had expressed, that there needed to be greater consideration of options for how to handle Asia. Nixon, deferential to his patron, claimed that Dulles was the authority. But, he could not contain himself. He added that "without any claims to being an expert, the Vice President said that at least he was convinced that China was the key to Asia." Dulles preferred not to make a blanket statement. Despite his disavowal, he considered himself proficient in Asian affairs. Cutler's request illustrated that other NSC participants agreed with him, or at least had an interest in hearing his opinions.26 Either way, the Vice President took the opportunity to unequivocally express his position.

Nixon parlayed his first lengthy excursion through Asia into a career path he would pursue for the entire Administration. Yet, he had to constantly work to maintain his position. Eisenhower did not view him as an international relations asset, and Dulles often chose to use Nixon as his foreign affairs agent, rather than allow him an independent role.

As Nixon worked to maintain an influential position, his goals expanded. He found that international travel provided opportunities to improve his reputation among world leaders and the American people. When abroad, he stepped out from under the shadows of Eisenhower and Dulles and shone in his own right. He met world leaders, became internationally recognized and learned about most regions of the globe. Nixon took six or seven major trips abroad as Vice President, visiting over 50 different countries before he left office in 1961.

Despite the associated benefits, he concluded before the end of the first term that his international tours carried little prestige with them. The first one was noteworthy because of its novelty, but subsequent trips lost their uniqueness. They did not provide him with the
ability to set policy, or even enunciate it. Between his second and third international expeditions, he began complaining to Dulles about their inconsequence. In conjunction with his objections, he sought means to increase the prestige associated with this travel. Nixon recognized that even though he considered that the international inspections lacked substance, he could promote them as important, and improve his foreign affairs reputation.

The Vice President did not fully realize the limited image attached to a goodwill ambassador until after he and Pat made their second overseas trip. During most of February, 1955, the Nixons visited Central America and the Caribbean. Although Milton Eisenhower had made a trip to Latin America in 1953, Dulles saw need for another mission.

The trip was actually intended for 1954. Dulles proposed it in August, writing to Nixon, "I hope that later on, probably in December, you and your wife can take a swing through Central America for us." Circumstances kept Nixon from embarking until February 6, 1955. Although the trip lasted only about one month, Nixon managed to visit ten countries and two territories, including Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama and the Dominican Republic.27

The resulting praise from American embassies throughout Central America re-inspired Dulles' confidence in Nixon. From Mexico, Ambassador Francis White reported "The newspapers have devoted greater space to it than to any other visit or happening in the nearly two years I have been here." All the editorials praised the Vice President.

From Havana, Cuba foreign service officer, Arthur Gardner, commented on "the good effects of Nixon's trip to Cuba at this particular moment. ... The basic fact is that in the most unequivocal manner the Vice President and his wife did a tremendous selling job."
With such positive reviews, the Vice President earned Dulles' respect and gratitude. The only other Administration official who garnered that level of praise was Ike. The President would do just that in 1960, but for the moment, Dulles ensured that Nixon traveled and Eisenhower stayed in the Oval Office.

The accolades continued. On February 23, Robert Hill, Ambassador to El Salvador, reported "It is my opinion . . . that the prestige of the United States has never been as high as it is right now as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Nixon's visit." Nixon was the first American Vice President to see El Salvador and the natives appreciated him. He followed his usual format and talked with the populace, not just the leaders.

Regardless of whether it transferred to Nixon personally, the office of Vice President carried a good deal of prestige. Nixon's presence implied a level of US concern that had not been revealed earlier. Whether or not Dulles intended to increase State Department efforts in Central America, Nixon's visit gratified, or at least placated, these Hispanic countries. It did imply a renewed interest in Latin American affairs.

Ambassador Hill also commented on the Vice President's visit to Guatemala. He noted the importance of the trip for increasing American prestige and "helping arrive [at] better understanding between our two countries." The goodwill aspect of the trip clearly succeeded.

At the time, Guatemala represented the most critical area in Latin America to the United States. The previous summer - with CIA and United Fruit complicity - Castillo Armas had overthrown the legally elected President Jacobo Arbenz. State Department analysts feared a connection between Arbenz and the Communist party. Armas, who followed
American directions, could be trusted to appreciate US interests. The situation remained volatile in 1955. Nixon forwarded his assessment of Guatemala to Dulles, through the American Ambassador, Norman Armour. He recommended increased US aid and support of the Armas regime. Neither were alarming suggestions, nor did they reflect the insight of an expert. Any State Department analyst acquainted with Latin America would have given the same counsel. But, that Nixon had the opportunity was more important than that he offered a different perspective on US-Latin American relations.

As in Asia, the State Department hoped that Nixon could also help resolve a few minor international disputes. Cooling a simmering feud between Costa Rican leader José Figueres and Nicaraguan ruler Anastasio Somoza had priority. Somoza supported Costa Rican dissidents in their on going coup against Figueres. Although some historians have concluded that the United States sided with Figueres, Nixon's instructions were to encourage accommodation and peace on both sides. The State Department briefing about Costa Rica recommended that Nixon: "a. Suggest that they [Costa Rica and Nicaragua] live in peace in their own country. b. If possible, convey to Figueres that he cease blasting Somoza and other leaders." The briefing notes for Nicaragua simply reversed the names and hoped Somoza would "cease blasting Figueres." Nixon followed this course as best he could. After his return to the United States, the Vice President wrote to Figueres. He stated he believed Costa Rica favored peace in the area. He suggested that leaders in the area had "to eliminate friction wherever possible" and that "it is my belief that our conversations have contributed to that end." Nixon did not resolve the feud, but he did attempt to end it. This was another step forward on the road to becoming a statesman.
Nixon's letter to Figueres typically would be a State Department initiative. Nixon must have had Dulles' approval before sending it, and possibly received orders from him to do so. Whether Nixon or a State Department official was the impetus behind the letter, that Nixon sent it at all highlights how he and Dulles had modified the responsibilities of the office. Nixon was performing a diplomatic function for State. Such assignments transformed the vice presidency from a position with limited importance to the Administration, into one commanding domestic and international recognition.

Within the Administration, Nixon's trip did not make much of an impact. The one positive result for Nixon was that it provided him with another region of the world in which he could claim familiarity, if not expertise. He definitely gained an understanding of the region.

On March 10, five days after his return to the United States, Nixon reported his findings. Besides advocating increased economic aid - a standard recommendation for Nixon, almost without regard to where he traveled - he displayed a clairvoyant understanding of the consequences of Communist expansion in that area. Speaking at an NSC meeting, he warned, "what happened in Guatemala would have been much worse for the United States if it had occurred in Mexico or in Cuba. . . . We should never forget that once one of these countries succumbs to Communist control, it would prove very difficult indeed to remove that control."

His prediction had no impact on policy, but proved accurate for Cuba a few years later.

When not traveling, Vice President Nixon continued his efforts to gain a more influential role in American foreign relations. During the summer, he tried, unsuccessfully,
to impress his conclusions about Russian tactics upon Eisenhower. Despite Ike's lack of interest, Nixon presented his case. He was determined to voice his opinions to the highest power and in mid-summer sent the Commander-in-Chief a rambling letter explaining his concerns.

The letter initially recounted the events that prompted Nixon's analysis. The "extraordinary scene at the garden park [at the U.S. Embassy] [handwritten], taken in conjunction with the drunken hippodrome at Belgrade, suggests that it is part of a concerted effort by the Kremlin leaders to make the world think that they they [sic] are truly a changed, human, approachable hail-fellow-well-met bunch of characters with whom any reasonable man can argue [sic] or bargain on a reasonable basis and that ANY FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT IS NOT THEIR FAULT." Nixon did not mask his disgust in the succeeding three paragraphs. He warned that the Soviet's new amicability could not be taken at face value. It was designed to swing world opinion to favor the Communists. These jovial displays were a public relations tactic designed to give the sense that America was to blame if diplomatic talks faltered. In Nixon's concluding words: "It must be the Wests [sic] fault if they can't do business with good old Nikita -- that is the impression they seek to leave, in advance of the meetings." Here Nixon probably referred to the Geneva Summit, which began on July 18.31

The memorandum reflected Nixon's true concern. The document, far more emotional and informal than typical (for Nixon), probably came straight from the Vice President's hand. In style, it reflected his personal 1947 Herter report more than any other document from his desk during the intervening years. The preponderance of typos implies that Nixon himself
dashed it off, without the benefit of secretary Rosemary Wood's typing skills.

Nixon considered this topic important enough that it could not wait. However, there is no evidence that his letter had any effect on the President. Nixon's fears were not realized. Eisenhower out-maneuvered his adversaries with a plan for US-Soviet reciprocal aerial reconnaissance. Ike's "Open Skies" proposal was intended to protect against surprise attacks. His unexpected proposition, announced at the Geneva summit in 1956, put the Russians on the defensive. Despite this, the overall conference talks were amicable. Out of them came hopeful praise for the "Spirit of Geneva." Ike's capable handling of the Soviet Union made Nixon's analysis seem alarmist. If the President recalled the essay after the summit, it would only have reinforced his belief that Nixon was too reactionary and inexperienced to lead the nation. The summit went well and the Russians did not gain the upper hand.

Since Nixon's efforts to advise Ike won him no points, his best means of advancing his foreign affairs reputation remained travel abroad. By July 1955, the Vice President was determined that his next trip would be important. Ideally, Nixon wanted US foreign policy to be affected by what he uncovered during talks with foreign leaders. He wanted the trips to have a greater significance than that of a friendly gesture by the United States toward some smaller nation.

At the end of July, the Vice President and the Secretary of State met for a morning conference. Responding to a request by Nixon, Dulles "expressed the opinion that it would be of doubtful wisdom for the Vice President to seek to make a trip to the Soviet Union at this time." Clearly Nixon had asked for Dulles' permission to go to the U.S.S.R. He understood such a trip would have astounded Americans and impressed Europeans. Nixon took the
rebuff in stride. He switched to his auxiliary plan, and according to Dulles, explained "he would like to make this fall some kind of a further trip, if this would serve a useful purpose. I [Dulles] suggested the Near East where he had not been." To Nixon, travel abroad meant greater independence and better press. Whether or not he went to Russia, he would go somewhere. Dulles concluded "that if we [he and Dulles] were together and had an opportunity at Gettysburg, we would speak about the possibility of the Vice President's going to the Near East and not going to the Soviet Union." The Secretary's reiteration that Nixon was not going to Russia made it clear, the Vice President was not to broach that subject with Eisenhower. But, Dulles accepted an expedition for Nixon to a less critical region. Nixon's desire to travel would be satisfied and the Secretary might receive valuable intelligence.

One final comment in the conversation illustrated Nixon's careful effort to protect his role in the government, and simultaneously reinforce his relationship with Dulles. Before they ended the discussion, the Secretary "mentioned to the Vice President the invitation of Jawaharlal Nehru to the President to visit India. The Vice President was very emphatic as to the unwisdom of the President's undertaking good will trips." 32 Such travel represented one of Nixon's only outlets. If Ike began traveling to exotic lands anything the Vice President did would be less impressive. Coincidentally, Dulles believed Eisenhower's friendliness could lead to promises that had dangerous consequences for the US. Nixon advised against Ike going to India because it would both detract from his own role, and disturb Dulles.

In August, Dulles again suggested the Near East as a possible destination for the Vice President. The trip would include Turkey, but omit Iran and Libya. Nixon, silently invoking the adage "nothing ventured, nothing gained" asked again about visiting Moscow. Dulles
reiterated his objections. According to Dulles, "there was danger of overdoing the sentimental side of our relations." Nixon agreed, knowing his chances of going to Russia were not high. He saw no reason to aggravate the Secretary.

As it turned out, the Vice President did not take his Fall constitutional. On September 24, Eisenhower suffered a heart attack. With the President's sudden incapacity, Nixon's public role altered. Nixon found himself technically in control of the Administration, but politically unable to make independent decisions. He could not appear to take command without facing tremendous criticism for usurping the presidential powers. Through December, he, Dulles and Eisenhower's assistant Sherman Adams performed a careful balancing act. They maintained the illusion that the Administration could function normally without the President, while simultaneously anxiously awaiting Ike's return.

Nixon's well practiced political savvy accounted for his success in this role. He understood how his actions would be interpreted, and took great pains to avoid any negative press. His role as stand-in President, however, did not last. By the second week in November, Eisenhower was out of the hospital. Although his full recovery would take several months, the immediate crisis was over. Eisenhower could reclaim his position as Commander-in-Chief. Nixon resumed the roles he had been assigned and created for himself, expanding them when possible.

On December 13, Dulles asked Nixon if he could go to South America for the January 31 inauguration of the new Brazilian President, Juscelino Kubitschek. Nixon wondered if the assignment was truly important. Dulles assured him it was, adding, "Brazil is a good friend and we would like to keep it that way." Nixon, however, would have preferred to keep his
January 30 dinner appointment with British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden. Dulles had asked him to accept that assignment three days earlier. Now he offered to sit in for Nixon. The Vice President had little real choice but to accept.

With his revised assignment, came a new dinner to host. Dulles had the Vice President entertain the president-elect of Brazil on January 5. The Secretary would not attend Nixon's dinner because he planned to host Kubitschek the following night. Undoubtedly disappointed about missing an opportunity to meet with Eden, Nixon resigned himself to the new task and performed it well. Even if Dulles reserved the prime international work for himself, he still gave Nixon more to do than did the President. Nixon accepted almost any duty, for the ability to work in foreign affairs.

He attended the inauguration, serving again as a quasi-goodwill ambassador, but he did not appreciate the chore. On the plus side, Eisenhower took an indirect interest in the trip. He had a friend involved in the oil industry who expected to talk with Kubitschek about a Brazilian bill that would attract US capital. He informed the Vice President of his friend's interest. Nixon commented "that Brazil's greatest need was to get more capital." Their discussion of Nixon's international trip, however, went no further. The conversation drifted onto political topics. But, at least the Vice President had had the opportunity to discuss a foreign relations matter one-on-one with the President.

On May 11, 1956, Dulles asked Nixon to make another trip abroad. This time Nixon would represent the United States at the tenth anniversary celebration of independence for the Philippines. To give an impression that the trip was presidential in stature, Dulles mentioned that Eisenhower would have gone, but India's President Nehru intended to visit Washington at
that time. Appealing to Nixon's interest in Far Eastern affairs, Dulles noted the trip provided a forum to call for unity among non-Communist Asians. Speaking in a convoluted and cautious manner, Nixon discussed his reservations. "The VP asked the Secretary what he thought about the worthwhileness of the affair. The Secretary said he thought it very worthwhile." With that assurance, Nixon continued, "he certainly would not be unsympathetic to the idea. The Secretary said this would not be unhelpful to Nixon at this particular time." Dulles implied that agreeing to the task might result in some reward - it "would not be unhelpful to Nixon" - even if that amounted only to positive media coverage.

But, Nixon revealed his dissatisfaction with the role of goodwill Vice President. He added "the main thing he was concerned about was that it should be made clear this trip was in the interest of the country, not just a trip out there." Nixon wanted a real purpose for making the trip. He hated representing America abroad for show only, without consequential results coming from his efforts. By implication, Nixon had not been swayed by his status as surrogate President. In fact, had there been no conflict in scheduling, Dulles probably would have opposed Eisenhower's attendance anyway, and invented a reason for Nixon to go.

Three days later, Dulles and Nixon again talked about the proposed trip. Now, disregarding his implication that Eisenhower might have attended, Dulles revealed that the Manila affair probably warranted only the presence of the diplomatic corps. The celebration would not require someone of vice presidential caliber. Filipino leaders might upgrade the celebration if pressed, but Dulles saw no reason to ask them.

Nixon's response exposed his own interest in the affair. Rather than miss the chance to go abroad - regardless of his capacity - Nixon suggested that the Secretary hint that Nixon
would be willing to show up, if there was reason. Although the Vice President aspired to a higher function than the emissary of Ike or Dulles, he recognized that playing that part still carried more prestige than staying at home. On May 24, Dulles instructed Nixon to be in the Philippines on their independence day, July fourth. Nixon agreed to go. He left from Hawaii at the beginning of July.

Dulles was not without the means to reward Nixon for acquiescing without any argument. To satisfy Nixon's desire for a more important assignment, the Secretary approved an expanded travel itinerary. As usual, this advanced his purposes, as much as it appeased Nixon. The new route included Taiwan, South Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan, Turkey and the Balearic Island of Majorca. Nixon's trip provided for Dulles an updated report on Asia from a source he considered reliable. For Nixon, the trip served as another learning experience, and a chance to increase his domestic and international reputation.

Among other leaders, Nixon spoke with the Thai Prime Minister and his advisors. These officials expressed frustration with American economic aid and tactics. They commented that Washington had to "do, don't just talk," adding US should cut red tape and get things done to make Thailand 'showcase of Asia.' The Deputy Prime Minister complained that neutralist and pro-Communist countries were receiving more aid than anti-Communist ones like Thailand. Nixon had made similar complaints about his country's foreign policy, so he sympathized with the Thai grievances.

The Vice President also met again with Chaing Kai-shek. Chaing sent Nixon home with his standard message to Eisenhower. He claimed mainland China could never succeed as long as Taiwan and America continued their alliance. He also insisted that the US must
not "yield any ground whatever on any front" because the "Communists will test our intentions by some aggressive action." The aggression Chaing feared, came two years later, when PRC artillery shelled the islands of Quemoy and Matsu.

Nixon also met with the leaders of South Vietnam, Majorca, Pakistan and Turkey. He asked about their fears, listened to their advice, offered US aid where he could and reported all his findings back to Dulles. The Vice President served not only as a high ranking dignitary attending the Philippines celebration, but also as an assistant to the Secretary of State.

Nixon returned to Washington on July 11, having managed to take his aborted 1955 Near East tour in condensed form. He arrived just in time to catch the beginning of the Suez Crisis. Although Nixon did not have much involvement in the events that followed, he did end up taking another foreign trip because of them.

Ostensibly, the crisis came about as a result of failed efforts to negotiate a loan between the World Bank and Egypt, to build the Aswan Dam. With US and U.K. backing, the World Bank developed a loan package for Egypt, that provided the capital to construct the dam. The project was intended to increase crop productivity. Egyptian negotiators considered too severe the controls on their economy that World Bank officials demanded to secure the loan. They would not agree to the terms. While counter offers were made, Egyptian leader Gamal Nasser became increasingly anti-American in his rhetoric and bought weapons from Czechoslovakia. The lack of progress in negotiations, combined with the anti-Americanism and fraternization with a Soviet satellite, led Dulles to withdraw the World Bank's offer. Nasser took the opportunity to nationalize the Suez Canal, owned mostly by
Britain and France.

Regardless of Aswan, Nasser probably would have expropriated the canal within the next few years. It represented a last vestige of colonial power. By seizing it, he illustrated his independence from Western powers and supported his pan-Arabic movement. Nevertheless, Dulles weathered a great amount of criticism for what appeared to the outside world as an abrupt withdrawal of the loan offer. When strategic and economic concern inspired the U.K., France and Israel to hatch a scheme to retake the Suez by military force, Eisenhower condemned the attacks and forced the allies to end their assault.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the significance of these events, Nixon’s role in the Suez crisis remained limited. The Vice President had a full calendar with the approaching presidential campaign. On top of that, Dulles fell suddenly ill with serious stomach cramps. The pains in his stomach turned out to be cancer. Thus campaign commitments monopolized Nixon’s schedule, and his most reliable foreign relations source temporarily ceased to provide information. Nixon was cut abruptly out of the loop. It was not until after the election and the Suez crisis that Nixon and Dulles discussed future journeys for the Vice President. Then Dulles suggested the Vice President visit Austria.

The trip related to the recent debacle. Simultaneous to events in Egypt, a rebellion flared up against the Communist regime in Hungary. The Hungarians might have achieved success had Soviet military forces not intervened and crushed the insurrection. Because of the concurrent nature of these events, the United States faced a dilemma. Allied attacks on Egypt could be interpreted as similar to the Soviet aggression in Hungary. American officials felt unable to strongly censure the Soviet actions without either appearing hypocritical or publicly
denouncing Great Britain and France. The former option might result in a loss of international confidence in the US. The latter could cause irreparable damage to America's already weakened relations with Western Europe.

On Pearl Harbor Day, 1956, Dulles had few means to condemn the Soviet aggression without negative repercussions for the United States. His most promising option was to use the Hungarian situation against the Russians without actually criticizing their actions. The failed uprising forced thousands of Hungarians to flee to Austrian refugee camps, instantly formed to handle the émigrés. Dulles decided to send a delegation to tour the Hungarian camps. That trip could illustrate Soviet harshness without actually mentioning Russian attacks.

Nixon's tremendous skill as a roving fact finder landed him the assignment. His visit was primarily humanitarian, not diplomatic. The Vice President initially resisted. He claimed he would go, "if Sec. thinks it is useful." Yet, the Vice President suggested that he might stay home and they could send an alternate delegation. He proposed that Mrs. Eisenhower or his own wife fly to Austria on Air Force One and pick up a plane load of refugees - as a "mission of mercy."

Dulles said he would consider Nixon's idea, probably a subtle hint that he had already dismissed it. Nixon then concluded he "does not want to go if it will be interpreted as a grandstand play." Dulles would not accept any excuses. Eleven days later Nixon was in Austria.

Before he left, however, Nixon made sure to obtain as much presidential sanction and authority as he could. He asked for letters from Eisenhower to President Koerner and
Chancellor Raab. He also suggested Ike autograph a photograph for him to present to Koerner. The request reached Ike via Dulles. Nixon sought a more important assignment than that of official US refugee camp inspector. The letters afforded him a higher stature by making his trip "presidential."

An official announcement explained Nixon's trip. "The purpose of the Vice President's trip, concurred in by the Secretary of State, is to consult with American, Austrian and international officials as to problems relating to relief and resettlement of Hungarian refugees and to visit while there as many as possible of those who have recently escaped from oppression." Previous announcements named both Dulles and Eisenhower as authorities supporting Nixon's trips. Perhaps, attempting to limit possible criticism of the President related to allied attacks in Egypt and almost no condemnation of Soviet offenses in Hungary, only the Secretary's prestige was invoked. And, while Nixon would have preferred Ike's name be mentioned, Eisenhower might not have agreed to let Nixon "consult" with international officials about refugee questions. Dulles gave Nixon the spotlight. The assignment worked well with Nixon's practice of meeting large crowds and international leaders, during a single trip.

As with the Brazil trip, after Austria the Vice President gained an audience with Eisenhower to discuss his findings. He informed the President that the refugees were a desirable "leadership type." He "emphasized that it is important that the United States not drag its feet . . . that we continue to take [immigration] applications at the current rate." In conclusion, Nixon "urged that here was an opportunity to get needed flexibility into our Immigration laws." Eisenhower side-stepped the Vice President's recommendation to ask
Congress for $30 to $40 million to alleviate the crisis. Instead, Ike suggested that these skilled refugees might be useful to Middle Eastern or Latin American countries. He authorized State to continue processing Hungarian applications even beyond allowable quotas, but took no other tangible action on Nixon's specific advice.37

Nixon probably advocated an increase in Hungarian refugee émigrés to America for three reasons. From a humanitarian perspective, the refugees would be better off in America, away from the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe. Such a move also represented an excellent propaganda opportunity to contrast the beneficence of Democracy to the cruelty of Communism. Lastly, Nixon recognized the refugees might be a source of intelligence about Communist methods. The three rationales were all connected by a common thread of advantage gained by America. Eisenhower, however, had little interest in his Vice President's counsel. Despite Ike's continued indifference, Nixon assumed every meeting in which he enunciated his viewpoint improved his chances of gaining a voice in foreign affairs.

Nixon's trip to Austria was his last of the first term and 1956. Although his efforts to gain a say in the Administration had not led to great success, he remained vigilant. Dulles continued to provide Nixon with travel assignments of varying importance. And, the unceasing struggle by the Vice President to expand his role during Eisenhower's second presidential Administration, resulted in some of the desired recognition Nixon desperately craved.
ENDNOTES:


October 31, 1953.


13. Note from American Ambassador to Australia to John Foster Dulles, 26 October, 1953, Eisenhower Library, White House Central Files: Confidential Files, Subject Series Box 46 File Nixon Trip to Far East, etc.; Meeting Richard M. Nixon debriefing Administration representatives, 5 August, 1954, Eisenhower Library, White House Office: Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs: Special Assistant Series; Subject Subseries Box 10: Vice President (1) (January 1954-April 1957).


