

with the Government of Vietnam. We can fully understand the difficulties faced by press representatives there and would like to see those dealt with as rapidly as possible, because under those conditions it is not easy to get a balanced picture of the situation. We hope that there could be some improvement not only in the situation in Vietnam, but in the availability of information about it in Vietnam to representatives of the press.

Again on March 8, the Secretary said in response to a question:

We ourselves have tried to be more helpful directly with members of the press in the briefing problem out there; and I would think that there has been some improvement, but not yet wholly satisfactory.

To recapitulate, then, our basic policy regarding press relations in Vietnam is as follows:

1. To continue to provide the fullest possible cooperation to the press in order to make available to newsmen a fair, complete, and balanced picture of the complicated Vietnamese situation and the U.S. role in it.

2. To furnish reporters with comprehensive background information in order to be certain that their understanding of the situation is complete.

3. Where possible, to hold frequent preoperations briefings with the same purpose in mind, relying—as we know we can—on the responsibility of the reporters to delay publication until the information is no longer of value to the enemy.

4. To continue our efforts to persuade the Vietnamese Government to cooperate more fully with U.S. newsmen. Since the primary responsibility for access to the news is a Vietnamese one, the main effort to get the Vietnam story fully told must be Vietnamese also.

Quite frankly, we realize that there have been some shortcomings in the implementation of our press policy in Vietnam. We are making efforts to improve this situation, and we shall continue to do so.

We intend to continue our policy of full cooperation with the American press as it covers the Vietnam story. We are convinced that Americans have a very great stake in the outcome of the Vietnam struggle. A Communist victory there would devalue free world support in the face of Communist aggression throughout the world, thereby weakening the whole fabric of free world strength and determination. It would open all of southeast Asia, and to a degree India and Australia, to a greatly increased threat of Communist subversion and aggression. It would condemn 14 million people to a Communist regime they have fought hard to avoid, a Communist regime which nearly a million Vietnamese already have left their homes to escape. It is essential that the American people understand the importance of this Communist thrust against southeast Asia, and that they be kept well informed of our efforts to counter it. We hope for more, not less, public information on Vietnam and our role there, and we will do our best to provide it.

Mr. MEADER. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOSS. Mr. Meader.

Mr. MEADER. Mr. Hilsman, I note from your biographical sketch that you have not been in this position very long.

Mr. HILSMAN. That is correct, sir. (See exhibit I, p. 418.)

Mr. MEADER. Do you have with you people who have been familiar with the situation in Vietnam for the past 3 or 4 years, let's say?

Mr. HILSMAN. I do, but let me also say that I was director of intelligence of the Department of State for the last 2 years, and so