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Military Aid Programs and the "Militaristic Image
of the United States"

In the first place it is important to define what is meant by the term "militaristic image of the United States." Are we talking here about the charges made in Soviet propaganda about United States bases and military encirclement, or are we talking about criticism made with regard to certain aspects of our military aid programs by people in the Afro-Asian world, or are we talking about the image of America which is generated by certain speeches and testimony by officials in this country, particularly at the time the U. S. Defense budget and the military aid programs are being debated in Congress?

The Soviets will continue to portray the United States in a militaristic image so long as we maintain a strong defense establishment, membership in military pacts, and maintenance of foreign military bases. There will undoubtedly continue to be criticism of United States military aid programs in varying degrees throughout those areas where we have such military aid programs. This criticism takes different forms ranging from government leaders who feel that they are receiving less modern equipment than is given to some other government, or who feel that they should have modern jet air forces, or others who feel that ~~more economic~~ aid and less military aid is necessary to strengthen their internal security. Some countries have accepted United States military aid not because they are convinced of an important external or internal threat of communism, but rather because we persuaded them to accept military aid or because they viewed it as a means of obtaining aid in other fields. As for the problem of militaristic statements made by U. S. leaders at budget time, perhaps it is possible to tone down some of these but so long as the United States has its present system of separation of powers it would not seem realistic to believe that such statements will ever come to an end in this country.

The constructive task from a propaganda standpoint, would seem to be the devising of measures that can be taken to make our military aid programs more successful and more palatable. As has often been stated, our propaganda, since it follows policy, can be only as good as our policy. Thus, the

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over-all findings by the Draper Committee would have significance as guidance for propaganda. As a general principle, it can be said that overt United States information efforts to promote military aid programs, particularly in the under-developed countries, are not likely to be productive and may be harmful. The more effective information programs will be those explaining military aid programs in indigenous media.

It can also assist other governments by providing them with information on the nature of the military and subversive threat which can be publicized through indigenous media.

Programs such as have emerged in the Philippines and in Laos where the military has been used for road and bridge construction, other forms of civil communication, the building of schools and has even assisted in fundamental education programs, can be popularized to give greater support to the emerging governments. It may be desirable in some countries to inspire indigenous propaganda programs demonstrating that newly emerging governments need enlightened central control during the period while they are building up sufficient economic and political strength to permit securely establishing more democratic processes. The alternative for a weak government which has prematurely adopted a democratic system may be Communist take-over, so it may be desirable in some countries to popularize centralized government whose strength is essentially military but which can gradually establish checks and balances obviating totalitarian methods and dictatorship. In the face of Communist competition, the problem of political organization is central in the developing countries. The dilemma we face in assisting other governments to cope with this problem whether through political, economic or military measures does not really rest on the image of the United States but rather on capabilities of the indigenous national leaders and their popular support. Although the Soviets have given major propaganda effort to portraying the United States in a militaristic image, there is no substantial evidence that such an image in fact exists in the minds of most of the people we are trying to help.

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