

CRITICISM OF DIEM

Mr. REUSS. Except this passage isn't fuzzy. Rusk says critical articles are likely to impede the war effort.

Now the American Ambassador, in carrying that out it seems to me, has got to do his level best to suppress such articles. I think that is an unfortunate role in which to cast our representatives.

He does not want to say these things himself, but he certainly doesn't want to try to prevent correspondents of the free world from writing as they please on a matter like this.

Mr. HILSMAN. That is not the statement of policy as it stands today.

Mr. REUSS. Has it been countermanded or superseded by a later cable?

Mr. HILSMAN. There is a whole set of things. I think you can distinguish between a factual statement that critical articles do, in fact, make the war effort more difficult. That is a true and factual statement.

But if you go further than that and say we therefore should suppress them, that is not the policy. We have no means of suppressing them, no desire to suppress them.

Mr. REUSS. It does say that the Ambassador has overall authority in these matters.

Mr. HILSMAN. Let's turn it around and say this: What the Ambassador cannot do is suppress information or delay its publication.

Now there are two instances in which he has the authority to withhold information: One is the advance publication of military plans. * * *

The second category, where information is, as I have said in the statement, held back until it is no longer sensitive, is matters concerned with negotiations, cases in which there is a delicate and long-standing negotiation, you know. This would be cases where continuous negotiation is going on, and you don't want press stories about it until the negotiations are completed.

Mr. REUSS. And there, too, I would completely agree.

Mr. HILSMAN. That is right.

[Mr. REUSS. That you are justified in restricting access. But what concerns me is a cable which, if the English language means anything, is Rusk telling Embassy Saigon that any newsman who writes anything uncomplimentary about that government is going to be left to stew in the salons of Saigon and can't get on a helicopter and go see anything. I don't think that is good.]

Mr. HILSMAN. Yes, sir. Whatever the language is and whatever it means, it was not so interpreted by our Ambassador. Nobody was ever denied any access or any facilities or any briefing as a result of critical stories.]

And let me then say that whatever the language of this cable is, that is not the policy today as it is understood by Nolting and Harkins and all the rest.

NEW DIRECTIVE ON NEWS POLICY

Mr. REUSS. And in conclusion I did gather from what you said that it is your intention to see that a clearer directive on news policy is sent to Saigon in the near future.