy director of the CIA, Robert Armory; the publisher of *Time* and *Life*, Henry Luce; and the Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Francis Spellman. As scholars like James Moses have shown, these introductions not only laid the foundation for Diem's installation as prime minister of South Vietnam after France announced its decision to withdraw from Indochina in 1954, but also set the dynamic for future relationships between U.S. advisors, Diem, and foreign aid efforts to maintain the viability of a "free" South Vietnam.⁴⁵

From the time of their initial meeting in 1953 until the Colegrove exposé, Mansfield was an enthusiastic and unreserved supporter of Diem. From the mid- to late 1950s, Mansfield played a significant role in preserving Diem's regime when members within the Eisenhower Administration considered the possibility of installing different leadership in South Vietnam. Appointed by the Eisenhower as a special advisor to the Republic of Vietnam, General Joseph Lawton Collins became one of the leading U.S. officials suggesting a regime change in 1955 after experiencing serious doubts about Diem's ability to unite the various factions in South Vietnam. In a letter from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to Collins, Dulles revealed that, up to that point, the U.S. backed Diem and "backed him 100% because (a) nobody better

⁴⁴ James L. Moses, "William O. Douglas and the Vietnam War: Civil Liberties, Presidential Authority, and the 'Political Question.'" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 1996, Vol. 26 (4), 1019-1033.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27551668>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

appeared on the horizon, and (b) because no one can survive without wholehearted backing.”⁴⁶ Mansfield had completed another Senate study mission to Southeast Asia that previous fall and met with Diem in Saigon. Though Mansfield received reports during this trip that Diem was an inconsistent and ineffectual leader, he felt strongly that there was no alternative to Diem if the Republic of Vietnam was to survive as a free, noncommunist state.

Not only did Mansfield argue to stay the course with Diem at the helm, but he also predicated the entire American foreign aid mission in Vietnam on Diem, stating in a Senate speech: “In the event that the Diem government falls... I believe that the United States should consider an immediate suspension of all aid to Vietnam... Unless there is a reasonable expectation of fulfilling our objectives the continued expenditure of the resources of the citizens of the United States is unwarranted and inexcusable.”⁴⁷ Despite Mansfield’s party affiliation, the Eisenhower Administration, particularly Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, relied heavily on his counsel when crafting Vietnam policy. In a top-secret cable from Dulles to the ambassador to Vietnam, Dulles predicted a strong negative reaction from Congress if Diem was replaced, adding that “Mansfield, who is looked upon with great respect by his colleagues with reference to this matter, is adamantly opposed to abandonment of Diem under present conditions.”⁴⁸

Criticism of Diem was not limited to elite officials or American advisors. A Vietnamese doctor and political organizer named Nguyen Ton Hoan wrote to Mansfield in the fall of 1955 to express his dismay over Diem’s oppressive tactics, including his censorship of the press and imprisonment of his political opponents. Hoan, who like the South Vietnamese leader, was both

⁴⁶“Letter from the Secretary of State to the Special Representative in Vietnam (Collins),” April 20, 1955, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v01/d128>.

⁴⁷ Speech by Mike Mansfield prepared for Senate delivery, Apr. 29, 1955, Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 38, Folder 62, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁴⁸ “Telegram From the Secretary of State to the Embassy in Vietnam,” Apr. 9, 1955, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v01/d109>.

a staunch nationalist and Catholic, claimed that he had traveled to the United States to persuade the American government and its people “that time is running out on South Vietnam.” Hoan hoped to gain a meeting with Mansfield to convince him that the United States must “help stop Diem’s experiment in despotism and bring about a political reconciliation and democracy.”⁴⁹ No response from Mansfield is included in his papers, other than a form letter from his office stating that the senator was back home in Montana, but assuring Hoan his views on the “Vietnamese situation” would be much appreciated.⁵⁰ Hoan’s portrayal of the “Vietnamese situation” presents a stark contrast to the letter of congratulations that Mansfield sent Diem only eight months prior. Extending his well wishes for the new year in 1955, Mansfield wrote to Diem, thanking him for his outstanding and courageous leadership, stating “I am aware of the many difficulties which have confronted you since you have assumed office, but I think your adherence to principles and sound moral grounds are taking root. We in America have great respect for your integrity and patriotism, and we know how extremely hard it has been to achieve the type of unity and understanding so necessary for the survival of free Vietnam.”⁵¹ In 1957, Diem made a return visit to Washington when Mansfield lauded him yet again, declaring the Vietnamese president “not only the savior of his own country, but... the savior of all of Southeast Asia.”⁵² Mansfield’s

⁴⁹ Letter, Dr. Nguyen Ton Hoan to Mike Mansfield, Sep. 14, 1955, Mss 065, Series XIII, Box 10, Folder 1, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁵⁰ Letter, James Sullivan to Dr. Nguyen Ton Hoan, Sep. 22, 1955, Mss 065, Series XIII, Box 10, Folder 1, Mike Mansfield Papers. A different Vietnamese national, Huynh Sanh Thong, sent Mansfield similar correspondence, repeating many of Hoan’s claims in February 1957, though it is unlikely that Mansfield ever saw Thong’s letter. A memo, stapled on top, from Mansfield’s aid reads: “Peggy, I don’t think this should be answered, Frank.” Thong also sent a copy of his letter to the *Washington Post*, but it was seemingly never published. For specific contents of Thong’s letter, see the Mike Mansfield Papers, Mss 065, Series XIII, Box 10, Folder 2.

⁵¹ Letter, Mike Mansfield to Ngo Dinh Diem, Jan. 13, 1955, Mss 065, Series XIII, Box 10, Folder 1, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁵² *Congressional Record*, May 13, 1957, Mss 590, Series I, Box 5, Folder 5, Don Oberdorfer’s Mansfield Biography Research Papers, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, Missoula, MT.

public support of Diem would abruptly drop off after Colegrove's allegations in 1959, but in the mid-1950s, his backing of South Vietnam's first president was both solid and significant.⁵³

Although public discussion of the foreign aid program in Vietnam was more muted during 1956 and 1957, foreign aid dollars continued to flow, not only into military, economic, and technical assistance projects in Southeast Asia, but also into a concerted public relations campaign within the United States to support Diem and American-backed nation building efforts in his country. The American Friends of Vietnam (AFV), a non-profit lobby that sprang out of the connections forged by Justice Douglas, secured foreign aid money to hire the Oram Group, a Madison Avenue consulting firm, which according to one critical piece, "literally flooded the country with glowing but completely false reports of Diem's popularity and South Vietnam's new strides towards democracy."⁵⁴ Indeed, Mansfield received several pro-Diem letters from members of the public. One of those came from Mrs. Harvey Wiley, a self-identified Episcopalian and average American citizen, who wished to thank Mansfield for his continued backing of Diem, whose characteristics of "uncompromising honesty and incorruptibility" were "rare in the politics of any country, much less in that far-away land, so long dominated by French corruption and immorality."⁵⁵ Mrs. Wiley's letter predates Oram's involvement, but she states that she had been following Diem's story in the press for "quite some time."⁵⁶

⁵³ Two reporters, from opposite political persuasions, have attributed the very outbreak of the Vietnam War to Mansfield's support of Diem at this juncture: Joseph Alsop and Hilaire du Berrier. Although these claims are provocative rather than provable, a fascinating email exchange between two of Mansfield's most prominent researchers, Greg Olson and Don Oberdorfer, discusses this very assertion: The "quotation... about how there would have been no Vietnam War without Mansfield is interesting. I would have used it in my book had I found it. Mansfield has been lucky in who has written about him. Both of us are sympathetic." Email exchange found in Don Oberdorfer's Mansfield Biography Research Papers, Mss 590, Series I, Box 7, Folder 7.

⁵⁴ Hilaire du Berrier, "The South Vietnam Americans Have Never Heard Of," *Economic Council Letter*, No. 420, December 1, 1957.

⁵⁵ Letter, Mrs. Harvey Wiley to Mike Mansfield, May 1, 1955, Mss 065, Series XIII, Box 10, Folder 1, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

In addition to utilizing foreign aid to take the Diem campaign to Madison Avenue, the American Friends of Vietnam also spawned its own private committee to handle foreign aid contracts in Vietnam in 1956. To anyone unfamiliar with the associational nature of foreign aid, the AFV's Committee on Educational and Cultural Assistance to Vietnam could have easily been mistaken for a Congressional delegation. The committee's official mission was to secure "financial, material, and technical aid in the field of private education and cultural activities in South Vietnam."⁵⁷ In 1957, the AFV and the government of South Vietnam jointly announced a set of incentives designed to lure private investment, including guarantees against nationalization without compensation, a three-year real estate tax exemption for new construction projects, and a 100-percent tax exemption on income derived from investment in Vietnam for the first year.⁵⁸ An examination of the influence of groups like the American Friends of Vietnam adds yet another dimension to how foreign aid administration actually functioned on the ground in recipient nations. In the case of the AFV, this private organization did not just react to, but also actively shaped foreign policy through the conduct of its day-to-day interactions in both Vietnam and the United States. Even more unreservedly than Mansfield, the AFV had tied the stakes of the American foreign aid program in Vietnam to Diem's leadership. That became a problem as Diem's regime turned more authoritarian in the late 1950s.

* * *

"One hundred years ago, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a novel that persuaded hordes of people previously indifferent that human slavery was a viscous evil. Today, a book is published whose authors hope to persuade hordes of people that unless drastic changes are made in

⁵⁷ "Vietnam Aid Unit Set Up: Private U.S. Group to Provide Cultural, Educational Help," *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1956.

⁵⁸ "Vietnam Sets Lures for U.S. Investment," *New York Times*, Mar. 16, 1957.

American policy in Southeast Asia communism will triumph from Assam to Bali. The book is *The Ugly American* by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick.”⁵⁹ On October 1, 1958, the *New York Times* published this review of a novel about American aid workers in the fictional country of Sarkahn, which the reviewer surmised was a mash-up of Thailand and Cambodia. The story alluded to thousands of Americans in Southeast Asia in various economic, military, political, and diplomatic posts, characterizing many of them as “second-raters happy in soft jobs at high pay and many unaccustomed luxuries” who antagonize the local population with their arrogance, condescension, and refusal to learn or care about the culture or customs of their host country.⁶⁰ The authors of *The Ugly American* argued that, when it came to foreign aid in Southeast Asia, simple projects that impart agricultural or engineering knowledge in the local language by “modest men” would do the most good. In the epilogue, Lederer and Burdick stated that the book was based in fact.

Predictably, *The Ugly American* caused a stir at the executive branch and among aid workers and diplomatic communities, but the novel also found an audience outside these elite circles, spending 76 weeks on the best seller list and selling five million copies.⁶¹ After the book came out, Mansfield sent a letter to Burdick inviting *The Ugly American* authors to meet with him in Washington and expressing his “delight” that they were assembling material to send him in connection with the study of foreign aid reform.⁶² It is unclear what came of that meeting, if it ever happened, but *The Ugly American* undoubtedly set the stage for Colegrove to publish, as

⁵⁹ Orville Prescott, “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1958.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Michael Meyer, “Still ‘Ugly’ After All These Years,” *New York Times*, Jul. 10, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/books/review/Meyer-t.html>

⁶² Letter, Mike Mansfield to Eugene Burdick, Jan. 19, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIII, Box 29, Folder 8, Mike Mansfield Papers.

many of the reporter's allegations would sound familiar to those who had read Lederer and Burdick.

In May 1959, Mike Mansfield was back on the Senate floor giving yet another speech about foreign aid as Congress debated appropriations for another fiscal year:

Mr. President: It is the time of another foreign aid bill. Those of us who have been in Congress long enough have seen more than a decade of continuous organized programs of assistance. We have lived with four principle postwar aid agencies in succession – the ECA, the MSA, the FOA, and now the ICA. We have witnessed the annual level of appropriations go up and we have witnessed it come down... It is common practice to say that we have put 60 to 70 billion dollars into foreign aid since the close of World War II... The fact is that is that figure tells us very little, because it is a composite figure... Having lumped a dozen dissimilar undertakings together as the foreign aid program, we try to measure total effect in terms of success or failure. It cannot be done.⁶³

It had been five years since the French withdrawal from Vietnam, and, despite his continued support for Diem, Mansfield's weariness with the state of the American foreign aid program was palpable. Predicting the same pattern that dominated past debates over aid appropriations, he stated his belief that, despite doubt and dissatisfaction, Congress would probably "go along" with foreign aid for another year because it was not prepared to dispute "as non-essential what the President has labeled as essential to the nation."⁶⁴ Prescient of what was to come, Mansfield restated his assessment that the public was growing uneasy about foreign aid, not out of a retreat from international responsibility or a selfish resistance to helping others, but in response to the "administrative decadence" with which foreign aid was being translated into

⁶³ Speech, "A New Approach to Foreign Aid," by Mike Mansfield, May 15, 1959, Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 40, Folder 27, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

action around the world. Using the exact same phrase as the Vietnamese doctor who wrote to warn him about Diem in 1955, Mansfield declared that “time was running out” on foreign aid.⁶⁵

Despite his close relationship with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Mansfield’s speech was most damning in its indictment of the Eisenhower Administration and its failure to act after Congress had spent years studying foreign aid in detail in committees throughout the late 1950s. Stating that these Congressional studies had “brought evidence of corruption and signs of mismanagement which border on the scandalous” to light, Mansfield charged the administration with cherry picking Congressional recommendations on how to improve the aid program, to the effect that very little improvement was made at all.⁶⁶ In conclusion Mansfield proposed amendments to the Foreign Aid Authorization Act which would place the administration of economic and technical aid fully under the Department of State and military aid under the Department of Defense, the same suggestions to tighten the bureaucracy that he made six years prior, along with a few other, newer suggestions.⁶⁷ As Mansfield predicted they would, his Congressional colleagues voted on July 8, 1959, to authorize \$3.5 billion of the \$3.9 billion originally requested by the executive without taking up his amendments. Indeed, Mansfield himself cast a yea vote for the appropriations. This year, however, a reporter named Albert Colegrove was about to call out the “administrative decadence” Mansfield had warned of, with a lot more cynicism and splash. Not only that, but Colegrove’s reporting would soon link the notion of scandal and American foreign aid to a highly specific place: Vietnam. It was an association that would become indelible.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Colegrove's first article strongly echoed both *The Ugly American* as well as some of Mansfield's own claims from 1953 about foreign aid. Indicting the plush existence of American expat life in Vietnam, Colegrove posed the question:

Who wants to rock the boat when his cozy bachelor apartment or spacious family villa comes absolutely rent free? Who wants to tilt the applectart when he draws down \$400-\$800 a year extra to offset the fictitious high cost of living in Saigon, where he can buy American cigarettes tax-free for 10 cents a pack and groceries for himself for \$1 a day? Who wants to climb on the soapbox when he's permitted a two-hour midday siesta, is chauffeured to and from work in a government car, and gets up to \$319 a month in so-called hardship pay for his dauntless willingness to endure the tensions and vicissitudes of a city that's properly renowned as the Paris of the Orient?⁶⁸

Disregarding advice to stick to Saigon, Colegrove claimed to have traveled from the rice paddies in the south to Quang Tri Province in the north and to have spoken with provincial chiefs, prisoners, refugees—Vietnamese and Americans—from business professionals to intellectuals, big and little workers in both governments, including Ngo Dinh Diem himself.⁶⁹

Opening his second article with a question, Colegrove asked: "Suppose you have a young son who has never driven a car. Would you buy him a Cadillac, hand him \$100 and an instruction book and then tell him to run along and amuse himself?"⁷⁰ Likening that scenario "what we are doing [in Vietnam] on a multi-million dollar scale," Colegrove detailed the fact that American aid program was buying "jeeps, trucks, guns, tractors, factories, and even whole radio networks" for an agricultural economy that lacked the know-how to use them.⁷¹ Continuing in the same paternalistic vein, Colegrove's subsequent articles nevertheless relayed examples of corruption in the bidding and contracting processes; unaccountability for U.S. government

⁶⁸ Albert M. Colegrove, "Millions Wasted in U.S. Aid," *Washington Daily News*, Jul. 20, 1959.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Albert M. Colegrove, "\$1 Million a Day Handed to Saigon—No Strings Attached," *Washington Daily News*, Jul. 21, 1959.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

property, including some 2,700 missing vehicles; and the incomprehensibility of the counterpart program, whereby aid dollars were converted to local currency and sometimes, in the case of 22 million piastres, just disappeared from the books.⁷² Ending the series with a piece on Diem's "hard-fisted rule" of the Republic of Vietnam, Colegrove argued that a police state, financed by U.S. aid, had developed in South Vietnam. Signing off, he questioned what it cost America, not just in dollars but also reputationally, to continue its unwavering support of Diem solely for his anticommunism.⁷³

Even before Scripps-Howard newspapers ran Colegrove's final article, staff members supporting the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and its Subcommittee on State Department Organization were frenetically gathering evidence and marshalling witnesses in advance of the hearings. One of Colegrove's sources, an International Cooperation Administration employee working in Vietnam, secretly came forward to talk with Mansfield's aide Francis Valeo and the committee's chief of staff Carl Marcy, who were performing much of the organizational work for the Senate investigation. The informant, identified in memos only as "Mr. Scott," tried to keep his involvement concealed from the ICA out of fear that he'd be terminated for speaking up. Claiming that policy guidance from the State Department was nonexistent throughout the range of technical and economic aid projects in Vietnam, Scott also noted that the "Vietnamese despise us and ask why we are so easily corrupted."⁷⁴ In a sidebar worthy of Colegrove, Scott alleged that the ICA, suspecting him to be the reporter's source, gave

⁷² The piastre was the currency of French Indochina, which South Vietnam continued to use after independence. Colegrove quoted a conversion rate of approximately 35 piastres for every dollar, but exchange rates fluctuated widely, which made the counterpart program notoriously difficult to assess. The final report of the "U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam," by the Senate Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs, published February 26, 1960, goes into more detail.

⁷³ Albert M. Colegrove, "Hard-Fisted Diem's Iron Rule Tarnishes Free World's Ideals," *Washington Daily News*, Jul. 25, 1959.

⁷⁴ Memorandum of conversation, Francis Valeo, Carl Marcy, and employee of ICA, Jul. 22, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 29, Mike Mansfield Papers.

him an ultimatum right before the hearings commenced: either voluntarily submit to psychiatric treatment, which would discredit him as a source, or he would be fired.⁷⁵ According to Valeo and Marcy, “the informant was obviously in a high state of tension, although rational and an extremely intelligent man.”⁷⁶ The ICA fired Scott after his testimony in mid-August.⁷⁷

Marcy, Valeo, and another Senate staffer, John Newhouse, played instrumental roles in coordinating the logistics of the subcommittee’s investigations, both in Washington and later in Saigon, under Mansfield’s close supervision. In the lead up to the hearings, the aides met with more witnesses, including a liaison of the General Accounting Office (GAO), a man named Owen Kane. Kane told Valeo that GAO issued two studies on the aid program in Vietnam in November 1958 that foreshadowed most of Colegrove allegations, which the GAO shared with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Kane was frank in his disappointment at the reception these studies received at the time.⁷⁸ In addition, Marcy and Newhouse interviewed a mass communications specialist named Wallace Gade, who had previously worked in Southeast Asia and was in general agreement with Colegrove’s conclusions. Gade said he believed the same errors and deficiencies exhibited in South Vietnam were also present and true of other aid programs in Southeast Asian countries. Specifically, Gade corroborated Colegrove’s allegations about Radio Vietnam and the debacle over the 50,000-watt transmitter.⁷⁹

There were plenty of Colegrove detractors on the witness list as well. The Senate Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs convened public hearings

⁷⁵ Memorandum of conversation, Valeo, Marcy, and ICA employee, Jul. 22. 1959.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Memorandum of conversation, Valeo and Scott, Aug. 17, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 29, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁷⁸ Memorandum, Frank Valeo to Mike Mansfield, Jul. 23, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 29, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁷⁹ Memorandum of conversation, Wallace A. Gade, Marcy, Valeo, and Newhouse, Jul. 28, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 29, Mike Mansfield Papers.

about the articles' allegations on July 30 and 31, 1959. A week later, it explored some of the issues in greater detail in closed-door executive sessions on August 7, 11, and 12. After hearing testimony from Colegrove, Ambassador to Vietnam Elbridge Durbrow, U.S. Operations Mission (USOM) Director Arthur Z. Gardiner, Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams, and other representatives of the foreign aid program in Saigon, some members of the subcommittee were satisfied that the statements of these individuals debunked Colegrove's charges and wanted to close the investigation.⁸⁰ Mansfield and others disagreed. Eventually the Mansfield contingent prevailed, and the subcommittee agreed to send a staff delegation to Vietnam to investigate the aid program in more detail. According to Mansfield's memos, the consensus was for a quick turnaround to "avoid any impression that the Committee is stalling on inquiry."⁸¹ In addition, Newhouse punctually drafted an interim report based on the committee's findings. In it, he summarized:

After some thirty hours of testimony, the Subcommittee has tentatively divided Mr. Colegrove's allegations and critical inferences into two categories. First, his most serious charges of waste and misuse of funds are regarded as having been satisfactorily explained by Government witnesses. It is believed that Mr. Colegrove, had he chosen to check his regrettably misleading conclusions with responsible officials, would also have received a satisfactory explanation for most of them. It is the judgment of the Committee that his failure to seek this type of corroboration was inconsistent with sound journalism.⁸²

However, Mansfield's notes on this draft are revealing. For instance, when Newhouse wrote about Colegrove's "uniformly immoderate, frequently inflammatory" tone and attempted to link

⁸⁰ "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Parsons) to the Secretary of State," Aug. 6, 1955, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v01/d86>

⁸¹ Memorandum, Marcy to Fulbright and Mansfield, Aug. 14, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 29, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁸² Interim Report on Vietnamese Inquiry, John Newhouse (uncredited), Sep. 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 30, Mike Mansfield Papers.

Colegrove's prose style to his credibility, Mansfield commented, "Forget his style."⁸³

Additionally, when Newhouse touted the survival of the "courageous little anticommunist republic" that has "reached a stage in its overall development... that has exceeded our fondest expectations," Mansfield pointedly asked, "Whose fondest expectations?"⁸⁴ Mansfield's notes on the draft culminated in his biggest issue with that version of the report: that it did not address basic issue of ineffectual aid administration.

Despite the preference of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright for issuing the report without delay, Mansfield pushed back and fought for more time. He also sought Valeo's advice. In a memo dated September 10, 1959, Valeo conveyed his belief to Mansfield that the interim report showed a "marked predisposition to accept the arguments of the Executive Branch at face value and to dismiss those of Colegrove very lightly."⁸⁵ Valeo agreed with Mansfield that the chief fault of the draft was that it largely ignored the broad administrative and legislative questions which were implicit in Colegrove's specific allegations. Arguing that these were far more germane to the subcommittee's purpose than the charges themselves, Valeo urged Mansfield to postpone the report until they had more information. Mansfield agreed and declined to issue any draft of the report.⁸⁶

In the fall of 1959, a Congressional delegation from both houses traveled to Vietnam to continue the investigation. While there, the delegation officially distanced itself from Colegrove's allegations to avoid antagonizing the Diem regime, which was incensed by the unfavorable press, and American aid program administrators, most of whom also bitterly

⁸³ Notes, Mansfield on Interim Report on Vietnamese Inquiry, Sep. 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 30, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁸⁴ Mansfield, Notes on Interim Report, Sep. 1959.

⁸⁵ Memorandum on Draft Report, Valeo to Mansfield, Sep. 10, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 30, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

resented the exposé. Instead, the delegation cast its inquiry as merely part of the normal business of Congressional oversight.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Colegrove himself was not able to return to Vietnam to cover the investigation that his reporting instigated, because Diem's administration refused to reissue his visa.⁸⁸

Even though Mansfield did not personally accompany the delegation, he still played a critical role in defining the parameters of the inquiry and drawing out conclusions that reinforced his earlier calls for aid reform. His influence was most felt in the lead up to the official delegation when Senate aides Marcy, Newhouse, and Valeo traveled to Vietnam several weeks in advance of the actual commission. Their goal was to conduct an in-depth study of aid administration practices—the very heart of the issue as far as Mansfield was concerned. Throughout this preliminary investigation, the aides pursued the principal lines of inquiry that Mansfield had outlined, seeking to evaluate the overall direction of purpose of the aid program as well as its efficiency and integrity. Marcy, Newhouse, and Valeo also committed to examining the qualifications, quantity, and lifestyles of in-country aid workers and American advisors as a primary objective.⁸⁹ Giving the trio clear instructions to fly under the radar of publicity, Mansfield urged them to cast a wide net and talk to anyone who might be a possible source of information, not just executives and high-level program managers.⁹⁰

In contrast to the direct leadership that he provided to the aides, Mansfield had much less authority over the on-the-ground conduct of the official delegation once it arrived in November. There were only two Foreign Relations Committee members who made the trip: Senators Bourke

⁸⁷ Carter, *Inventing Vietnam*, 102-103.

⁸⁸ "Colegrove Visa Refused for Return to Viet Nam: Gore Calls It More Reason for Probe," *Washington Daily News*, Sep. 30, 1959.

⁸⁹ Opening Statement, "Hearings Before the Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs," by Chairman Mike Mansfield, Jul. 30, 1959. Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 40, Folder 39, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁹⁰ Memorandum, Marcy to Valeo, Aug. 1, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 29, Mike Mansfield Papers.

B. Hickenlooper, a Republican from Iowa, and Albert Gore, a Democrat from Tennessee. The rest of the eight-person delegation represented other Congressional committees and interests. This became apparent as sharp disagreements arose almost immediately about what course the investigation should take and what conclusions the delegation would draw from its observations. Senator Gore and fellow Democrat Gale McGee, of the Senate Appropriations Committee, interpreted the state of American aid in the country in wildly different manners. While McGee saw “the most exciting and imaginative [aid program] of any... around the world,” Gore was “shocked and disturbed at the slack-jawed laxness with which our tax money is being handled.”⁹¹ Even along partisan lines, there was no coherent view of the situation.

For all intents and purposes, two separate Congressional inquiries into the American aid program in South Vietnam took place that fall. The official delegation was both brief and mired by its own attempts to investigate the specifics of Colegrove’s allegations without overtly appearing to do so.⁹² Finding no concrete evidence of corruption but also unable to agree that the aid program was effective, the delegation devolved into a similar stalemate that had gridlocked the original hearings. Marcy, Newhouse, and Valeo, on the other hand, framed their study according to Mansfield’s directive and ultimately produced the bulk of the conclusions and recommendations that the subcommittee would advance in its final report.

Throughout the course of 1959, interpretive reporting of the American foreign aid program was on the rise. While the *New York Times* coverage of the Colegrove hearings hewed mostly factual with little editorialization outside the opinion pages, other publications did begin to suggest new courses of action for foreign aid that differed from the “official” prescriptions of politicians like Mansfield. For example, *America Magazine* suggested that instead of trying to

⁹¹ Carter, *Inventing Vietnam*, 103.

⁹² *Ibid.*

convince the public to support foreign aid for economic or national security reasons, more emphasis should be given to the moral weight of helping poorer countries raise their standard of living. Stating that “foreign aid would fare better both at home and abroad if only it were presented more idealistically,” the magazine was making its own argument, which was very different from the Congressional din over the program.⁹³ Like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* in the late 1950s still had at least one ear turned towards the echo chamber. Still, certain *Post* headlines during the Colegrove episode did adopt a critical tone. For example, the verb choice in “Democratic Group in Senate Attacks ‘Blank Check’ Foreign Aid Spending” is revealing.⁹⁴ Unsurprisingly, the headline writer for a Scripps-Howard article covering the Colegrove hearings displayed his own bias: “Senators See ‘Much Good’ in Aid Probe.”⁹⁵

* * *

In February 1960, under Mansfield’s chairmanship, the Senate Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs issued its final report on foreign aid administration in Vietnam. In the document, the subcommittee restated its belief in the original intent of the foreign aid program in South Vietnam—to prevent communist takeover—and its commitment to serve mutual security interests. However, the driving force of the report was its call to change foreign aid administration.⁹⁶ While the original draft, which Mansfield declined to publish in the immediate aftermath of the Congressional hearings, focused almost exclusively on answering Colegrove’s allegations point by point, the Scripps-Howard reporter and his individual claims

⁹³ “New Approach to Foreign Aid,” Jun. 13, 1959, *America*, Mss 065, Series XXIV, Box 7, Vol. 32, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁹⁴ Associated Press, “Democratic Group in Senate Attacks ‘Blank Check’ Foreign Aid Spending,” *Washington Post*, Jul. 7, 1959, Mss 065, Series XXIV, Box 7, Vol. 32, Mike Mansfield Papers.

⁹⁵ Dickson Preston, “Senators See ‘Much Good’ in Aid Probe: Capehart Offers to Visit Viet Nam,” *Washington Daily News*, Jul. 31, 1959.

⁹⁶ Report, “U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam,” by the Senate Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. Senate, Feb. 26, 1960, Mss 065, Series XXI, Box 65, Folder 40, Mike Mansfield Papers.

took a backseat in the final report. Making only brief references to Colegrove, the report concluded that “the specific charges raised in the newspaper articles do not generally lend themselves to proof or disproof by a legislative body.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, it framed the uproar over the exposé as a misunderstanding arising from “differing interpretations of the same situations, with critics seeing primarily evidence of wrongdoing and ineptitude and responsible officials seeing primarily extenuating circumstances.”⁹⁸ Given the confused view of foreign aid held not only by the individual members of the subcommittee, but also the constituents they represented, the tepid conclusion to the Colegrove chapter is hardly surprising but also unlikely to have satisfied anyone. Again, Mansfield’s voice rose to the fore to address the same overarching question he had been asking for years: how could the administration of the American aid program be improved?

The first recommendation the subcommittee proposed was to require the executive branch to submit a detailed plan for each country receiving large-scale grants of nonmilitary aid.⁹⁹ For South Vietnam and elsewhere, the report reiterated Mansfield’s belief that a successful American aid program should promote its own eventual obsolescence. This point was nearly identical to one that Mansfield made the previous year, before Colegrove published, when he tried and failed to introduce amendments to the Mutual Security Act of 1954.¹⁰⁰ Through the subcommittee, he once again called on the State Department to enumerate specific ways to increase South Vietnamese economic self-reliance, so that the young country could eventually be weaned off American aid.

⁹⁷ Report, “U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam,” 5.

⁹⁸ Report, “U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam,” 6.

⁹⁹ Report, “U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam,” 2.

¹⁰⁰ See Mansfield’s speech “A New Approach to Foreign Aid,” May 15, 1959.

Addressing a primary thread of the administrative confusion, the report also argued for new legislation that would spell out the authority for ambassadors in posts abroad.¹⁰¹

Specifically, what powers do they have to make decisions about foreign aid in the respective countries they serve? Since the U.S. Mission in Vietnam operated under an executive order, the subcommittee believed that the ambassador, Elbridge Durbrow, should have the ultimate responsibility for American operations in the country. Yet the reality of the situation on the ground was much different. Each of the various U.S. agencies operating in South Vietnam all reported back to their individual headquarters in Washington, making the prospect for unified control or coordination all but impossible.¹⁰²

Consolidating authority for foreign aid and reducing the top-heavy control of aid programs in Washington had been two of Mansfield's main reform goals since 1953, so it was unsurprising that both issues resurfaced in the subcommittee's final report. Extolling the aid program as the "single greatest expression of American policy in Vietnam" the subcommittee indicted the bloated bureaucracy in Washington that resulted in many unnecessary and burdensome delays for aid projects on the ground.¹⁰³ In the case of nonmilitary aid, the subcommittee discovered that nearly 50 separate executive departments, agencies, or subdivisions were involved somehow in the planning or execution of the program each year, even before Congress approved the appropriations to fund it.¹⁰⁴

In terms of the official American community, the subcommittee regurgitated even more of Mansfield's earlier suggestions. Finding that the executive branch must make a concerted effort to improve local perceptions of American officials living abroad, it recommended a full

¹⁰¹ Report, "U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam," 2.

¹⁰² Report, "U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam," 12.

¹⁰³ Report, "U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam," 14.

¹⁰⁴ Report, "U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam," 16.

study of the pay and fringe benefits they received for participating in overseas service. This is one of the very few instances in the report that attaches merit to a specific Colegrove charge. Conceding that Americans generally “lived at a level far above modest and comfortable,” the subcommittee argued that the State and Defense Departments needed to substantially reshape housing allowances and acquisition procedures to reduce excesses in lifestyle and habit. It further recommended eliminating hardship payments and in-kind assistance for all American personnel in South Vietnam—both military and civilian.¹⁰⁵

The final report acknowledged one other direct link to the Colegrove allegations: the radio project that the Scripps-Howard reporter claimed encapsulated the “whole fantastic story” and mess of the aid program in Vietnam. Likening Radio Vietnam to a “Pandora’s box of confusion, misunderstanding, and infectiveness,” the subcommittee also ascribed a central allegorical role to the project.¹⁰⁶ Stating that it embodied “just about all the frustrations and difficulties which can beset aid undertakings,” the report traced miscommunications about the project to the beginning of U.S. involvement in the country after the French evacuated.¹⁰⁷ Because American advisors and the South Vietnamese never shared a common understanding about the basic purpose for radio development, in practice, radio transmission remained unchanged despite the expenditure of over half a million aid program dollars for wages, consultants, and equipment upgrades. While the subcommittee was unable to document outright corruption or misuse of public funds, the investigation of Radio Vietnam suggested that careless disregard for conflicts of interest would be the least malignant interpretation of the situation. It concluded with the recommendation that the Inspector General take the case from there.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Report, “U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam,” 34-35.

¹⁰⁶ Report, “U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam,” 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

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In the late 1980s, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee commissioned a comprehensive study of the executive and legislative roles that led the United States into war in Vietnam. Despite the substantial effort that Congress spent investigating the foreign aid program in the Republic of Vietnam, the study contended that there was no evidence that the Colegrove hearings or the subsequent recommendations of the Mansfield subcommittee had any significant effect on American activities in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁹ If anything, the 1986 report argued that they appear to have been a diversion, funneling energy into inquiries of waste at the exact time that the communists in Vietnam were ramping up for round two of the revolution. The study also attributed a basic lack of Congressional interest in Vietnam in the late 1950s to the muted reception of Mansfield's recommendations on foreign aid.

It would be an understatement to say there was no coherent view of the successes and failures of American foreign aid in the 1950s, even along party lines. Mansfield and the rest of the subcommittee remained dedicated to preserving democracy in South Vietnam and never questioned its stability as crucial to American interests, reflecting the automatic acceptance of certain perceptions of Cold War political reality. Even in its final report in 1960, after Mansfield became arguably less sure about the viability and merit of the Diem regime, the subcommittee refrained from any criticism of the South Vietnamese government. Issuing a disclaimer that any failings that may or may not exist on the part of the Vietnamese government are the concern of the Vietnamese people, the subcommittee stated that even if such shortcomings did involve the United States, they should be addressed by the executive branch, which carries the responsibility

¹⁰⁹ Report, "The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I, 1945-1961," Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Apr. 1984, 327.

for conducting foreign relations.¹¹⁰ Considering the wide range of players actually engaged in the day-to-day conduct of foreign relations, the claim is fairly ironic, but nevertheless shows how deeply averse politicians like Mansfield were to any upset of the political balance in South Vietnam.

Still, there is strong evidence that indicates Mansfield's private thinking about Diem underwent a dramatic shift in the wake of the Colegrove investigation. Ambassador to Vietnam Elbridge Durbrow gave an interview in 1978, nearly 20 years after the foreign aid probe, in which he recalled Mansfield's serious doubts about American strategy in South Vietnam, even at that relatively early stage. When he went back to Washington to testify in the Colegrove hearings, Durbrow said he talked one-on-one with Mansfield off the record. In the interview, Durbrow related the encounter:

Whether it was the Colegrove articles or something else, or an accumulation of things, [Mansfield] was as cold as ice. To me personally, he was polite, nothing rude, but he was cold, and he had been fairly warm before, particularly about Diem. He talked to me personally about Diem's lack of democracy and alleged corruption and all of that. As far as I was concerned, he was turned off to Diem by that time.¹¹¹

After his extensive study of the foreign aid program, Mansfield understood the substance of Colegrove's reporting to be accurate, and he refrained in its aftermath from the extravagant public praise of Diem that was characteristic of his statements about Vietnam before the Scripps-Howard exposé. Mansfield, however, never publicly endorsed Colegrove's reporting and kept his distance from Colegrove even in private when the reporter requested a meeting with him in July of 1959.¹¹² In contrast to his reaction to the publication of *The Ugly American*, when Mansfield

¹¹⁰ Report, "U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam," 7.

¹¹¹ Report, "The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War," 326-327.

¹¹² Memorandum, Marshall McNeil to Mike Mansfield, Jul. 28, 1959, Mss 065, Series XIX, Box 559, Folder 29, Mike Mansfield Papers.

congratulated the authors and invited them to contribute their ideas on foreign aid reform, the correspondence between Mansfield and Colegrove is both to the point and aloof. The bulk of their exchange consists of Colegrove sending the senator more information to back up his claims.¹¹³ Perhaps Mansfield felt that Colegrove, as a representative of the media, had to be kept more at bay. But it is also possible that Mansfield understood many in Washington found Colegrove's "sensationalism" off-putting as the reporter pushed boundaries that simply were not pushed at that time by the dignified media men of the Gridiron Club.¹¹⁴ It is likewise probable that the Montana senator was reevaluating his public friendship with Ngo Dinh Diem, and Colegrove certainly was no fan of South Vietnam's president.

The idea that debates over foreign aid in the 1950s were merely a distraction in light of the war that followed does not hold weight. Many of the subcommittee's recommendations did eventually get incorporated into executive reorganization of foreign aid administration. Under the Kennedy Administration, Congress passed the Foreign Aid Act of 1961, which created the US Agency for International Development (USAID), consolidating the authority of all non-military aid under the new agency, just as Mansfield had suggested. The act also represented a significant overhaul of the ideological principle of foreign aid, whereby development supplanted mutual security as the *raison d'être* of the program. The Foreign Aid Act of 1961 also accompanied an appropriation for \$40,000,000 to fund the first year of the Peace Corps. The act continues as the legal foundation for foreign aid policy to this day.

¹¹³ See Mss 065, Series XIII, Folder 32, Mike Mansfield Papers for more correspondence between the two.

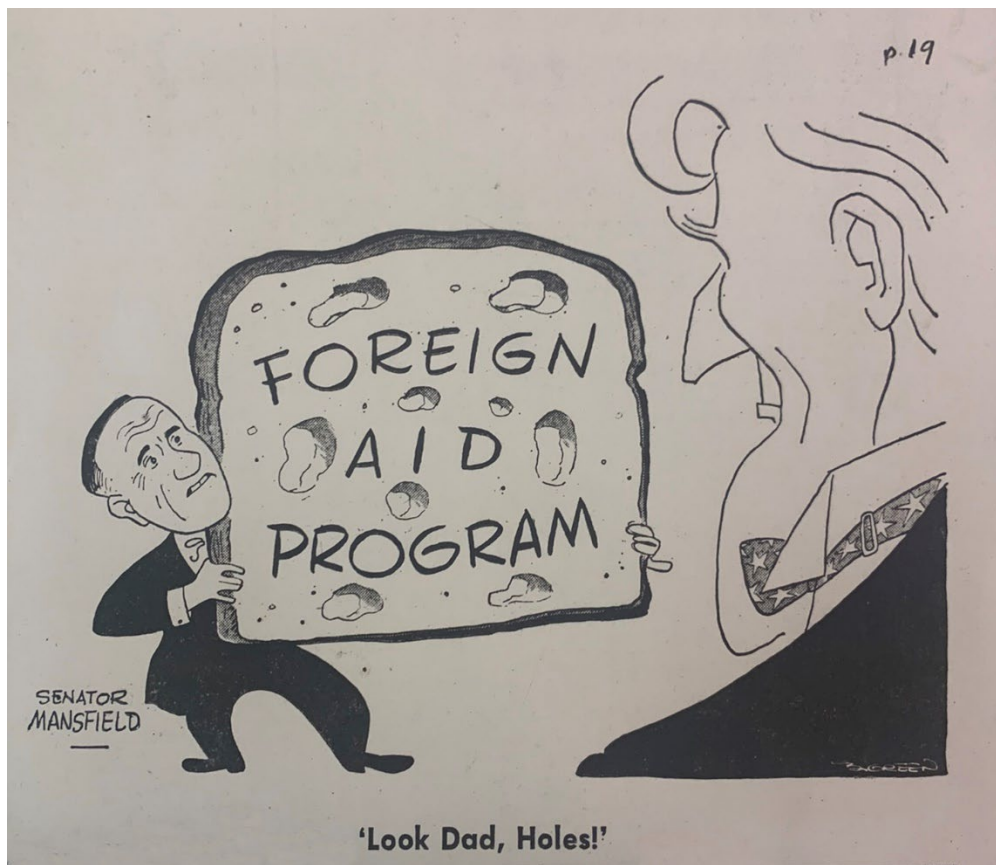
¹¹⁴ The Gridiron Club is one of the oldest and most prestigious journalistic organizations in Washington D.C. For more on the culture of media consensus, see Kathryn McGarr's chapter in *Media Nation*: "We're All in This Together."

In 2017, President Trump pledged massive cuts to foreign aid, deriding the notion that the U.S. should give any assistance whatsoever to “people who hate us.”¹¹⁵ Against this rhetoric, polling revealed that some Americans believe that 20 percent of the federal budget goes to foreign aid, when the real number hovers between 1 to 2 percent.¹¹⁶ Sixty years later and the issue of foreign aid still perplexes. It still brings up important questions about how we perceive our democracy and our government’s role in the world and how we process the gaze reflecting back at us, especially if it is critical or unflattering. Beyond the creation of USAID, the Colegrove episode and the attempts of politicians, the public, and the media to understand the complex and contingent issue of foreign aid are significant for the window they provide on a unique moment, after the United States emerged from one war with a new national narrative but before it plunged into another that would fracture that narrative in lasting ways.

¹¹⁵ John Norris, “Special Feature: A History of American Public Opinion on Foreign Aid,” Aug. 15, 2017, Devex International Development, <https://www.devex.com/news/special-feature-a-history-of-american-public-opinion-on-foreign-aid-90732>.

¹¹⁶ Norris, *The Enduring Struggle*, 2.

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¹¹⁷ *Providence Journal*, May 20, 1959. Mss 065, Series XXIV, Box 7, Vol. 31, Mike Mansfield Papers.

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Abbreviations

ECA	Economic Cooperation Administration
FOA	Foreign Operations Administration
GAO	General Accounting Office
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MSA	Mutual Security Act
USOM	U.S. Operations Mission
VOA	Voice of America

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