

Truce Team Divided Into Two Ideologic Camps, Papers Show

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SAIGON—Division along ideological lines of the International Commission of Control and Supervision shows clearly in classified documents prepared by the U.S. Embassy here.

The ICCS is the four-nation peace supervisory force that has been operating fitfully since the Vietnam ceasefire began four months ago.

As time has passed, the Canadians and Indonesians on the ICCS increasingly have supported the positions of the United States and the government of South Vietnam (GVN), while the Poles and Hungarians, known as the "Polgarians," have invariably backed the Provisional Revolutionary Government (Viet Cong).

The documents refer casually to Polish and Hungarian "obstructionism" and "Communist sophistry." A Canadian officer is reported to have accused the Poles and Hungarians of "rude" behavior, and an Indonesian officer is said to have been reprimanded by his superior for signing a report the Poles and Hungarians drafted.

A series of confidential U.S. Embassy daily ceasefire "situation reports" and related unclassified documents covering ICCS activities recently were made available to The Times. The classified reports cover part of May.

Canadian delegation members, who are now threatening to leave the ICCS, apparently are the chief source for much of the information in the reports. They seem to be playing to a limited extent the same role for the United States that the Poles and Hungarians clearly do for the PRG.

The division of the ICCS into two ideological camps has developed gradually. It is likely that at least some of the Canadians and Indonesians who believed in the idea of neutrality have been driven into the arms of the GVN by the obviously pro-PRG actions of the Poles and Hungarians.

The main function of the ICCS is to investigate and assign blame for ceasefire violations when either the GVN or PRG complains. The PRG has made only a few complaints, so the contribution of the Poles and Hungarians has been to block or find fault with investigations of GVN claims. The only times the four delegations have voted unanimously has been when the GVN was found guilty of a violation.

The classified documents give many examples of what U.S. officials consider the Hungarians' and Poles' "obstructionism." One report cited a Canadian "statement of views" on investigations of 12 GVN complaints by one ICCS regional team.

In eleven cases, the Canadians charged, the Hungarians and Poles refused to participate, and in the 12th case agreed to investigate but finally did not because of disagreement on timing. The document said the Hungarians and Poles called the Canadian report "one-sided and slanderous."

GVN officials have apparently tried to develop methods to counter "Polgarian" stalling. When the PRG commits a ceasefire violation, one report said, GVN officials in one province have learned to request an ICCS "inspection" rather than an "investigation," since the latter "entails long delays while ICCS regional headquarters concurrence is sought."

With an inspection, the report said, "time-consuming paperwork and clearances are temporarily bypassed, a few days, or, more often, a week or two later, a formal investigation is conducted."

Another U.S. document spoke of "Communist sophistry" in an investigation of a PRG attack on a village in Ba Xuyen province in the Mekong Delta May 3. "The Poles opined that the accidental detonation of an arms magazine in an adjoining shack might have destroyed the village office," the report said. "The Hungarians and Poles discovered rust on the jeep which carried five men over a mine to their death. They said the rust suggested the jeep was an old inoperable vehicle dragged to the site and blown up. Since there were no dead or wounded remaining in the village when the ICCS team arrived the day after the attacks, the Hungarians Poles decided there was no proof of casualties."

But the GVN and United States also try to use the ICCS to their advantage, the classified documents show. One report said Canadians on one ICCS regional team were complaining that "GVN liaison officials have begun prompting witnesses in a fairly obvious way to insure that they tell a consistent story."

An unclassified monthly report written by a U.C. civilian adviser in Pleiku province said that members of a regional ICCS team were taken to a village of Montagnard tribesmen and "given a full welcome including rice wine, bracelets, gifts of Montagnard shirts and rides on a working elephant. But," the advisor added, "the unstated purpose of the trip was to demonstrate GVN control of the roads."

With an announcement due soon on whether Canada will stay in the ICCS, the Americans are intensely interested in this point, and are apparently reporting whatever tidbits of conversation they pick up on the subject.

Not all the ICCS problems can be attributed to ideology. A May 15 situation report started that "up to 20 Polish translators have been sent home following a two-day meeting in Saigon in

early May when all translators were pulled in from the field. In several cases, the absence of these translators has delayed local ICCS operations over the past 10 days.”

According to an informed U.S. official, many of the Polish translators are “professional student” types who have “vaguely hippie” attitudes and crave contact with Western Europeans and Americans.

The Hungarians have been hampered because they brought no translators at all. Often they have had to resort to speaking to the Poles in Russian to find out what was going on.

The Indonesians, the only non-Westerners among the four delegations, have adapted most easily to physical conditions in Vietnam but have occasionally gone awry because they don’t understand the Western legalistic niceties of running meetings.