

WHAT IS SEATO?

The South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) celebrated its 13th birthday on September 8, 1967, with the dedication of a new and permanent headquarters building in Bangkok by His Majesty Phumipol Adulyadej, the young and popular King of Thailand.

Where did SEATO come from? It was born in Manila in 1954, fathered by eight nations faced with, or concerned with, an aggressive communist threat against the very existence of developing nations in Southeast Asia. Many of these had come into being after the Second World War and were struggling with political, social, and economic problems in efforts to build a secure life for their peoples.

In this time of change and insecurity, communist leaders exploited social unrest and nationalistic feelings among the people of the region. Communist move-

ments, directed and aided from the outside, kept trying to take over, sometimes by direct external aggression, sometimes by insurgency. In the Philippines, in the area then called Indochina, in Burma and the Malayan peninsula, the threat reached critical proportions. In 1949, Mao Tse-tung's communists secured control of the whole Chinese mainland. In June 1950, the communist North Korean army invaded the Republic of Korea in a bold effort to seize that new nation. The effort was thwarted, after a fierce struggle, by the forces of several nations under the United Nations aegis, ending in an uneasy armistice in 1953.

By early 1954 the communist-led Viet Minh had seized much of the northern province of Tonkin and had advanced into Laos, driving toward the border of Thailand. Thailand made

an urgent appeal to the United Nations Security Council for a team of peace observers to investigate developments along its frontier with Laos. This reasonable request obtained nine affirmative votes and one abstention, but was vetoed by the Soviet Union.

In July 1954, the Geneva Agreement was signed, dividing Vietnam at the 17th parallel and ostensibly ending the conflict in Indochina. There was hope among people throughout the world that this could mark the beginning of a new era of peace.

Still concerned about the communist threat on its northeastern border, Thailand decided to have recourse to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This article authorizes collective defense treaties.

The Manila Conference of September 1954 brought the representatives of eight nations together to find a way to meet the threats to freedom in the area, since the Soviet veto had prevented the UN Security Council from taking effective action. Their answer was a collective defense organiza-

tion which included Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States. The representatives of these eight nations drew up and on September 8, 1954, signed the Manila Pact which brought SEATO into being.

What is it all about?

In short, SEATO's mission is twofold. On the one hand it aims to stem direct, overt communist aggression by creating and maintaining the necessary military defenses or deterrent power.

How does SEATO work?

A Council of Ministers, comprising the foreign ministers of member nations, governs SEATO. It meets annually to determine policy and to review the progress of SEATO activities. The meetings alternate between the various capitals. The last meeting was in Washington in 1967, the next one will be in Wellington in April 1968.

The Council of Ministers is represented at SEATO headquarters by Council Representatives, consisting of the ambassadors to Thailand of each member nation and

a representative of the Thai Foreign Office. The council representatives meet monthly with the Secretary-General of SEATO to review policy, programming and planning and to consider SEATO projects.

The Secretary-General, who is the executive head of the organization, is responsible to the council when it is in session, and at other times to the council representatives. He directs a staff of international officers.

Under the Council of Ministers are the military advisers. These are officers of member governments at their theater command or chief-of-staff level. They meet twice yearly to review the military situation in the area and to approve the work and plans of the Military Planning Office (MPO), located at SEATO headquarters in Bangkok. The MPO plans are tested in annual programs of military exercises — maritime, amphibious, air-ground and command-post. They provide for a combination of fighting forces which understand each other's methods, weapons and language. Thirty-four exercises

have been held over the past 11 years.

SEATO has no standing forces, as in the case of NATO, because this is considered unrealistic in terms of the strategic situation in Southeast Asia. It relies instead on the rapid combination of forces trained to work together and has demonstrated in actual maneuvers that these forces can be speedily assembled and efficiently coordinated to carry out concerted actions.

SEATO is not concerned with overt communist attack alone but also with countering and preventing communist subversion. Assistance to member nations in this field is a primary consideration of the Secretary-General of SEATO, Lieutenant-General Jesus M. Vargas, former Chief of Staff and former Secretary of Defense of the Philippines. General Vargas operates from firsthand experience in fighting insurgency. He played a leading role in breaking the back of the communist-led Huk's attempt to seize power in the Philippines more than a decade ago.

Secretary-General Vargas places high value on

SEATO's civil program. "Security is essential," he says, "but progress in the social, economic, and related fields is imperative. It is axiomatic that military strength alone is insufficient today to ensure national security. The armed forces are a shield but behind that shield must be a strong economy coupled with social progress."

Over the years, SEATO has striven to strengthen the nations of the area in vital social, economic and cultural fields through projects carried on by SEATO or by member nations, either individually or collectively.

SEATO has sponsored a number of studies on the requirements of its Asian members for skilled labor for their developing industries. Two technical training schools were established in Pakistan as models for the training of technicians throughout the country. In Thailand, the skilled labor project provides nearly half of the technical training facilities available in the country. Twenty vocational schools have been established on the basis of existing carpentry schools in major provincial towns in Thailand.

The SEATO Technical Training School in Bangkok offers a course for future technical supervisors, foremen and skilled workers in the Thai armed services schools and workshops. This is a bilateral project by Australia and Thailand, under SEATO sponsorship. Similar projects have been undertaken in the fields of education, health, tribal research and community development.

An outstanding project is the SEATO Graduate School of Engineering in Bangkok, a unique regional school open to graduates from all countries in Southeast Asia. It offers courses in five branches of civil engineering, leading to a master's degree, and the school has now been expanded into the Asian Institute of Technology, which will become independent and shed its SEATO sponsorship.

SEATO is also concerned with health problems, and has sponsored a medical research laboratory and a clinical research center in Bangkok. The first deals with research into the causes and treatments of diseases which ravage the area — malaria, haemorrhagic fever, liver-fluke. The second, the

SEATO Clinical Research Center, seeks improved methods of diagnosis of the major diseases of Southeast Asia and is doing research on the treatment and medical management of patients.

Another project is the SEATO Cholera Research Laboratory in Dacca which

has become the world's major institution of its kind. The cholera laboratory has already made notable advances in the treatment of the disease and continues studies into its causes and prevention. — *By W. W. Copeland in the Free World, February, 1968 issue.*

KITCHEN

Such is life. It is no cleaner than a kitchen; it reeks of a kitchen; and if you mean to cook your dinner, you must expect to soil your hands; the real art is getting them clean again, and therein lies the whole morality of our epoch. — *Honore de Balzac*