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REFLECTIONS ON VIETNAM

by
Barry Zorthian

For my generation, World War I was history and World War II was our great watershed event. Vietnam was secondary. For my son's generation, World War II was history and Vietnam was the great watershed. For you, Vietnam is history and only the future will tell whether you will face a watershed event of the same magnitude as did these last two generations. I hope not. Wars are hardly the benchmark needed to help a generation come of age. I suggest that you can perhaps avoid such an experience more effectively by studying and learning the lessons of the past.

Which is what you are doing this week and for which I congratulate you. Vietnam is well worth the time and effort you are making for it will tell you much about us as a nation - where we have been, where we are and perhaps where we are going - and it can certainly provide you with some lessons and principles that must be observed in the conduct of our international affairs if we are to avoid such terrible costs as 58,000 American dead.

But I caution you in undertaking this evaluation to avoid the temptation of succumbing easily to conventional wisdom. Vietnam, more than most events of such magnitude, is the subject of myths and misconceptions that have taken root and developed a life of their own. It is only recently that history is showing signs of gaining some balance and that the black and white pictures of the past are beginning to change more accurately to the grays that existed in fact. Tonight, I would like to offer some observations on the nature of those grays from the perspective of one who was an active participant for four and a half years of the war.

But first let me place myself more precisely. I arrived in Vietnam slightly more than twenty-five years ago, in February of 1964 to be exact, and spent the next four and a half years as Director of all American communications activities in Vietnam, including media relations and psychological warfare as well as conventional information programs. My role included membership on the U.S. Mission Council of chiefs of agencies where I served with three different Ambassadors, three different Commanders of the

military forces and a score of other senior agency directors. This was well before any of you students were born; at least, I assume it was.

I cite this not just to emphasize my age nor my length of service in Vietnam but to make a point, an important one for those who would evaluate Vietnam. For though I served in Vietnam for a lengthy period, my service there covered only part of the war. I call my period the "Middle Years"-the years of the initial American combat involvement and the American buildup. Before it came the French War which, though it did not involve American troops, set precedents and patterns that had a great influence in later years; the Diem period which set the direction and seeds of destruction for the South Vietnamese government; and after it, the post-Tet years which saw a partial deterioration of the American military forces by 1970 and led to the withdrawal of the Americans in 1973; and finally the post-American period which ended with the collapse of the South Vietnamese military forces and government in 1975. I might add parenthetically, there has been almost a continuing post-Vietnam War "Vietnam War" in Cambodia since 1975.

There were thus in reality a series of Vietnam Wars and though they were all tied to each other and part of an overall pattern, each needs judgment on its own. It is dangerous and misleading to speak about the Vietnam War as though it were a single war; it is more accurate to speak about the "Vietnam Wars". And therein lies a basic point: generalizations which may be accurate about one of these phases do not necessarily apply to the others; in fact, most often do not. And I should note that I as an individual speak most knowledgeably about my period there. For the rest, I was and am an interested observer but not a first-hand witness.

Today, the conventional wisdom is that U.S. involvement in these wars - certainly its combat involvement in the wars of the mid- to late sixties and the early seventies - was a grievous and even immoral error of national judgment; that the United States faced inevitable defeat because of intense Vietnamese nationalism and the tenacity and determination and skill in the conduct of insurgency of the North Vietnamese; and that the final outcome reflected the arrogance and insensitivity of a superpower seeking to apply Western concepts and solutions to a Confucian society in a distant land about which it had little knowledge and empathy. To quote a recent highly-acclaimed book on Vietnam: "Vietnam was our first bad war. The American soldier had everything he could want except a good cause and good leadership without which you can't win."

I demur - certainly insofar as a "good cause" is concerned and I suggest to you that this conclusion like so many others about the war deserves restatement in shadings of gray rather than the black and white which it uses. I would probably agree that in balance, the price we paid in the form of human lives, the expenditure of national treasure, the deep divisions created in our society and the negative impact on our national psyche was too high for the results we achieved. But even that more moderate judgment comes only with the benefit of hindsight.

Certainly, at the time, the cause seemed proper and the policies appropriate. We tend to look now at Vietnam in somewhat of a vacuum. It needs to be placed in its proper setting - the last chapter of a post-World War II era in which the confrontation of the two superpowers and the division of the world roughly into Communist and non-Communist camps led to a national readiness as a matter of national interest to help defend the rights of people to develop their societies in their own fashion. We were deep in the syndrome of John F. Kennedy's rallying cry of "We shall pay any price..." in defense of liberty. And the growth of subversion and guerrilla warfare to undermine allied governments and challenge what we perceived as U.S. interests; the activities of a militant Mao-led Mainland China that was extending its tentacles into the countries of Southeast Asia; and the specific situation of Soviet-supported North Vietnamese infiltration of a South buttressed by then with one and a half million refugees from Hanoi's rule that clearly wanted to resist Hanoi control led to the initial American commitment of the early sixties.

Was that cause, that commitment, "bad"? Certainly not in motive and certainly not in principle. And certainly not in the spirit of the time. If my explanation strikes you as the conventional wisdom of the period, as the justification by the establishment for the policies of involvement, your reaction is correct. It is. There was a voice or two raised in opposition but generally those seemed to come from a small minority of chronic objectors. The substantial majority - in the Executive Departments, in the Congress, among the foreign policy experts, even in the media, including many of the reporters who later became severe critics - supported the policies adopted first by President Kennedy and subsequently by President Johnson. As has been noted, the "best and the brightest" were the prime proponents of the involvement in Vietnam, at least initially. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964 which provided the legislative basis for American combat involvement received only two negative votes in the Senate. And public opinion polls showed the general public was

also in support; remember, President Johnson won election in the fall of 1964 by a landslide.

Now if this cause looked "good" in the judgment of the period, where did it go wrong, when did the "good" become "bad" and lead to the the student riots of the late sixties, to the growth of the widespread and violent opposition of the early seventies, to the judgment of our political leaders to withdraw from Vietnam at virtually any cost, and to the conventional wisdom of today still reflected in the quotation I cited earlier.

I suspect social historians will give a much more knowledgable answer. The United States was in the midst of a social revolution which started with the civil rights movement of the fifties; the establishment in all its forms and institutions was increasingly questioned; the critical pact of basic trust and credibility between the government and its electorate was unraveling. War itself, pictured daily on living room TV, was increasingly rejected as an instrument of national policy. And student deferments brought a sense of guilt to tens of thousands as they saw their contemporaries, many from minority groups, dying in a far off land. Unease, frustration, a changed sense of America's role in the world all focused on the growing drain of our youth and treasure in a land that few had heard of and almost none felt any attachment for. Which had the more effect on the national mood of criticism and bitterness that emerged - the social revolution or the war or did they interact and contribute equally to the change in the world as we knew it? I do not know. The historians are going to have to make that judgment eventually.

But I think the most important factor in turning the supporters of the Vietnam commitment to critics who then had an enormous impact in due course on the public's attitude was our performance on the ground in Vietnam - a performance that was constantly visible because whatever other shortcomings the government may have had, it could not be faulted for drawing down a curtain over the scene. This was the most open of wars, our first war without censorship, and it unfolded on a very well-lighted center stage for all the world to see.

In this massive public shift from support to opposition, I suggest it was not our "cause" that was at fault but our execution; it was not our thinking that led to our difficulties but our implementation. The critics were and are wrong in this regard. It was not that the Mission Council did not appreciate the importance of carrying out programs to win the hearts and minds of the population or of limiting the visibility of the Americans or of needing a more effective South Vietnam government or of using more selective and

targeted techniques in countering the Viet Cong. It is simply that we could not put our intentions into effect successfully. We recognized the limitations of the South Vietnamese government. We were conscious of the drawbacks of the huge American presence. We were acutely aware of the failures in the appeal to people. But most often, because of prior conditions, because of hesitation about embarrassing the host government, because of the inadequacy of personnel or resources, because of bureaucratic or military reluctance to change American concepts or patterns, because of the force of political pressures from home, we found ourselves applying not the programs or policies we wished but rather choosing the lesser of bad alternatives. Or facing the one unthinkable option we had: withdrawal, abandonment, the ultimate desperate detachment, shameful to me, that came finally in that dismal picture of departure from the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1975.

Still, in an overall evaluation of these shortcomings, you would find much that was positive and effective - and again I suggest to you that the absolute judgments of the conventional commentator on these detailed programs and policies are not only in error; they are basically invalid. I reject the notion that it was an impossible situation for the United States or, for that matter, for the South Vietnamese government. There was nothing inevitable about the final outcome - and a good case can be made that "victory" if that is the right word for it or, perhaps more accurately, a defeat of the North Vietnamese invasion of the South was possible just as United Nations forces, largely American, had achieved in Korea against the North Koreans a few years earlier.

I note for you a few points to be made in support of this contention:

Despite all the flaws and shortcomings of the South Vietnamese government, the people of the South never clearly opted for the North. There was no general uprising of the population in the Tet Offensive of 1968 as Hanoi had anticipated. There were no wholesale defections of the people, particularly in the hamlets in the countryside, to the Viet Cong. There was passive acceptance of control enforced by arms. In the hamlets, there was above all a desire to be left alone by both sides so they could pursue their lives in peace. As to the ultimate attitude of the South Vietnamese people, ask the boat people, ask the one million Vietnamese in the United States and the tens of thousands elsewhere who have left the historic land of their ancestors.

Despite individual defections, balanced usually by even more numerous individual surrenders to the Southern forces, no South Vietnamese combat unit ever defected or surrendered in toto to the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese, as has been the case in other wars of this nature, until the very final collapse of the entire military force.

Despite all the criticism of its tactics and military performance, the U.S. military forces never lost a battle to the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese forces. That certainly includes the whole series of battles labeled the Tet Offensive.

Yes, there was a certain deterioration in the morale, attitude and performance of U.S. military forces by the 1970's but the dramatic events reflected in movies like "Platoon" were the exception, not the rule, and the vast majority of American military who served in Vietnam came back and resumed normal lives without the trauma experienced by some.

The television program, "Tour of Duty", is not typical of Vietnam nor is "China Beach" - certainly not of the whole broad spectrum of the long years of American involvement: rice growing in the Delta and education and medical assistance in the riverside hamlets are just as valid. Dramatic license is fine but it must be viewed in balance in seeing the real world.

My list could go on for a long time. My point again is not that these particular observations present either a complete or even a fully accurate picture. But they, and many more points in a similar vein, are also legitimately part of the complex mosaic which must be considered in evaluating Vietnam. So once again, I suggest to you that the answers lie in a series of grays rather than the stark absolutes that are so convenient for those seeking simple solutions.

I could even make a case that the "defeat" for the U.S. - the final black and white judgment - may have its own shadings of gray. I can argue - I confess I do not do it with too much vigor - that the ten years we bought in Vietnam at the terrible price of 58,000 dead and a much greater number of Vietnamese casualties - provided the time necessary for the fragile Southeast Asia governments outside Indo-China to get their roots down and achieve stability. Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia are all relatively stable today; the Philippines has been in turmoil but more because of internal developments than external pressures; and Vietnam itself, controlled by the North of course, has had to rest after its "domino" expansion into Cambodia to attend to its own domestic problems, many of them growing out of the war.

What is the point of all this? Simply that there are no easy answers, no flat unchallengeable conclusions. In Vietnam, we often agreed on the facts but differed on the conclusions. The spectrum was so broad and varied that you could find whatever you wanted, support whatever viewpoint you brought to the task. The cup was truly half full or half empty depending on which half you wanted to see.

Let me suggest as you probe the Vietnam experience this week that you seek to make your own judgments on some basic questions, questions on which I have opinions but to which you may well find different answers. For it is your relatively unbiased eyes and ears that may develop the right shadings of gray for these questions that have plagued us for so long:

What was the effect on the final outcome of President Johnson's decision to enter the war piecemeal and to offer the American people both the Vietnam War and the Great Society, guns and butter, at the same time? Certainly, I would argue that these two fundamental decisions lengthened the war unnecessarily and helped divert the American people from giving the war in its early stages the full attention and involvement it needed. And one clear lesson that I would cite from Vietnam is the need to fight a war, if one must be fought, with full application of power, without artificial limits on the military. International considerations, such as concern about the entrance of China into the combat, are a legitimate problem to take into account but handcuffs on the military, particularly in the initial stages, is a questionable approach to a military campaign.

What was the effect on the conduct and outcome of the war of President Johnson's personal involvement in its everyday direction? President Johnson was a man bigger than life, an overwhelming personality. He involved himself in the war in great detail from providing directions for the civilian programs to selecting targets for air strikes. He put himself in the position of having to accept responsibility for the results - and thus lost that desirable cushion between the President and subordinates which would enable him to remove those whose programs did not succeed and seek new paths with new direction,

Why did we fail to persuade and lead the South Vietnamese government to a greater degree of effectiveness, to implementing better the positive programs in education, health, medicine, and agriculture which we knew were needed and which we developed? For that matter, why did the South Vietnamese

government not lead effectively on its own initiative? I question whether it is possible for the United States to serve as a surrogate government, particularly in a society with which we have no common roots and perhaps it is even impossible to guide and lead the government of such a country but, if so, we must seek other ways to convince that government to conduct a positive program that will appeal to the population .

Why did we fail to communicate the whole Vietnam involvement more effectively, a task in which I played a role? In the open world of today with its enormous capacity for transmitting information, effective communication of a major foreign policy is absolutely essential. Policies of the magnitude of Vietnam cannot be long continued without public support. I contend that we, the U.S. government, failed to meet that challenge in Vietnam. We must identify the reasons why and seek corrective measures.

What was the effect on the final outcome of America's natural impatience, of its intense desire to see a task quickly finished even if the issues lend themselves only to long term solutions? The Vietnamese have fought for a thousand years. Hanoi thought in terms of decades. We needed quick and visibly successful results. Our lack of staying power was reflected in many ways, in our strategy and our tactics - and it was a characteristic which the North Vietnamese exploited fully.

As you continue this week of analysis and evaluation, beware the quick and easy answer. Vietnam may well have been the most complex and difficult and certainly most controversial of our wars. Whatever you learn will reflect those difficulties. Nevertheless, it is important that we distill the experience, that we learn the limitations of our national capabilities and power, that we adjust to what is possible for us in a pluralistic world, that we - no, more importantly, that you - learn where we have been and make certain that you do not have to repeat the errors of the last two generations. In pursuing this goal, I urge you to undertake your examination without apology or sense of national guilt. The United States began in Vietnam on a legitimate and honorable course. Both the government and its representatives there made many mistakes but they were mistakes of execution and not mistakes of intent. As President Bush noted in his inaugural speech, surely there is a statute of limitations on our defensiveness about Vietnam.

Look with clear eyes and clear mind and without preconception at the issues and lessons of this page in our history. It

is a difficult task but with sufficient commitment and perception on your part, it can be done. It is important for the future of your generation.

And now rather than try to continue to anticipate your interests and comment further in detail, let me stop and open the floor to questions.

BARRY ZORTHIAN

When the last war began 25 years ago

The month ending today marks an anniversary which deserves more than passing note despite the demands on our attention by the onrush of current world events. It was 25 years ago — on Feb. 7 to be exact — that American military men, initially American Navy pilots from aircraft carriers operating in the Gulf of Tonkin, officially engaged in combat in Vietnam for the first time.

With our concentration now and for the foreseeable future on the developments in East Europe and the Soviet Union, there is a good chance the current conventional wisdom that our combat involvement in Vietnam came without cause or justification will become the definitive judgment and be consigned to the history books as unchallenged gospel. That version of the events of 25 years ago deserves a fresh appraisal, one that might even provide some wisdom for situations which do not appear on the horizon now — but could arise in the future in a number of potential trouble spots around the globe.

The roots of the decision that February go back much further to the Eisenhower and Kennedy presidencies when we gave a commitment to the South Vietnamese that the United States would provide an opportunity for them to decide their future free from control by the North. But the more immediate beginning can be traced back to the events following the overthrow of the Ngo Dinh Diem government on Nov. 1, 1963. Up to then at least, many felt a South Vietnamese government could make it on its own, even though Diem and his family had become virtual tyrants in their last years. There is a great deal of controversy about the degree of our complicity in the overthrow and assassination of Diem, but there is little doubt about the nature of the events that unfolded in the following months.

Those of us on the scene found on our hands not a government but a revolving stage of one coup after an-

other. By March 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson had lost patience with games in Saigon by Vietnamese cliques. Out came emphatic word via Defense Secretary Robert McNamara on one of his frequent trips to Saigon: No more coups.

We tried. How we tried. We did our best in meetings and warnings and talks and briefings with the generals, the politicians, the Buddhists, the Catholics, the Hoa Hoa, the Cao Dai, the Northerners, the Southerners, the civil servants, the military, the businessmen and all the rest. Visitors and experts from Washington came and went. Plan after plan was devised and set in motion. But it was all no use. The Vietnamese groups pulled and hauled and went to the streets — sometimes against the generals, sometimes against each other, sometimes against the French, sometimes against the Americans. We did not have government. We had anarchy. The Vietnamese would have nothing of discipline, cohesion, unity of purpose.

Even worse perhaps, the military situation was deteriorating rapidly. The Diem overthrow had been followed by a disastrous weakening of the Vietnamese military and a virtual collapse of the once-powerful police. The Vietnamese army went down to a 213,000-man level on the record and probably much less in fact. And even of that small total, the Vietnamese were losing virtually a combat battalion a week to a Viet Cong force that by August 1964 was clearly being equipped with the highly effective 7.62 mm. communist infantry weapons system and was being backed up the infiltration of organized North Vietnamese Army units. There was a real danger that the country would be cut in two militarily along a line from Kontum to Binh Dinh between Saigon and Hue to the North.

The Gulf of Tonkin developments in August and the retaliatory Amer-

ican raids gave some relief to the unfolding of defeat in the South. But it was only temporary, and, to most of us on the scene, it was soon apparent that we had the choice of either letting Vietnam "go down the drain" or intervening with American assistance and forces to provide a shield while the South Vietnamese rebuilt their capabilities. American officials in both Washington and Saigon felt we had a commitment to honor and a broad geopolitical strategic interest at stake as well, and so the choice seemed clear. But the arguments against intervention — cited both then and now — were strong, and there was a matter of an election campaign underway in the United States in which Johnson promised our boys would not fight in Asia.

So we did not decide to move into South Vietnam in force, but we also certainly did not get a decision to

Finally, the Viet Cong made the decision for us. They decided to challenge the American military presence directly — inviting the retaliation which finally came. First on Feb. 1 came an attack on American air forces at Bien Hoa, relatively near Saigon, with quite a few Americans killed. The Viet Cong had chosen their time wisely.

It was the eve of our national election and there was no possibility of warlike retaliation by Johnson. We vented our hurt in harsh public statements but kept our forces at their bases. But planning was undertaken in Washington and Saigon after the election for further challenges. They came.

On Christmas Eve, the VC struck again at an American installation, this time the U.S. military Brinks Hotel in the center of Saigon, but once again, the timing was well-

By early morning Washington gave the go-ahead for Navy carrier planes to carry out an aerial attack on Dong Hai.

abandon the South Vietnamese. What we did instead was stumble along through the fall. We got more instructions and more plans and more advice to strengthen Vietnamese institutions and simply make them function better. The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese hit post after post and grew stronger and steadily more aggressive. And our own forces, as advisers and instructors, had to increase and went over the 20,000 figure and the American death toll of these forces rose to 100, and then 200 and then more. Our children went to school in Saigon with Navy men riding "shotgun" on their buses and our wives tried to keep some semblance of sanity in our home lives, and the world around us grew more and more unreal.

chosen. The Christmas season was hardly the time to start combat. And so again, it was a case of public statements and private planning. And then on through the Vietnamese Tet with its symbolism of peace for the Vietnamese. And finally into February.

On Feb. 6, with then National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy in Saigon for firsthand meetings with the U.S. Mission and Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin in Hanoi presumably for similar meetings with the North, the VC struck again — this time at an American compound in the highland provincial capital of Pleiku: eight Americans dead, 100 wounded. The military situation in the South was at a particularly low ebb. The VC with the support and involvement of North Vietnamese units were operating in our innermost defense perimeters; the South Vietnamese army and government were almost non-existent; the collapse of the country was entirely possible. Perhaps the North thought that we would refrain once more because of Kosygin's presence in Hanoi.

But this time, the pattern was to be broken. The Eagle's tail had been twisted once more, and there would be no end to the challenge if it was

not met then. Meetings went on through much of the night with Mr. Bundy, Ambassador Gen. Maxwell Taylor, Gen. William Westmoreland, some token Vietnamese participating on the Saigon end of the discussions and the president himself together with his leading Cabinet members at the Washington end. The faces were serious, the voices somber and the discussions were intense. But the outcome seemed inevitable: retaliation. And since the initiative and wherewithal for the attacks on the American installations were clearly from the North, the message had to be delivered directly to the source.

By early morning of Feb. 7 (late afternoon of Feb. 6 in the United States) Washington gave the go-ahead for Navy carrier planes to carry out an aerial attack on the small town of Dong Hai in the southern part of North Vietnam. The South Vietnamese gave their approval and in fact Vietnamese Air Force planes would have led the attack if the weather had been different. Pre-developed plans were set in motion. Mr. Bundy and Gen. Westmoreland took a quick trip to Pleiku while preparations were made, and they came back more determined than ever. The attack soon was under way. What remained was the announcement itself — something which Saigon's effective rumor mill quickly anticipated.

But anticipated or not, there was no substitute for the actual announcement. Washington decided that the first release should come from Saigon and the White House could then follow up with its official confirmation. I alerted the press corps to be in my office in the U.S. Information Service building for an important announcement at 7:00 p.m. that evening — by then the planes would be back on their ships and the pilots debriefed. Shortly, all was at the ready. I waited with the copies of the prepared press release

on my desk and an open line to Deputy Ambassador Alex Johnson at the embassy. Mr. Johnson had an open line to the White House. A few minutes after 7, the order for release came down. The door was opened, some 50 to 60 correspondents rushed in to pick up copies of the release and rushed out from the first and only press conference I held in four years in Vietnam without a single question raised. No questions were needed. The story told itself. America's long night had begun.

Later that day came the announcement of the evacuation of dependents from Saigon; later that week, more air strikes; in March, the first American ground troops, U.S. Marines, to defend our various installations; in April, the first American Army division, the 1st Air Cavalry; in July, in Honolulu and subsequently in Washington, the basic decisions for large-scale intervention by American troops, eventually 535,000 troops. There were to be the great domestic upheavals; our national trauma over our participation; almost eight years and 58,000 American lives before a "peace" treaty marked the official end of American military participation in that tragic land.

It all started formally in that February 25 years ago. Our reason? These are the concluding words from the White House statement that day:

"As the U.S. government has frequently stated, we seek no wider war. Whether or not this course can be maintained lies with the North Vietnamese aggressors. The key to the situation remains the cessation of infiltration from North Vietnam and the clear indication by the Hanoi regime that it is prepared to cease aggression against its neighbors."

Barry Zorthian was chief U.S. spokesman, director of psychological operations and a member of the U.S. Mission Council in Saigon from February 1964 to July 1968.



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"REFLECTIONS ON VIETNAM"
OUTLINE OF A PROPOSED BOOK ON VIETNAM

Note: The writer served in Vietnam as a senior member of the U.S. Mission from February, 1964, to July, 1968. During that period, he was chief spokesman for the U.S. Mission, a member of the Mission Council and at various times Director of the U.S. Information Service, Director of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO), Counselor of Embassy for Information with the personal rank of Minister. He served under three U.S. Ambassadors, Henry Cabot Lodge (two tours), Maxwell Taylor and Ellsworth Bunker, and served as a colleague and chief public affairs adviser (under an NSC directive) to Gen. Paul Harkins, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, and Gen. Creighton Abrams, the longest association being an almost concurrent four year tour of duty with Gen. Westmoreland. As chief U.S. spokesman, he originated the daily briefings that came to be known as the "Five O'Clock Follies", served and had contact with some 2000 journalists (including repeats) who were accredited to the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV) during the four year period and helped develop the concept and was the first director of the joint U.S. Mission organization for psychological operations and communications. His term of service in Vietnam was the longest for any senior U.S. official with the later exception of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. The proposed book would draw upon his experience and intimate knowledge of the events of this critical period of the U.S. presence in Vietnam.

"Reflections on Vietnam" (or "Vietnam Revisited") would be based on a return visit to Vietnam during which key places of personal and historic significance would serve as the starting point for comment and reflection on Vietnam and the American involvement in the war. These reflections in turn would be followed by comment on both the events involved and the author's comments on them by writers representing other viewpoints- a prominent Vietnamese representative and an experienced journalist each of whom served in Vietnam at

approximately the same time and had quite different vantage points for the events under examination. If the differences in these viewpoints turn out to be sufficiently diverse, the three might undertake a further recorded first-hand "Post Script" discussion which would be transcribed and appended to the particular chapter. Two possible participants in this project are Ambassador Bui Diem, former publisher of the Saigon Daily News, former Vietnamese ambassador to the U.S., author of a book and many articles on Vietnam and now engaged in academic work at George Mason University in Virginia, and Peter Arnett, Pulitzer prize winning correspondent for the Associated Press for a number of years in Vietnam, one of the most knowledgeable and critical of the correspondents who served in Vietnam, subsequently a correspondent for AP in a number of foreign assignments and now a correspondent for Cable News Network, recently assigned to Jerusalem. Both informally have expressed an interest in participation.

The key to the book lies in the return trip to Vietnam to give the author an opportunity to revisit places to freshen his memory and stimulate an informal and personal retrospective on the war: Saigon and Cholon of course (and various parts of the city); the Delta - Vung Tau, Cantho, Mytho, Ha Tien, Long An, Tay Ninh; the highlands - Pleiku, Dakto, Ban Me Thuot, Dalat; the coast - Nha Trang, Phan Rang, Chu Lai; and then up to Danang, Hue and Khe Sang and others. The recent record indicates that present Vietnamese authorities will permit this type of comprehensive visit - probably with escort required but also with considerable leeway.

The history of Vietnam as written in the past twenty odd

years has been presented largely from the viewpoint of the critics. The most recent books of note, "A Bright Shining Light" by Neil Sheehan and the new "Flashbacks" by Morley Safer condemn both the American and South Vietnamese efforts based largely on the comments and viewpoints of unofficial observers, both in Vietnam and the U.S. and critics within the U.S. Mission. There is a real danger that this one-sided accounting of the U.S. involvement will be accepted as accurate history and become dogma.

There is a need for balance, for some understanding and presentation of the agony and complexity of decision making in Vietnam, the reasons for the various actions and policies which were adopted, and an appreciation of the South Vietnamese efforts and sacrifices. There is also a need for a presentation of the human side of the officials who conducted the war - why and how they made the decisions they did from President Johnson and his close associates in Washington to the U.S. commanders - civilian and military - in the field.

The writer does not propose a blind and uncritical presentation of the official viewpoint. Both then and now, he has been critical of many aspects of the American performance in Vietnam but he has also believed in the basic validity of our involvement and having participated in many of the key decisions during those four and a half critical years in the mid-sixties, has some appreciation of the how and why of the course of the American involvement. Furthermore, he would add his personal comments and observations to this viewpoint from the inside.

The concept for the proposed book does not contemplate an

orderly history of the war. That kind of an effort is unnecessary. It would cover too much ground and would be repetitious of what has already been written. What is proposed instead is use of the occasion of the visits to many of the cities and places where the principal events of the war took place and the recollections which will result from these visits to comment on some of the principal issues of the war from the viewpoint of an official in the U.S. Mission. The judgments will seek to bring some balance to the history of the war. The commentary will will also incorporate vignettes and anecdotes about many of the personalities - journalists and officials - who were on the scene.

For instance, the visit to Cantho and Mytho would be the occasion of commentary on the attempt to win the support of the Vietnamese peasants - both by the Americans with their health, medical and education programs and the Vietnamese with their attempts to reach through the barriers of the hamlet to the peasant. Cantho and Mytho also provide the opportunity for comment on the V.C. penetration and terrorism in the countryside.

Ha Thien and Tay Ninh near the Cambodian border provide the opportunity for a discussion of the Ho Chi Minh trail, the frame of mind of the V.C., infiltration of troops and arms by the VC and North Vietnamese, our cross-border and "black" operations.

Long An and Vung Tau provide the opportunity for a discussion of the pacification programs, the later revolutionary development teams, and the Phoenix program.

Ban Me Thuot and Pleiku the occasion for a discussion of the role of the Montagnards, the search and destroy strategy, the

eventual collapse of the South Vietnamese army.

Chu Lai and Nhatrang for the build-up of American forces and facilities, the huge construction effort which reached a high point in Cam Ranh Bay, the first entry of America troops in 1965, the visit by President Johnson in 1967 and the famous "coonskins on the wall" meeting with the American generals.

Danang and Hue for the air war towards the North, for the Tet battles of 1968, for the Marines and their civic action teams, and for Westmoreland's strategy in Khe Sang and the defense perimeters of 65-66.

And Saigon: the official conduct of the war, the role of the Vietnamese government, the Bhuddist uprisings, the political intrigue of the Vietnamese, the Tet offensive, the role and performance of journalists, the top-heavy American bureaucracy, both military and civilian. And my personal memories of four years of Mission meetings, press briefings and personal life.

The commentaries will be a blend of recollections, anecdotes and substantive judgments. Where they are sufficiently different from the current conventional wisdom, they will lend themselves to contradiction or elaboration by the two supplementary observers discussed in the first paragraph above.

And along the way, there will of course be comment on broader aspects of the war - the political dimensions, the overall conduct of the war, its effect on the Vietnamese and the American participants, the validity and need for the American presence and effort and of course the controversial questions about the public presentation of the war which was the writer's particular area of

competence.

In addition, interspersed throughout the book both in the reflections and the commentary will be highly personal anecdotal evaluation and characterization of many of the major figures of the war period - based on first-hand observations and attendance at most of the key conferences during the war in Washington, Manila, Guam, Honolulu and in Vietnam itself and the more than four years on the scene in Saigon. Certainly there will be recollections and comment on contacts with the Washington establishment: President Johnson, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Walt Rostow, Carl Rowan, Robert Kennedy, Edward R. Murrow, Gen. Earle Wheeler, Arthur Sylvester, Bill Moyers, George Christian; famous visitors to Saigon like Henry Kissinger, Frank Stanton, Billy Graham, Richard Nixon, Vice President Humphrey, Sen. Symington, John Steinbeck, Congressmen and Cabinet members, State and Defense Department officials and the endless stream of visitors who were a highly visible feature of the setting; and in Saigon, over the years, the Ambassadors and Generals named earlier but also Ambassadors Alex Johnson, William Porter, Sam Berger, Phil Habib, Bob Komer, the CIA station chiefs; the military from major and lieutenant colonels at the province level to the commanders like Lew Walt, Fred Weyand, Dick Stilwell, Bill Depuy, Bruce Palmer and Crighton Abrams; the mavericks like John Paul Vann, Ed Lansdale, Dan Ellsberg; the media of course - Morley Safer, Peter Arnett, Malcom Brown, Neil Sheehan, David Halberstram, Ward Just, Oriana Falaci, Mary McCarthy, Bernard Fall, Joseph Alsop, Frank McCullough, Robert Shaplen, Keyes Beech, Bernie Kalb, Walter Cronkite, Eric Severeid, the young ones who later became famous like

Dan Rather and Ted Koppel. And finally the Vietnamese, many now almost forgotten: Gen. Theiu and Prime Minister Key, Gen. Minh and Gen. Vien, Tran Van Do and Bui Diem, the seven ministers of information with whom I dealt and the ministers and province chiefs and "notables" of the Vietnamese stage. The list is almost endless because Saigon was a revolving door thru which almost anyone of note of that period passed at one point or another and the writer had an opportunity to see them all at first hand in meetings and in conferences, in one-on-one dialogue and in news briefings and backgrounders and social gatherings, in Saigon and in the field. Every effort will be made to reflect the sense and flavor of the intensity and pressures that marked Vietnam during that period.

Beyond the visit to Vietnam and the first hand recollections, there will be a need of course to undertake a good deal of reading and research in order to prepare for the return and further follow-up research after the visit prior to actual drafting. The writer arrived in Vietnam twenty-six years ago; a refresher is necessary.

A rough estimate of a time frame for production of a manuscript for this book would be as follows:

Spring thru fall, 1990 - reading and research.

Winter, 1990-91 - one month visit to Vietnam

Spring thru fall, 1991 - drafting.

Late fall, 1991 - manuscript submitted.

My normal work in public relations will have to be put aside largely during preparation of this book which will require a minimum of a half day on a steady, regular basis devoted to reading,

research, and writing. As a result, there is a need for an advance to make up for compensation lost during the period involved. In addition, the cost of travel to Vietnam will constitute a burden for which assistance is needed. My estimate of the amount of advance needed to cover these costs is \$30,000.

Two recent pieces on Vietnam by the writer are attached to provide some idea of the quality of the prospective writing and general approach. Neither of these deal as much as the book would with personal experience and anecdote

- Barry Zorthian

PREPARED REMARKS BY BARRY ZORTHIAN
FOR SESSION V
"VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: LESSONS FROM A WAR"

Our meetings this week continue a process that one sometimes feels began even before Ho Chi Minh returned to that troubled land in the forties: an examination, a searching, a conference on Vietnam, its problems and its lessons. How often have we looked at this land in these almost forty years and how often have we been frustrated in finding answers. The only hope I see in our sessions this week lies in increased perspective, in the "re" in "reconsidered", in the calibre and the knowledge of the participants. Before myths become history, let us hope that we can shed more light than heat this time at least.

Except for a brief visit in the fifties, I went to Vietnam almost exactly nineteen years ago - very junior by some standards, a real old-timer by others. Mine were what I call the Middle Years - the period between the Diem government overthrow and the build-up of American forces to a figure over one half-million in mid-1968. I might note parenthetically that the press corps in Saigon grew proportionately almost as much during the same years. I speak with intimate knowledge only of these years. For the others, my experience is that of an interested and involved observer but not of a first-hand participant. The distinction is important. Vietnam was many things in many periods. There are few generalities that apply to the whole period of American involvement and few lessons that are valid for the whole spectrum of our participation and experience.

This particular panel has been given the task of evaluating the quality of reporting - a judgment that must be just as complicated and inconclusive as the attempt to evaluate all the other major aspects of this most complicated and controversial of our nation's experiences in this country. One is tempted to respond to the question of whether the reporting in Vietnam was good, bad or in-between with the flip answer "all of the above." Such a response is probably closer to the truth than any flat, conclusive judgment.

Before turning to a more detailed answer, let us remind ourselves of some of the particular characteristics of the stage upon which the actors - the press, the U.S. government, the Vietnamese, Hanoi - operated. For these characteristics which made Vietnam so unique in many ways in our national experience certainly provided a significant influence on the response to the question put before this panel.

I suggest that these were elements of considerable importance in drawing up the answers:

- o Vietnam was the first open war in modern history - at least during the period I am talking about. Whatever the merits - and there is much dispute still about whether there should have been censorship or not - Vietnam was conducted without pre-censorship and with unprecedented access for the press to the war itself and to the people involved. The result was a goldfish bowl atmosphere that brought with it periodically a tendency on the part of the government to compensate.

- o And yet for all this openness and the huge corps of journalists usually in that country, I would remind you that Vietnam can accurately be described as a war half-covered. Sure, there was an occasional carefully controlled visit to Hanoi; sure, a Wilfred Burchett sometimes filed a dispatch supposedly from V.C. front lines. But the North Vietnamese and the V.C. hardly faced the scrutiny of dozens of probing, skeptical and critical journalists looking at every facet of their actions and communicating their findings in great and uncensored volume to a public at home.

- o Vietnam was also the first television war - the first complete exposure of all the horror and destruction of war to a mass audience in color in the comfort of the home. And while some specialists believe that television in the final analysis did not make a difference, certainly television news came to maturity in Vietnam - and its impact was considerable in intensifying conceptions and emotions.

- o Vietnam was our first experience with guerilla warfare - both the government's and the media's - complicated by a distant setting for which we had little knowledge and little empathy. The subtleties required for this war and for this setting were hardly in the American manner or experience. The clash was not only of men under arms but of cultures, concepts, outlooks, and, yes, even methods of communication to the world at large.

o Vietnam also developed in its early stages and continued to have throughout an element of not only the normal and desirable adversary relationship between government and press in our system but a degree of hostility and dispute that fed on itself and destroyed any prospect of mutually developed solutions to some of the problems of communication. The government was cast in the position that its word was automatically questioned until proven correct in contrast to the past when its word tended to be accepted unless proven otherwise. The word of the press seemed equally challenged in many segments of the electorate.

o Judgments made now about practices then should be based on the ground rules existing then. Vietnam came in the midst of a social revolution in the United States - whether cause or effect I leave to the social scientists. But the government's relations with the media were changing. Indeed, the government's relations with its electorate changed. Many of the problems between the government and the press grew out of these changing relationships.

o To generalize about virtually anything in Vietnam was most often misleading and frequently dangerous. The war extended through many phases and many administrations; the press - and throughout these comments I use the word to include audio-visual media as well - contained many outlets, many forms and many viewpoints. To talk about "the government" is as inaccurate as to talk about "the press." There was no monolithic institution or control in either category. But what comment I do make about "the press" in these remarks applies to the major media, the national media, certainly not to the dozens of "non-journalists" who were present.

Now having cautioned against the practice, let me proceed to try to answer in general terms the question that has been posed to us. But in doing so, let me set my own limitations: I speak of 1964-68; I speak of Vietnam; I speak of the coverage of South Vietnam and the operations, programs and actions there; I speak not of the Diem period or the post-Johnson administrations in the U.S., not of debate or dispute about the war in the United States, not of coverage of Hanoi, not as to whether we should or should not have been in Vietnam, not even of the morality of war.

It is not helpful in attempting to make judgments in this framework to say simply, as one distinguished journalist wrote in 1977, that "more often than not, and for far too long, what the press was getting from the government over the long, agonized, tormenting years of Vietnam...was trash." Nor to say on the other hand as another experienced journalist wrote in 1981 "But never before Vietnam had the collective policy of the media - no less stringent term will serve - sought by graphic and unremitting distortion the victory of the enemies of the correspondents own side." The truth as usual is much more difficult and complex and it should be our goal today to move a little closer to that truth so that we can learn for the future.

Here then are some bottom line responses to the question posed by our advisory group, based on the period and limitations I have stated:

- o More often than not, the press was more accurate in covering the situation in Vietnam than the official government public reports - at least up until Tet. And yet far too often at key points on critical issues, there were stories that contained inaccuracies, distortions and misinterpretations.

- o More often than not, the U.S. public was well served by the performance of the briefing authorities, military and civilian. And I base this judgment not just on the on-record briefings but also on the voluminous backgrounding and on the extended and constant access the media had to government sources. And again I say, this is not to mean that there were no flaws in the government's performance and no need for improvements.

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- o Far too infrequently, in fact virtually never, did reporters transmit accurately the policies and objectives of the National Liberation Front and the government of Hanoi.

o Were reporters "used"? What does that mean? Were they given information with the motive of seeing a particular story appear in print? Of course they were - by the government, by the critics, by the South Vietnamese, by the V.C., by Hanoi; and, by each other.

o As the number of U.S. troops increased, did the press switch from political analysis to an emphasis on battle coverage. No but the press did let its growing opposition and criticism of the war begin to show up in the nature and tilt of its coverage - not more often than nt but in far too many cases.

What are the lessons of all this? Certainly Vietnam was a failure in terms of government communication to its electorate. I would suggest that perhaps it was not an overwhelming success in terms of communication by the media either. How can the two sides do better in the future? The particular set of circumstances that appeared in Vietnam are not likely to be repeated elsewhere but there can certainly be situations that lend themselves to the same kind of problems of communication. If there are, let me suggest some principles that need to be observed. I regret that these may sound like they have been taken from a page of one of the School of Journalism's textbooks but they were violated sufficiently in Vietnam to require repetition.

For the government:

o Expect and anticipate an open war with full exposure to the media - to a pervasive, probing skeptical media. Censorship and control may be possible in a conventional type of war but it is not likely to be practical in the type of situation we faced in Vietnam. Remember that for better or worse, the open society which we have chosen puts a premium on the role of a free press. The American public has never accepted censorship of the press in war except for protection of tactical military information. It is not likely to do so in the future. The non-military stories and judgment which are what gave you the most grief in Vietnam are part of the ground rules that are likely to exist. Understand them, respect them and plan to operate with them in effect.

- o Develop a government doctrine in dealing with the press based on a concept of an independent press and as open a government as is possible. Make such a doctrine part of the training of your military and civilian officials - particularly the foreign service and the military officer corps.

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- o Develop a better method of collecting information on military operations to meet the needs of the press and, beyond it, of the electorate.

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- o Re-examine the current institutional characteristics of the media. The pressures of time, competitiveness, volume and dramatic impact distort and intensify coverage to a degree that obfuscates rather than informs or clarifies.

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- o And finally when you think you see everything clearly, when you feel you have all the answers, when everything makes sense, when you begin to speak in absolutes and feel you are the sole guardian of truth and morality, run, don't walk, to another country. The time for reassignment has come.

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Barry Zortnian
President, Time-Life Broadcast, Inc.
May 2, 1970

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Zorthian:

Well, I want you to let me finish commenting on this body count, then get back to the other aspect of your question. But body count grew out of a number of pressures, part of which, incidentally, was the press, demanding to know whether claimed casualties had been verified; literally asking whether an American officer had put a foot on each dead body. The Australians are known to have claimed that they did this, but what significance is there in a body count where your battle is really for political commitment; what significance is there in the other statistical yardsticks, the quantification of the war. We never could agree on the meaning of these things and the progress of the war. We never could agree on the application -- first, the selection, secondly, the significance of it -- and therefore progress in the war was always under dispute. Progress in the war was a matter of judgment. I felt something was moving ahead; someone else did not. Now to get back to your question on body count, certainly no one in his right mind would deny that very often the so-called body count was an estimate, a front-line military estimate. I think you will find that the record shows that in November of 1966, fairly late in the game, an official statement was put out saying body count does not mean what it would seem to imply, a literal count of bodies; it is at best a military guess.

Stern:

Barry, what are your feelings about the credibility gap -- having seen it from Vietnam and from the government side?

Zorthian:

My feelings are very complex because the issue is very complex, and I think there are reasons for the credibility gap; I am not quite as sure that they are traceable to Saigon or Vietnam as to the whole mood of the country and particularly to the administration in Washington. I don't say that in any partisan sense, but in the sense of the issues and LBJ's personality. We contributed, I am sure, in Vietnam. I would argue that there is an equal and parallel credibility gap on the part of the press, and this is frequently overlooked. I concede, as I say, the shortcomings of the government, would argue that the press itself had this parallel credibility gap, but then would add quickly that an assiduous, interested, energetic viewer-reader could have found out and known the facts about Vietnam if he had done enough work.

Now the real question is was whether the information comes out packaged in an available enough form so that any reasonable average person or one with more than average interest in international affairs could have obtained the information he should have to make a fairly intelligent judgment. That would be a little harder to argue. Simply because the volume was there, even though the total was there, for any single person it was difficult to find and to be easily, readily absorbable. I guess that would be the word "form." And so the individual American, as I say, the one who is interested, I suspect and I would argue, got much less than he should have and got almost obfuscation, not clarity about Vietnam.

Stern:

Is this because you think there is too much information and that this

information wasn't really being filtered out in any instantly recognizable form for the American mass audience?

Zorthian:

Well, I think there is too much information; again you have to go from the general to the specific. Vietnam, the high point in our press representation, was something like 600 correspondents right after Tet happened in 1968, the Tet Offensive. You really ask yourself the question, "Does this story, any story, justify that much coverage?" Now, again you have to get back to the individual: what did he get out of all that? And I have a feeling though he may have had a lot of volume he did not get a lot of clarity; and to distill what he got, get the nuggets out of it, was a task beyond the average person.

Stern:

Could you talk a little bit about the coverage of the Tet Offensive. For instance, the official military view was that the U.S. had won a great battle and that this was the turning point in the war, yet most of the reporting indicated that this was a massive defeat for the United States.

Zorthian:

The question you raise is valid, and your comments are fairly accurate; but it is an ideal case of talking at cross purposes. This was one of our problems in Vietnam: the impression that the military thought that it was a great victory grew out of a statement General Westmoreland made on the lawn of the U.S. Embassy on the morning of January 31, 1968, right after the Tet Offensive in which after a night of intense battle surrounded literally by dead V.C. and two or three dead Marines, he talked in

reference, and largely to the Marine Security Guard and to some Army that were brought in, saying: "You won a battle last night. You stopped penetration of the Embassy. You stopped the V.C. in its tracks." Now later he expanded on that. That was, if you will, a statement of the moment. And we did point out that of the 100 places the V.C. attacked that night or those two days, they were pushed back within 24 hours, most of them. They did stay, if you remember, in Hue for two or three weeks and in Saigon for a briefer time. In pure military terms, by the conventional military yardstick, the military statement is perfectly accurate. In terms of a psychological impact, in terms of a political impact, particularly in the U.S., the statement that it was a victory for the V.C. is perfectly accurate. We never could agree on what our common yardsticks were. The Tet offensive in a sense pulled LBJ down and led to the March 31 speech. You will find a story by Charles Mohr of the New York Times in the fall of 1968 which said the V.C. suffered a tremendous military defeat, but the word military becomes critical. And it was military by conventional yardsticks: loss of cadre, failure to achieve military objectives, failure to give the general uprising the outpouring of support which they anticipated. I don't know how you resolve this. As I say, first you have to decide what your yardsticks are, your measurement, and then use it and apply the situation to it, or apply those yardsticks to the situation. We never were in agreement on what the yardsticks were; and this applies generally to the war, indices of progress.

Stern:

What do you mean by yardsticks in terms of not falling into particular individualistic frameworks, like you were saying about the Tet offensive?

If it could only have been judged as a military action, perhaps it could have been treated somewhat differently in the press; but there was a psychological thing going on in this country. What are the yardsticks covering that kind of a story and putting it in the proper perspective in your view?

Zorthian:

Well, the question is a valid one; the answer just isn't that clear. Vietnam is not a territorial war. It's a war, if you will, essentially for the support of a population. This involves the thinking of people. It also involves their actions, but it doesn't involve an outlook. It involves a very mixed approach to physical control. There are villages which are under control of the government in part, the V.C. in part -- daytime, the government; night-time, the V.C.; so how do you measure progress in such a war. In a conventional war you move forward or you move backwards. In the morning you can tell whether you are ten miles ahead of where you were yesterday or whether you are ten miles behind. You can tell whether you are going ahead or going backwards, and this is the kind of war we have experienced. In a war of this type, as I say, the ultimate goal is support of the people, political commitment; and this is something that is not measurable, almost by definition; so in order to look for some indices, some measurement of movement, we come up with substitutes; and these substitutes are developed for a whole variety of reasons. You can argue the validity of them, but eventually emerged in Vietnam such things as casualties; that horrible phrase, body count; incidents; psychological operations.

Stern:

Just on the issue of body counts, for instance, there was a great credibility gap there. CBS had a story at one time about a sergeant who almost frankly admitted that body count was sort of half made up and that patrols would go out at night and stumble over bodies and count bodies that way. How do you handle that kind of a story?

We still have this problem here: that on the network news shows, Thursdays became sort of the box score days, where we would see the casualties. There was never any hedging or explanation that this was the estimated count.

Zorthian:

It was unfortunate that it came out that way, but there were reasons for that as well. The body count as it was given in Saigon was simply a compilation of reports from the field. The first estimate would be made at the platoon level; and from there upward whatever was added would be an addition -- the battalion might have had some casualties of its own. By the time you reached regiment and division it was strictly an adding machine operation; and MACV would argue with some validity: why should we change those figures and round them off; this is what our field units have reported; we are trying to be accurate; let's report to the press exactly the information we got.

Stern:

And for that reason you got the precise figures?

Zorthian:

This again was part of our problem in Vietnam: that people would get

bogged down on an issue like that; the question was not: was it 12,015 casualties that month? It is the order of magnitude. They were roughly accurate, and I would point out that even the worst critics of these specific numbers of the body counts believed in general terms that they were accurate. Arnett Peter of the Associated Press, for instance, conceded in writing that they were essentially accurate and in fact that they might have been understated. I would also note to you that Giap told Oriana Fallachi of the Italian paper Europea, hardly a friend of the United States, that the American casualty claims were essentially accurate.

Stern:

Which story or television report made you the angriest?

Zorthian:

I would hate to point to any specific one that made me angriest, simply because I don't think there was any such one. There were a number of controversial ones. One was Morley Shaffer's comments on the burning of the hut in August 1965 which raised such a rumpus. I never was angry at Morley about it. I think he did -- distort would be the wrong word for that -- but I think he did give an imbalanced commentary. There were some others, some of the Tet offensive pieces were inaccurate in a sense.

Stern:

Do you want to talk a little bit about Shaffer's piece?

Zorthian:

Well, there is not much to say about it. A great many of these stories had a greater impact because of the particular timings. They came at

a time in the American experience in Vietnam when we suddenly discovered we were in a war, that bad things were happening, that war means death and destruction; and it happened to hit the U.S. at the moment when it had a greater than normal anticipated impact. The film, incidentally, was not that unique; NBC had more or less the same film the same night. Morley's commentary, here I think I would argue as being somewhat unfair, implied that burning of thatched roofs of huts was a deliberate policy of the command, that this was normal American practice; and this was what raised the great outcry. And this is what I say when I say that Morley was essentially inaccurate. He would, I am sure, argue otherwise. But certainly, as a command policy, we never adopted anything quite that destructive. The NBC commentary was more moderate, more reporterial, and had much less reaction to it. Now I don't hold Morley to blame for that; Morley is a personal friend. He is a first rate reporter. I think that he is a man with great sensitivity and feeling; and I think a reporter of his type has to be extra careful to put his sentiments aside, to put his humanness aside and attempt to be objective. Morley did many, many good things. In a war of this nature we are going to get this sort of thing ever so often, and perhaps it is healthy that we do.

Stern:

How can you report a war like the Vietnamese war totally objectively?

Zorthian:

I don't think it is possible to be totally objective. I think you work at it. Let's take one extreme. The New Yorker ran a long, long piece by a man named Jonathan Schell, which eventually came out as "The Village of Ben Sue," a perfectly legitimate type of story to use. Now the New

Yorker forgot to tell its readers that Jonathan Schell is a confirmed pacifist. Now obviously, it is perfectly proper to be a pacifist, but it is an essential part of reading that story to know that the observer is a pacifist and sees that whole story through pacifist eyes. Now I don't expect him to be objective, but I want to know what his prejudices are; and this is where I think the letdown came. I think that when AP runs a story or CBS runs a story, they are claiming by implication that this story is being presented with fairness and objectivity. If they want to say otherwise, that is perfectly fine; only I would like to be told this is a commentary, this is a correspondent who feels so and so, he is partisan in this sense, he has this preconception, and this is the way that he has written this story. While objectivity is difficult, I think it has to be tried for; fairness perhaps is a more favorite word in the press today. And if it is being completely disregarded, I think it is the ball game, but we ought to be forewarned about it.

Stern:

What kind of communications did you receive from the White House in regards to Vietnam?

Zorthian:

Clearly, very few directly. Quite often, obviously, questions being raised: how accurate is this story, who ~~has~~ talked out of turn, this contradicts what we are receiving in official reports, please check up on so and so. And this is perfectly natural. I don't see anything insidious in this. I am in a business corporation; and if we find out or hear some-

thing isn't going too well, certainly we call back our field manager and ask him what the accurate version is.

Stern:

Mr. Zorthian, you say that nobody was able to give the American public a sort of overall analysis of this war, what is really going on. Why do you think there was this lack of an overview on the part of the military or the press?

Zorthian:

Well, I hope I didn't say that because I didn't mean to if I did; and I would withdraw it. I think there were some excellent observers out there who gave a good, accurate, and may I use the word, balanced, balanced in the sense that it was a comprehensive review and knowledgeable review of this war, although they had very strong opinions. On the other hand, the thrust of your question, the implication is that the American reader-viewer, even the interested ones, did not get very often an overall knowledgeable, penetrating evaluation of the war. One of the reasons I think is that the war is such a complex war, an involved one, that it was difficult for anyone to handle it. It was, in a sense, the proverbial blind man seeing the elephant; and it was very hard to see that elephant even if you weren't blind. I'm not sure any of those pieces all fit together, whether the individual American has the patience to try to absorb them all. As I say, if you work at it energetically and intelligently and continually, you would be able to obtain the whole picture; but it was very difficult to do so without that kind of an effort. This was true also of correspondents who would go out and touch one aspect of the war and be off and away. I have a particular

objection to obvious three day wonders who used to come out and cover the war in a quick 72 hours. But I would hope that one of the techniques, one of the problems we have with journalism is to devise ways in which stories as complex as this can be presented intelligently and in a layman's terms so that it can be absorbed by enough people to create that goal we all have of an enlightened public.

Stern:

Thank you.

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

Address by
Barry Zorthian
at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C.
12:30 p.m., Friday, October 4, 1968

"A View of Vietnam and the Press"

When Peter Edson called to invite me to appear before you, I confess I accepted with some enthusiasm. I had been away from Saigon for more than two months and frankly, I was beginning to miss an audience and specifically was homesick for - I think the accepted description is - a stimulating session with the press.

Since then, the full significance of my commitment has begun to dawn on me. For a government press officer to enter this Basilica of the Profession and talk about the Press in Vietnam is somewhat akin to the quarry reversing direction and entering the lion's den to discuss the well-being of the occupants. There is no assurance he will emerge in one piece.

Just the other day, a leading television executive told an audience "It is the business of the press to tell the government how to run its business. It is not the business of the government to tell the press how to run itself." In view of past reaction on the part of the press to unsolicited advice from outsiders, this is probably sound counsel. So for the sake of prudence and the record, let me discard whatever government mantle I have, even though I may use the editorial

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"we" in referring to the government, and speak to you instead on a personal basis as a friend and associate who shared with your colleagues in Vietnam for over four years what has been perhaps the most difficult task of communication we have faced as a society in the post World War II era -- the task of communicating that complex, frustrating, perplexing part of our national experience known as the war in Vietnam.

I would like to examine with you today the question of how well we, the press and the government, performed that task. I speak of course only on the basis of my own service in Vietnam and my use of the past tense today reflects this context rather than any lack of awareness that the Vietnam story is still very current.

In many ways Vietnam was the supreme test of our abilities. That public opinion was a critical factor in the course of the war is stating the obvious. An analysis of the formation of that opinion would involve many ingredients and we may have to wait for historians to measure the interplay of various factors from the perspective of time. But, at the least, the information reaching the public from Vietnam was a significant factor. And it is not too early for us to look at the record, to note the problems and to seek solutions in order to apply any lessons that we may learn to the tasks of communication in the future.

Certainly in Vietnam, we had the opportunity and the means to demonstrate our competence. The communications revolution of the past two decades has given us the technical capability. In Vietnam, our government had unprecedented access to the media and the press had unprecedented freedom of movement and coverage. There remains the question of how well we met our responsibilities

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on the substance of the message.

I use the word "communication" -- a somewhat inadequate term -- to include the task of both the government and the press. For I am convinced that on issues of national affairs, we have a joint and parallel responsibility for communication with the public: the government out of its obligation to inform the electorate; the press in its capacity as the watchdog of the government in behalf of the people. Almost by definition, the government and the press are natural adversaries; but if our relations must have conflict, they need not be hostile and at best should be founded on mutual respect. Our relationship would also be healthy and beneficial if we could engage in constructive dialogue on our problems -- without self-righteousness, without recrimination, without undue sensitivity, all admirable qualities which too often have been absent in our exchanges in the past.

These are lofty sentiments -- perhaps they smack too much of theory and cannot exist in the world of reality. Nevertheless, I like to think that at least a start was made along this road in Vietnam. That the government and the press had differences there is hardly news. And that there were periods of hostility between the two is not a startling revelation. But I would submit that eventually, we eliminated most of the hostility - and while we still had very real differences in outlook, in evaluation and in judgment, we also had dialogue: hours and hours of dialogue at many levels and in many settings. The substance of that dialogue was most often the war itself -- its conduct and status. The intensity of those discussions and the preoccupation with our task at hand must have reached the

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stage of boredom for many of you who visited Saigon. I remember the plea repeated so often by visiting firemen "Don't you want to hear about...?" and the rude "NO" in response as we returned to the subject of Vietnam with renewed passion. As a debate went on, perhaps the atmosphere that was generated is best reflected in what came to be the preliminary to any assertion of opinion: "Now let me finish my blanketey blank sentence before you disagree with me." Of course, no one paid the slightest heed and I am not sure I ever finished a sentence. Against this background, need I add that today's opportunity for an uninterrupted monologue is doubly welcome.

Those discussions inevitably also turned to shop talk - to the question I posed earlier, to the performance of the government and the performance of the press. And, out of the heat of those discussions came an awareness of the problems that faced us both.

Insofar as the government's performance is concerned, I hope you will forgive me the understatement of simply recording that the government was not usually treated gently in those exchanges. I suppose I am one of the few men alive who can claim the equivalent of a four-year college course in the infinite variations of the use of the word "deception." However, my purpose today is not to defend the government's performance nor even to rehash it with you. Your evaluation of that has been thorough and blunt, as it should be, - and I might add not without effect. For while I am not prepared to accept all your criticisms as having been justified, I would also concede that the government profited from the exchange and sought to make adjustments in response to your criticisms. The results were not always completely to your satisfaction although

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some correspondents on occasion would confide that we were doing all right - after checking to make sure that they were out of earshot of their colleagues.

Rather than pursue further this particular aspect of the problem, let us agree today that the performance of the government must be improved and that we need to develop more effective means of communicating with the electorate as well as with people of other nations.

Let us turn to the other half of the problem. The Vietnamese say "The tongue has no bones. It can be twisted in any direction." What was the direction of the press? In seeking to respond, I make no claims to definitive judgment or that my particular presentation represents the views of your colleagues in the field - though I would note that the more thoughtful ones were as relentless in probing the problems of the press as those of the government. The difficulty in giving an unequivocal answer to the question I have posed is the same consideration that applied to almost everything else in Vietnam. There were very few blacks or whites. There were instead shadings of gray and a judgement as to the particular degree of gray depended on the outlook of the individual - and that in turn on his vantage point, his experience, his preconceptions. Judgments by me may be affected by the nature of my work in Vietnam and recognizing this, let me resort to my claim of friend and associate and attempt only to identify areas that at least deserve analysis for any comprehensive evaluation of the performance of the press in Vietnam.

The first major point to make in this attempt is that generalization about the press in Vietnam was as treacherous as generalization about virtually every other aspect of the situation. There was always an exception, a "yes, but".

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During most of the past few years, there were anywhere from one hundred to three hundred working journalists on hand at any given time together with supporting cameramen, technicians and assistants -- though my first daily briefing in my office in September of 1964, the start of that institution that eventually came to be known so widely as the "Five O'clock Follies" that even government press officers began using the label, catered to less than fifteen correspondents. Over the years, about two thousand different individuals were accredited and, including second and third and fourth visits by many of these, about four thousand accreditations were registered. These correspondents covered the full spectrum of competence -- from many of the best journalists available, to those for whom the label was only a thin camouflage for partisan evaluation, to the inevitable adventurers who had somehow obtained the necessary letter of endorsement. To lump all these into a single group labelled the "press" is obviously unwarranted and misleading and my observations today refer only to legitimate correspondents, not those whom I would describe as "non-journalists".

The second major point is that any evaluation of the press in Vietnam must recognize and pay tribute to that part of the record which was in keeping with the best traditions of a free press. The score of journalists who gave their lives in Vietnam attests to the degree of raw personal courage displayed by many of your colleagues. The professional recognition you have given the work of many reflects the high degree of their competence and integrity. Let there be no doubt that whatever the discomfort on occasion for officials, the press in Vietnam played its historic and proper role: the zealous judge of the government's performance, the independent interpreter of events. It did so under trying circumstances in which every facet of professional skill was necessary. The

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general assignment reporter in Vietnam had to be a journalist for all seasons - a combat reporter, a political analyst, a sociologist, an economist, an investigator. He faced the most complicated of assignments - the reporting of a so-called people's war that was alien to all previous American experience. As the response by many of your colleagues to this challenge was distinguished.

The third major point is that the record revealed problems and raised questions - problems and questions which grew out of the situation itself, and the nature of our system of journalism as it is practiced today.

Perhaps the most complex of these problems was the question of qualification of correspondents for this new form of war -- an insurgency war with its compound of military, political, social and psychological elements. There were a significant number of highly qualified journalists in Vietnam -- men who have been covering Asia for years; men who had sufficient professional experience to perform competently in any situation; men who prepared conscientiously for the task. But there were also many whose qualifications at best were doubtful. Qualification is not a matter of age or even of desire. It is a question of outlook, experience, knowledge, perspective. And the war in Vietnam required more than most a knowledge of the history, culture, politics and circumstances of the people. There is a cultural adjustment involved in going overseas for the first time, particularly to Asia. There is a personal shock effect in coming face to face with war for the first time. These can affect the nature and tone of reporting -- and the only way to reduce their impact at all is to prepare in advance. Perhaps few reporters would have responded as one did to my question as to whether he had read a single book about Vietnam before his assignment

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with the answer: "No, I didn't want to clutter up my mind." Or one who interrupted a military briefing to ask "What is a battalion?" If these cases are not representative, are they essentially different from asking, as editors did so often, for a definitive interpretation on the first or second day after arrival in Vietnam from a correspondent who has been plucked out of a domestic assignment with little warning and plunked down in Vietnam twenty-six hours later?

The problem was not unique to the press. The government faced the same question but, though we did not solve it completely, literally thousands of officers, both civilian and military, received training in Vietnamese history, culture and language for periods ranging from a few weeks to a full year before taking up their assignments.

Corollary to this problem of qualification was the problem of turnover. Again, there were notable exceptions and again the problem existed for the government as well but it seemed to be particularly severe in the case of the press. Correspondents are not born with experience and a period of training and acclimation is to be expected -- and was unavoidable in the case of Vietnam in view of the shortage of Vietnam specialists when the war began. Furthermore, war coverage is a young man's game though I might note that a number of veterans of World War II covered Vietnam with considerable distinction. But granting all this, does it make sense to transfer a correspondent quite so often after he finally gets that experience? I have admiration and respect for those correspondents who have stayed with it through these many long years but they are a relatively small group. Six month tours for "resident" correspondents and one and two week tours for transients were hardly exceptional. Just the number of

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accreditations alone indicates some measure of the extent of the problem. You would find it hard to believe the number of times we received cables that I finally concluded were a standard form provided by Western Union. The text would read: "Arriving Saigon Thursday morning PanAm Flight One. Please meet and arrange appointments with Bunker, Westmoreland, Komer, Thieu, and Ky. Also representative Vietnamese. Request travel Danang for interview Walt, Pleiku for quick review Montagnard situation and Delta where hope to see Vann. Also interested meeting with Gen. Thang and Major Be if time permits. Keep Sunday clear since I must file before departure early afternoon that day." And you know, sometimes they did it all. Vietnam must seem like something viewed through the window of a fast-moving train to these instant experts.

I am not troubled by the question of whether qualification or length of service in Vietnam resulted in criticism or support of the war; I am troubled by the question of the validity of the reporting when these are not present.

Another related problem was the one of sources. Few American correspondents knew Vietnamese; not too many knew French; and yet many of the most worthwhile sources in Vietnam were comfortable only in those languages. What limitations did this lack of language place on a correspondent in obtaining and evaluating sources? How much did he depend on other correspondents rather than undertake independent inquiry? How much was he a captive of his Vietnamese assistant or interpreter -- and what were his sources, qualifications and prejudices? What motivated the Vietnamese who sought out the journalist with information and interpretation? How much did the established Vietnamese source now respond out of habit with outdated comment on the general situation because

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he had come to believe the correspondents wanted to hear it that way? Certainly, the official American position should be questioned carefully and providing public exposure for the dissenter is an honorable tradition in journalism but what were the motives and qualifications of the critic in the official structure? These are questions that must be faced and answered by a competent journalist in any involved story, particularly overseas, but in Vietnam, the problems were more complex and the judgments harder to make.

Standards and definitions were also a source of difficulty. What yardsticks were used to measure Vietnamese society? Western concepts and standards or measurements that were relevant and realistic in an Asian country in the midst of war and transition from a traditional society to a modern state? Even if we needed reference to our own standards to make coverage meaningful to an American audience, were we applying these standards as they exist in fact or as they are stated in textbooks? Why should we measure -- as some correspondents did -- the Vietnamese elections of a year ago against standards more demanding than "any election held in the United States"? We've been at it almost two hundred years; they, just a handful.

How were we to measure the war itself -- this most complicated of all wars where the people rather than territory was the objective? The use of statistics had severe shortcomings but was there a better yardstick or were we to depend on the divining rod of each individual? How valid in Vietnam was the normal practice of generalization based on the particular, of measuring the thousand by examining the few? And how did you evaluate the attitude of people in a

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country where sophisticated research techniques were limited at best and most interviews were suspect because the person being questioned assumed the inquiry was sponsored by the government and responded accordingly. I suppose the extreme example in this context was one correspondent who loudly proclaimed within twenty-four hours after his arrival in Saigon: "Hell, I know what the Vietnamese think. As a matter of fact, I talked to two of them today." Not quite. Not even when interviewed by both Gallup and Harris.

I don't think we ever agreed on definitions of relative words in Vietnam. Perhaps it was not possible to do so -- and expect the audience to have the same definition as well. But certainly the meaning of relative words represented a problem area. What was the meaning of progress in this unconventional war? What did the government mean and what did the press mean when it used the term? What was victory and corruption and democracy and stability and military capability -- in Asia and in a war of this nature? Were we talking about the same benchmarks or were we talking across each other?

Consider the problem of fairness -- not objectivity because that word is in journalistic disfavor today. Accepting the new standard, there was still a question of definition. Fairness as determined by whom and in terms of what attitude? What was the fine line between reporting and advocacy -- and had the line shifted? Was it "fair" to send a confirmed pacifist to cover a war -- and not inform the reader of his viewpoint? And how often in a situation where apparent proof of almost any interpretation was available, did the correspondents -- or his editor -- simply seek confirmation of preconceptions or protection of prior judgments? What was the price paid in terms of fairness by the Vietnamese

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government for its lack of experience and its shortage of facilities and qualified personnel in dealing with several hundred correspondents representing twenty or thirty nations while not a single correspondent from any country -- including the Communist states -- had unrestricted access to the other side during the entire war?

And finally, the institutional characteristics of modern journalism. What were the results of competitive pressure on correspondents? Did that rocket from the home office lead to more emphasis on the eye-catching, dramatic version that would outdo the competition than the niceties of complete accuracy? I am aware of the essential nature of journalism but I am also mindful of Heywood Broun's admonition that "there is no deadline for truth." Did the presence of so many lead the individual to try to justify his presence to his editor and audience by overreaching for the story that would distinguish him from his colleagues? How often was a story kept alive beyond its intrinsic value in order to satisfy the demand for more copy?

What was the effect of the volume of coverage of the war? That it was enormous is unchallenged. But did this volume contribute to clarity and comprehension for the reader or to confusion? How much of it was he able to absorb or did he ultimately just become dazed? The test is not the weight of the product but its value.

Have we learned to handle television -- or better phrased, has television learned to handle war and particularly this type of war? There is no question about the impact of the medium. But what was the cost in comprehension for the audience when the medium brought combat in vivid color into the family

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living room every day but because of its nature was unable to provide the same drama for the intangible or the humdrum that may have been more meaningful in the long run?

These are troublesome problems. Many are common to complex stories anywhere but some are unique to Vietnam and all were intensified there. I present them in some detail because I think that for you, as for the government, the problems demand more attention than the successes.

They do not constitute an indictment of the press nor does the posing of them necessarily imply conclusions that are critical. They do however represent areas which deserve frank recognition and searching examination for the lessons they contain and the guideposts they can provide for the future.

Let me add a footnote here. About two weeks ago, I gave a talk to the "other house" - the Overseas Press Club - in which I raised some of these same points. Within a few days, I received a tear sheet from the Saigon Daily News with a bold front page headline "Zorthian Hits U.S. Press" and a cartoon showing what purported to be a likeness of me holding my nose at the scent of a flower labeled "The U.S. and International Press". I hope today's exercise does not produce a similar result, for my intent is neither condemnation nor provocation but rather stimulation of your own analysis of these questions.

Certainly, I present no sweeping conclusions or easy solutions, though I suggest that some of the established practices of the press may be dated for the world of today and that a story as complex as Vietnam may require the development of new techniques and new self-discipline if only to reduce the scope of the problems. I also recognize that there are no magic formulas to

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some of these problems and that in the final analysis, the answer will have to be what it has been historically - reliance on the judgement of a competent professional journalist. The real challenge then becomes the training of sufficient journalists - and editors - to satisfy the requirements of the press in this age of instant communication.

Whatever the answers, one thing is clear. Friends and associates can only pose the problems. The solutions can come only from you, your editors and your publishers. I have not forgotten the advice I accepted earlier; it is not the business of government to tell the press how to run itself, but I suggest that it is the urgent business of the press to turn its well-developed powers of analysis on itself.

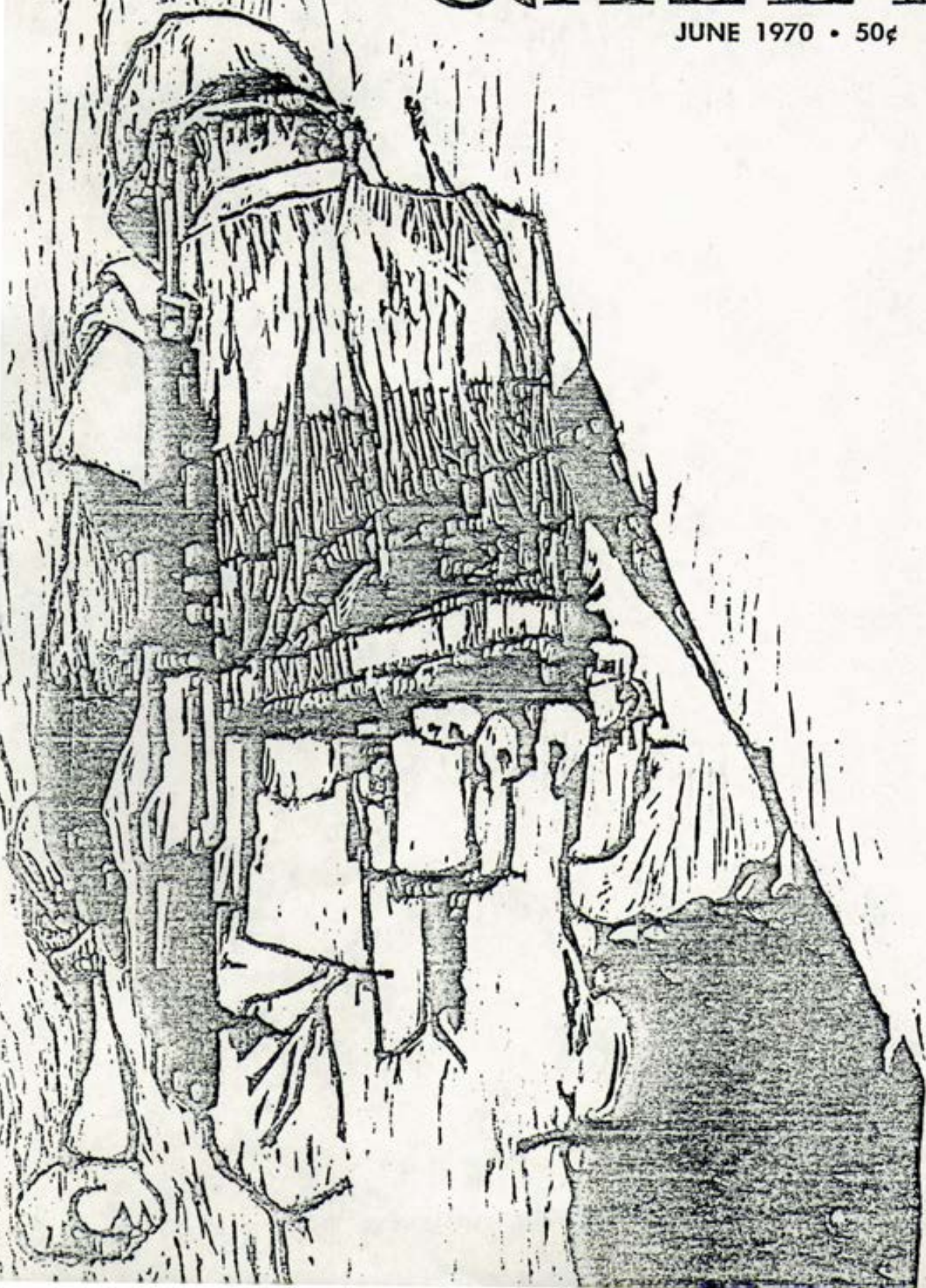
For what is involved is not only the standards of your profession but in the long run, the confidence of your readers and listeners.

Gentlemen, I have finished that interrupted sentence of mine and now it is your turn.

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MARINE CORPS GAZETTE

JUNE 1970 • 50¢



Press relations is an art that rejects a precise formula, but consideration of certain ground rules can make the often difficult task more effective.

EFFECTIVE PRESS RELATIONS

Col Zorthian's article is a moderately revised transcript of a speech he made to students at the Command and Staff College on 21 Jan 1970. Col Eugene H. Haffey, Director, C&SC, suggested that the lecture would be meaningful for all Marine Corps officers.

By Col Barry Zorthian, USMCR

AS a former Marine it's good to get back to Quantico. I am especially pleased to share the next hour with you talking about a subject of vital importance to Marines: the broad field of public communication—or, more precisely, press relations.

If there is a new dimension that you as commanders and staff officers must face up to in 1970, it is the dimension of communication—not as an additional duty or something to be done in spare moments, but as an integral part of your military duties. Whether you find it agreeable or not, the fact is with you and must



Col Zorthian, a Vice President of Time Incorporated and President of Time-Life Broadcast, Inc., served in the Government for 20 years. During his Government service, he served for 13 years with the Voice of America and 7 years overseas with the USIS in India and Vietnam. In the latter capacity, he was responsible for the coordination and direction of the Mission's press relations in behalf of the Ambassador. He served with the 1st Marine Division during WWII and is still active in the Reserves.

be accepted as an area that must receive your attention.

The temptation is for us to have a nice bull session criticizing the character and nature of the press and then leave early for the club feeling that we've put in a good day's work. Let me resist that, not because I'm here as a defender of the press but simply because I think that there's not much mileage to be gained in this setting by dwelling on the shortcomings of the press. If you ask whether the press has many faults, the answer is yes, it does. But let's put the performance of the press aside for the moment and look instead at the government's performance. Under that broad heading, I want to focus in particular on the performance of the military services and the Foreign Service in the context of Vietnam.

Vietnam represents what may be the most intense point of confrontation in recent years, perhaps in all times, between the government and the press. Consider the role of each in filing reports to the home front, the impact of one on the other, the effects of this interaction on the American public and, consequently, on national policy. These phenomena are going to occupy the attention of sociologists, historians, politicians and, I hope, military career officers for a long, long time—as indeed they should, for the lessons and guidelines they can give us for the future. I want to contribute to that exercise, to distill a few of what I think are the lessons of Vietnam in dealing with the press and suggest them to you perhaps as a starting point for future dialogue and analysis on your own part.

I think it may be well when considering the role of the government in this field of communication to step back a bit in order to attain some perspective in constitutional terms. My purpose is not to give you a course in civics. But I do think that in all the heat and fury of today about the press, its role and its performance, the constitutional aspect (the constitutional concept, if you will) is often forgotten. Our concept of government is based

in part on a free press. It is an essential, integral part of the system of government that we have chosen. The press has a role to play in that system in behalf of the public as a monitor, as a guardian, as an independent judge of the performance of the government. This is a constitutional rule, but too often, I'm afraid, it is not really understood or accepted.

The press' role in our society is one of independence. It is not a handmaiden of government, so to speak. The press does not have the duty to create or contribute support to an administration or to any of the administration's policies. Its role is one of the critic, one of passing judgment. It is perfectly within the responsibilities of the press to pass judgment on the facts—on whether the facts are accurate, on whether they're complete, on whether we in the government—military and civilian—have enough facts at hand.

Secondly, it is the press' responsibility—its constitutional responsibility—to judge also the evaluation of those facts and the decisions and policies reached by those in government.

At its best, the press performs its constitutional role in a responsible, intelligent, positive sense. At its worst, it does it irresponsibly, with all the possible drawbacks and flaws that we're all too aware of. But I suggest that essential to any discussion of the problem is an acceptance of this concept of the role of the press in our society. It becomes particularly important in your case as career military officers and in my former role as a Foreign Service officer to be aware of this, because we do live a somewhat insulated life, a life detached from the normal mainstream of American society, especially when we serve overseas. And the press ends up becoming an inconvenience, an intrusion, a critic who isn't welcome.

An acceptance of the constitutional concept becomes doubly important when you consider that it's still possible today for an individual to become an ambassador or a general without ever having developed a sense for press relations, public affairs or communicating, and without ever really having had any training in it. This type of public relations course in a command and staff school is excellent, but it is also fairly new. One of the tasks facing Uncle Sam is the development of a press doctrine. It should be as much a part of the training of career officers as tactics in the military case and as political reporting in the case of foreign service.

The press media are going to be with us more, not less. We live in a world of instant communication. The flow of information to the public is just enormous. It's gone up several fold. I don't know how you'd measure it mathematical-

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ly, but certainly what we and our children are getting is much, much more than even 10 years ago.

The average American today watches television for five hours a day, and of that a certain amount is news, public affairs, and so on. How long ago would you have accepted the thought that a man would walk on the moon and be watched simultaneously by 600 million people while he's doing it? Five short years ago, 10 years ago, if you'd made a statement like that, you would have been taken for a visionary. Such things could never happen!

Our capability in communicating is pervasive. It's become a much greater element in our lives. Our substantive ability has not improved equivalently; and yet, if we are to meet our present responsibilities, that ability must improve. Here, too, I suggest that we look beyond the immediate problems, frustrations and annoyances of the press and look at what is the ultimate target: the public—hopefully, an enlightened, informed public. Again, if we believe in our basic concepts of society, our government rests ultimately on public opinion. Our need, then, is for a more enlightened, better informed, more intelligent general public that will reach better judgments or at least as good judgments as possible. The channel to the public is the press. And in dealing with the questions that I'm raising, it would be well to remember that the press is only a channel, not an end in itself.

If we can start off on the basis of these few points, there are a few principles (or commandments, as I like to call them) that should be observed in dealing with the press and in becoming more effective in communicating. Number one is this basic point that I have tried to put across: respect for the role of the press; acceptance and understanding of the role of the press.

Secondly, in today's world a degree of sophistication, or candor, is necessary. The rhetoric of my generation, of World War II, is no longer good enough. In the mood of our society today, the "establishment," the institution, is under question and is being analyzed, and in the proper spirit this is a healthy process. A gap between words and fact—a reliance on rhetoric—is simply not adequate for this kind of a situation. I think that too often on the government side our approach to the press has been disingenuous; if not deceptive, at least misleading. This is not right in principle. You simply cannot get away with a gap between reality and your articulation of it. So the sophistication of the day—this irreverent, questioning, skeptical mood of the day—has to be taken into account and

accepted as a fact of life. The issue is not really whether it's good or not; the issue is that it's there.

Let's try to put into perspective, also, the role of the public affairs officer. He is a staff officer; and, while I don't claim to present Marine Corps doctrine in this area, as a staff officer he should be used. I argue that the public affairs officer should participate in the policy-making process just as much as the G-3 or any other member of the staff.

The element of "public impact" is a factor to be taken into account in making a decision. It need not be a dominant factor, and there are many times when it will not be. But it is certainly not one that should be ignored. Very often, as many of you are aware, the ground rules under which we fought the war in Vietnam were affected by public opinion or the anticipation of public opinion.

The public affairs officer, then, should be taking part in the decision-making process and contributing his element, his dimension of the command function, to your over-all judgment. Furthermore, I suggest that he not be held to account, as is so often the case, for the failures—that is, for the negative stories. I've had a very, very knowledgeable ambassador tell me that the trouble with the Foreign Service is that it thinks it has to win all the press issues. It has to hit 100 per cent, and if it doesn't it's very disappointed. Again, it is the type of thing that's hard to measure. But if you do better than 50 per cent, you're doing well; and if you're getting 60 to 70 per cent on your side, just count your blessings and let it go at that.

The mood, the tone, the skepticism of the day almost ensures that you're going to lose a few. What a public affairs officer can do and what you do with his help and staff counsel is perhaps blunt the harm in a damaging story, making it less bad than it might be otherwise. I think that if you achieve that, you ought to be satisfied. A bad story is a bad story, and it's going to end up as such. The facts of life are not going to be changed. You can, perhaps, put it into perspective. You can, perhaps, blunt the negative impact by the way you handle it, the approach you take, and the attitude you show.

I said you can blunt and provide perspective; and I get to a next major point, which is education of the press. That sounds a bit patronizing, but it isn't meant to be.

When the press is filling its role properly, it is anxious to have information and facts as the basis for a judgment. You can help considerably in that regard by ensuring that the judgment exercised by the representative of the press is as knowledgeable as possible, by giving him the information you can subject to considerations of national and military security. To

There is a sharp distinction between information and publicity.

provide the press with the information at hand together with your evaluation of the information is part of a necessary exercise on your part to educate and inform the press. This important principle is shown, obviously, in the various techniques used in dealing with the press—in backgrounding, in giving the press access to military expertise, and in providing all of the facts and information collected. The press is going to file its dispatches. Far better it does so, even if it ends up critically, based on accurate information than done in a vacuum or on only partial information.

Let me suggest, also, that a very sharp distinction be drawn between information and publicity. A post newspaper, an instrument of command, is essentially publicity. Information from the viewpoint of the press is quite different. The press is not there not only just not to be a handmaiden, but it is not there simply to accept releases and file them without question or without further examination. One of the headaches we used to face in Vietnam was that too many of our press officers, both military and civilian, had been plucked out of post PAO jobs where they had been involved really only in publicity (they knew the story they were writing was going to get into that post newspaper) and plunked down in the middle of the hottest, most controversial, most complex story in the world today and asked to do a real information job, a press job. The distinction is a real one. It is one I think you have to bear in mind; and it is one, certainly, that the press is aware of. When you hear the press criticizing the pap, the propaganda, the government releases, what they're really criticizing most often is the government's efforts at publicity. There are some incorrigibles who criticize even the information side. But I haven't heard any really responsible correspondents complain about the provision of information to them. Obviously, most of them would welcome it.

Finally, I'd suggest as part of press doctrine that we look at the press as an opportunity. I think there is a difference in approaching the press within a framework of positive, constructive thinking rather than as a chore, a frustration, or perhaps the last choice beyond jumping into a pit of vipers. Too often our senior commanders in Vietnam, both military and civilian, failed with the press. As a result they failed with the American public and failed to support U.S. policy by actively disliking the press and by approaching the press in terms of hostility, whatever the justification. (There was a good deal of justification. I assure you that some

of these gray hairs I attribute to my friends of the press.) Nevertheless, if you put aside the individual behavior of certain correspondents and look at them as a channel, as the means to an end—and the end is an enlightened public affecting decisions on great issues in our society—if you look at the press along these lines despite the temporary annoyances and frustrations, their reaction to you might be a little more positive. Because while all of the things I say sound fine in theory, they do develop and take effect and are applied by human beings; and the element of human relations in press relations is very important. To be respected as a human being by the press is an important part of it. While you can't change your personality to fit a certain mold, you can help influence these human relations by your own attitude.

And let me suggest that in this spirit of going half way and achieving a better rapport, you learn something about the tribal customs and mores of the press; that you understand something about how and why a correspondent functions. Just as you want him to know something about your business, so he will respond better if you understand something about his.

Here is a list of a few ground rules that I referred to earlier as "commandments":

No lying to the press. While that isn't very often done, I do say deception, deliberate or otherwise, has happened often enough. Being disingenuous, not providing all the facts—there should be no deception today. One of the aspects of Vietnam that will someday get a great deal of examination is the "goldfish bowl" aspect, the fact that everything was public. We not only had no censorship, I'm not sure we had much security. There were an awful lot of papers labeled "top secret" and so on, but there was very little going on in the country that the press or even the Vietnamese public didn't catch up with eventually. It's much better to get out the full picture accurately as you know it rather than be cute and coy and hold back part of it because you think it's negative and will affect the impression you want to leave.

Restrict security to an absolute minimum. Military security and national security have been used as a crutch too often for papering over just distasteful, negative situations. Hold security to an absolute minimum. If it's not justified, it won't last very long; it won't be respected very long. In terms of military security in Vietnam in the four years I was there, we only had four correspondents who violated the self-imposed ground rules on military censorship badly enough to have their credentials lifted. Out of 2,000 correspondents with as wide a range as you can get in terms of

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quality and attitude, that's a pretty good record. Legitimate military security is not going to be violated by any journalist worth his salt. But if he thinks you are using that as an excuse for other purposes, your so-called security just won't last five minutes.

Establish ground rules in dealing with the press clearly and without any misunderstandings. Be clear and then be firm on whatever the ground rules are. Too often someone has talked indiscreetly, thinking he was "background," the correspondent thinking he was "on the record." Again, legitimate, responsible correspondents will accept ground rules. These are tools of the trade. They should be learned and they should be stated clearly without any embarrassment or hesitation. We just had occasion to talk to the Commandant about something this morning. He said, "This is a subject I cannot speak about." Fine. Period. This is all you need. What is not right is, "You cannot use this" or "You can use it but you can't attribute it to me," and then provide material and be surprised when it appears in print. Just know where you stand and how you're dealing with the press.

Parts of the government are interrelated. Neither the armed forces as a whole nor a single military service nor the State Department itself nor any other element of government exists independently today. Our world, our society and our government are too sophisticated. There is an interrelationship between the press relations of one element of the government and the others. Whether you are in a command position or a PAO position, you cannot operate and execute your responsibilities without regard for the impact on other elements of the government.

Your audience is a wide one. To fall back on a cliché, it is a small world. There is no distinction between a domestic audience and a foreign audience that means much any more. Why, our press conferences are covered almost as heavily by representatives of the foreign press as they are by the domestic press. One of the major problems you face in a place like Vietnam—and it is a problem that you've got to be conscious of—is, "Who are you talking to?" You talk to the whole world at once. Consider Gen Westmoreland as COMUSMACV just about two years ago standing in front of the American Embassy after the TET attack. He's talking to the Marine guards who are surrounding him then after a vicious all-night battle. He's talking to his command. He's talking to the South Vietnamese people. He's talking to Hanoi, to Communist nations, to Allies, to neutrals. Finally, he's talking to the U.S. There are conflicting interests, certainly, and what is appropriate for one audience very often is not appropriate for another.

There aren't any easy answers to this. A four-

star general, after a fight surrounded by a platoon of Marines who went through a hell of a night, saying, "You've won a great victory here," is understandable. Two years later you look at that statement in cold light with the perspective of two years and the effect of that TET offensive and U. S. public opinion and so on; and you say, "How can a man be so optimistic?" It leads to a Herblock cartoon which you may remember: "All is not lost; the mimeograph machines were saved!" As I say, I have no magic solution for this problem. But it is a problem that must be borne in mind. Sometimes there are ways out. Very often you've got a conflict and you've got to compromise. All I'm suggesting is that it not be forgotten that your audience is a wide one; and, depending on the issue, it can be a worldwide audience.

You must take the initiative. Finally, I'd list the need for initiative, for being concerned about getting out a story—even a negative one—in your terms, under conditions of your choosing, and in a setting that you've help to set up. Again, this can be extremely important in the light and mood and tone of a difficult story. That first headline very often sets the tone. Provide the form—if you will, the framework—for the development and evolution of that story.

I have no firsthand knowledge of what went on behind the scenes in My Lai; but a "My Lai" would have been a negative story no matter what was done. I think it would have come out better—less negative, if you will—if the military had been in a position to take the initiative in surfacing it, to get it out under the best possible circumstances rather than having it leak out the way that it did. Bits and pieces came out, and the buildup was much longer than perhaps had to be the case. And the framework in which it came out was about as negative as it could be. So I don't say you could have gotten a good story out of My Lai no matter what happened. But it might not have been quite as bad if some initiative had been taken.

Too often in the past our philosophy has been reflected in the classic guidance to PAOs: "If asked, if you are questioned about this. . . ." I'd suggest that in many of these cases it's far preferable to take the initiative rather than wait for it to come to you, and that you'll end up with a better story.

Let me close with the point that I can't promise that application of all these principles I have listed will automatically bring you better press relations. For press relations is an art, not a science, and precise formulae cannot be applied. But I do promise that conscientious adherence to them will make your efforts with the press more effective; that it will make easier this critical task of communicating with the public which has become an integral part of your military responsibilities.

USP MC

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June 22, 1970

Mr. Peter Braestrup
3811 Fulton Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20007

Dear Peter:

I wish the information I am going to transmit in this letter were more precise, but after two years memories fade and I haven't had time to really reconstruct the events by going through my papers and notes beyond pulling out my 1968 calendar and checking the appointments listed in that. So if any of the details below conflicts with your information from other sources, I make no claim to infallibility and would bow to the weight of the evidence.

In any case, the events of those few days were frantic, frenetic and confused at best, and I'm not sure anyone will ever be able to put all the pieces together as they actually took place. Incidentally, I would refer you to John McGowan as well as a backstop for my information. As you remember, John and I shared a house and we worked closely together, particularly during the Tet period. John is now Psychological Operations Adviser to Admiral John McCain at CINCPAC, and he may have some details I miss.

Let me start with Monday, the 29th. George Jacobsen, who lived in the house in the Embassy compound to the right rear as you faced the Chancery front, had a Tet reception that evening. It was a typical Saigon reception with lots of people and considerable small talk. The atmosphere was not particularly tense. Remember, both sides had declared a cease-fire of differing lengths for the Tet season. George's reception was capped by a handsome fireworks display--a huge firecracker cluster--on the Embassy grounds. We all got home reasonably early. Servants were taking off for the holiday and everyone was looking forward to a quiet few days.

Tuesday was technically a holiday for the Mission, but it hardly turned out that way. If you remember, II Corps exploded and reports started coming in during the day of large-scale VC attacks throughout the Corps with particularly major attacks in Nhatrang and the various provincial capitals. In Saigon, we were

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fairly active during the day receiving, digesting and disseminating the reports. There were some additional precautions taken at the Embassy and Westmoreland I believe put out a MACV alert, but certainly we had no specific warning of the attacks coming that night although there were many rumors and some pieces of intelligence. In any event, I have no social activity on my calendar for that evening, and as I remember it, John and I were home for a rare quiet and private dinner.

The noise of the Saigon attacks started early in the evening, but since we always heard distant shooting in the city, the sounds did not arouse much curiosity at first. It soon became clear, however, that something unusual was going on. As you may remember, I had various military telephone lines in my house in order to get to the military quickly, and I got in touch with the Combat Operations Center as I usually did on such occasions to get the latest available information. The first reports of the attacks were starting to come in (I think the time was 10'ish or 11'ish), but as you might expect, they were still quite fragmentary. Actually, I think the first reports were about the attack on the Palace, and since these came from Vietnamese sources, they were diluted even more than usual by the time they got to MACV. The one thing that seemed clear, however, was the fact that there was more than isolated hit-and-run attacks underway. It looked like the start of a wide-scale assault on Saigon itself. I'm not quite sure just when first word of the attack on the Embassy came in, but I think it was shortly after midnight. I received word from COC that it had reports of shooting at the Embassy. I tried to get a call through, and I was at a loss to get the type of detailed information that I felt was necessary to answer the questions which I knew I would be getting from correspondents as soon as they heard the sound of shooting and confirmed the existence of an attack.

I had PIT, Tiger, ARVN phones in the house as well as the Embassy Mercury radio net for emergency use. I was unable to get through to the Embassy on any of them. The duty officer and the Marines were understandably in touch with MACV and the Embassy security channel and were actually seeking reinforcements at that time.

The best thing that happened was that I finally thought of George Jacobsen--largely I suppose because of the reception the night before--and I finally got through to him on the PIT line. And there with George leaning out his second-story window, I got an eyewitness report on everything he saw--the initial shooting in the yard, the action around the Chancery proper, the movement of the VC. Finally (and here I am not certain of the time, but I believe it was about two or three a.m.) the Embassy activity seemed to die down and George and I ended our marathon conversation. You are aware of what happened to George later.

Meanwhile of course, I had been receiving phone calls from the correspondents but had not had much detail to give them. With the lull at the Embassy grounds, I started a systematic call out to the spot news list--the wires, the nets, the specials and the newsmagazines. I remember I gave two of them--I think they happened to be the first two I was able to contact, and I think they were AP and Ron Steinman at NBC--George Jacobsen's house telephone number with the thought that they could get some eyewitness material. I got through finally to most of the list and gave them as much detail as I had with the obvious qualification that this was preliminary and fragmentary. I finally got to sleep about four, but as you know, the action broke out again just before dawn and we were up and at it once more. By this time, the correspondents were alerted and many were on the scene while still dark. By the time I got to the Embassy grounds about 8 or 9 in the morning, the shooting had ended and the grounds were swarming with both officials and correspondents.

General Westmoreland made his famous off-the-cuff statement about "victory" (remember the context, the setting and the previous twelve hours) at my suggestion in response to the requests of many of the correspondents; we were already into the dispute of whether the VC had entered the Chancery or not and we had to look ahead to repairing the damage--physical and psychological. I stayed at the Embassy through most of the morning--getting and giving out information, escorting correspondents through the Chancery, arranging interviews for the press with various Marines, soldiers and Embassy security personnel (George and Bob, what were their last names?).

My calls to correspondents during the night was in keeping with my practice of providing them all the information we could in such situations (remember, both before and after there were many instances of widespread nocturnal attacks by the VC in various parts of the country) in order to obtain the most accurate stories possible. There are some who were critical later of this particular call out on the ground that it led to more detail and color and drama than might have been the case otherwise and therefore intensified the negative impact of the story in the U. S. I don't accept the criticism for a moment. The stories would have been just as sensational if I had not called out--perhaps more so since they might not have been as accurate.

The January 31st attack also marked the start of perhaps the most intensive briefing effort we ever undertook in Vietnam. Again, we have been criticized after the fact. But I felt strongly and both my superiors in Saigon and Washington agreed that the only sensible approach was to provide all the information we could. Correspondents of course were covering some of the actual combat--particularly Hue and Saigon--on the scene, but we still had much

information to provide. With Si Sidle quarterbacking the military side, we went into a series of almost daily top level briefings. Si handled some himself; Maj. Gen. John Chaisson, USMC, of the COC did a number (and he was particularly good). We had Maj. Gen. Keith Ware (who was an ex-chief of command after the Tet offensive and was later killed in Vietnam) come in and give briefings. Fred Weyand came in. So did Bill Rosson. So did Bob Cushman up in I Corps. We had lower ranking officers with special stories appear. Their instructions were clear--tell it like it is. But inevitably of course, the emphasis was on the upbeat, not the setback.

On the civilian side, we did not have as many guns to roll up but we did what we could. I had daily sessions; Arch Calhoun pitched in; Komer took some; and the AID people put forth on their activities. Calhoun obviously focused on political developments and Komer on the joint recovery efforts with the Vietnamese, particularly in regard to the difficult refugee situation. We got out all the information we could but again inevitably the weight was on positive moment, not negative. The correspondents reacted accordingly, as you might expect. We also got out as many POW interrogation reports and captured documents as we could. And we even provided daily summaries of Hanoi and VC broadcasts.

Finally, we used our big guns--Bunker and Westmoreland--specifically with Washington urging but on a more limited basis than Washington wanted in the early days. Si and others can fill you in on some of West's briefings out at MACV headquarters.

I am sure you have had some fill-in on those held by Bunker for a selected group of twenty or so or at dinners for six at a time on a rotating basis. The February 3rd briefing was by Bunker (I think the date is correct; it may have been on Friday, the 2nd) and was held in the Embassy third floor conference room at my urging. Bunker had a simple message: yes, the VC achieved a considerable psychological impact both in Vietnam and the U. S. but they did not attain their own self-proclaimed goals (as described to us by captive VC and North Vietnamese soldiers)--collapse of the Vietnamese government; wholesale surrender and collapse of the ARVN; a general uprising and welcome from the people, particularly in rural areas; and military footholds in urban centers. If these were their goals, said Bunker, they failed though we recognize that they may have achieved other objectives, such as an impact on American public opinion.

You know the results of the briefing. It was interpreted as excessively optimistic at worst, unrealistic at best. I think this judgment was unduly harsh. I think perhaps we might have given more emphasis to their psychological success, but remember that we were sitting in Saigon, not Washington, and I

think (even now with hindsight) that the evaluation we provided was essentially sound. I worked with the Ambassador on this one and felt we had both balance and perspective. The correspondents did not.

Westy ran into the same type of trouble. As you know, Westy is a gung-ho, can-do type, and when he briefs, he tends to emphasize the upbeat. The correspondents tend to lose his qualifications. I don't claim all of Westy's briefings were that balanced. I do think the press made them out to be much more optimistic than they were intended.

Romer's problems need no comment from me. Bob just couldn't resist performing when he got up in front of the press. He was much, much better in private conversation with one or two correspondents than with a group.

What would I have done differently? Not too much in terms of volume, access, frequency of briefing. Perhaps more restraint on some of the evaluations, more qualifications on some of the claims.

Who was right? I don't know, Peter. No list answers. We were wrong in some regards; so was the press conscious in other aspects. By fall, Charlie Mohr, hardly a trained soul, wrote in the TIME that the VC suffered a considerable military setback in the Tet offensive. That's what we tried to say. The VC also gained considerably in psychological terms. We didn't say that enough.

The friendlies? I suppose the answer is that they were not too effective in the immediate post-Tet period. The government was thrown off-balance and recovery, together with the subsequent rehabilitation and rebuilding effort, absorbed most of its energies. Furthermore, at that point the government's press structure was split up--Nguyen Ngoc Linh was not a minister but he did have the information directorate; Thieu had his own press man, Col. Lam; Ky was using Dan Duc Khoi. The military press people had no authority beyond giving out the briefing information they received from the joint staff; and non-government Vietnamese were having a field day with the huge visiting press corps. Each element tended to brief on its own and in terms of its self-interest. There was little that was effective or coordinated, and as a result, the Vietnamese side of the picture came out even worse than it need have.

I suppose I could give you even more detail, but already this looks like two or three times more than you need.

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However, if the above raises further questions or requires more elaboration, please let me know and I'll respond as best I can. All of the above is useable on the record with attribution as desired, of course.

Best,

Barry Zorthian

BZ:jb

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REFLECTING ON VIETNAM & THE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

by Wm. Hamilton Jones

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FEB '69



Major's failings. The shortcomings of the cooks and kitchen police hardly exceeded primitive stupidity. My own problems were not serious. Some sacrifice must be offered on the altar of discipline—passes curtailed, pay docked, and so on. But underlying opinion was clear. The *faux pas* was the Major's, and the Colonel would see it that way—as he did.

Meanwhile the summer was passing. The horses' particular brand of pneumococcus seemed to lose its zest. As they recovered, they became more amenable to military discipline. Soon the drivers had the caissons rolling along; and the gunners grew proficient at mental arithmetic as they listened to the shouted numbers, twirled the wheels that moved their gun barrels, and learned to push home dummy shells, lock the breeches, and jump aside to avoid a theoretical recoil as lanyards were pulled.

South of the border the political temperature cooled as the days shortened. General Pershing came home empty-handed, rumors flew that the National Guard would be demobilized; but not before the effort and sweat of summer had been put to the test of firing live ammunition. Labor Day came and went. The mountain foliage began to turn, the blueberries to ripen on the hillsides. A few trenches were dug on a hill across a valley, enemy battery emplacements were simulated with plywood, notices were posted to warn berry pickers off the range on the chosen day. The Major was posted as range officer to ride over the target area before firing began to ensure that it was clear.

On a glorious autumn morning the regiment set out for the firing position, a plateau some miles beyond our camp at the far end of the military reservation. On the parade ground the sight of the full regiment in formation was a moving one; but when Battery D brought up the end of the column of march and our rolling kitchen took its place at the end of that, martial spirit suffocated under a pall of dust. Not a breath of air moved it. Only a wet handkerchief over the nose and mouth kept lungs from filling solid.

A brief respite came when the column halted and the kitchens moved up from the tail to the head of the batteries. The drivers watered and fed their horses while the gunners ate and then took their place. Even though the Major was far away on his assigned range patrol, we risked no chances with the meal—no boiled rice—there was too much live ammunition around. Not long after lunch the column debouched onto the plateau and moved straight across it. As Battery D emerged, the column broke into a trot, then swung at right angle into regimental front with guidons fluttering. When they were aligned, a bugle sent the whole command into a full gallop, a brave sight. As they reached firing position, they swung around, unlimbered guns and caissons, and took the horses, still excited and tossing their heads, to the rear.

We left the kitchen to the drivers and joined a group at the steps to a platform from which the Colonel was observing the terrain through field

glasses. The last preparations for firing had been completed, gun crews and officers were in their places, range finders manned. Soon officers shouted numbers as they computed distances, angles, and elevations; wheels on the guns turned. The regulation procedure from here on was pretty conventional. One or two guns would fire a long and then a short—that is, on the first they would add to the estimated range, on the second, subtract. Having thus, hopefully, bracketed the target, they would split the difference, or make other correction, and everyone would be ready for business.

The Colonel turned to his second-in-command. "Range clear?" he asked with rising inflection. The words were repeated across the platform and down the steps. The words were picked up and rolled back as a receding breaker is by an incoming one. This time the inflection was reversed, assertive; not a question but an answer, "Range clear!" Then from the platform came the electrifying command: "Regimental salvo!"

The usual procedure might be conventional, but the Colonel was not. He would start this exercise with a bang that few present would forget. In 16 guns shells were shoved home, breeches slammed shut; gunners jumped clear while lanyard sergeants watched for the signal. "Fire!" said the Colonel. The resultant roar was eminently satisfactory. Some of the horses snorted and gave a plunge or two. The whole hilltop across the valley burst into smoke and dust.

About a mile our side of it appeared a separate source of dust bursts, moving toward us at great speed, touching, so it seemed, only the higher mounds. An order to cease fire stopped the reloading, and field glasses centered on the speeding horseman. Word spread that it was the forgotten Major. As he came nearer, he seemed to be urging the horse to greater effort. Panic or rage or both had clearly taken over. He would certainly gallop up flushed and breathing hard, fling himself from the saddle, and run toward the steps shouting, "What damn fool . . . ?" One could see him, stopped by the Colonel's cold stare, salute and stammer out, "Range clear, sir!" I didn't wait for the confrontation. The platform would soon be the scene of high words, possibly controversy, in any event, unpleasantness. It was clearly no place for a mess sergeant who belonged with his field kitchen.

For a few days much talk and questioning revolved about who said what to whom. Unfortunately I could not help with this since I had rejoined the kitchen group before the dialogue began and was quite as puzzled as the others about what had happened. Anyway, it was all forgotten in a few days when we broke camp for the move home and mustering out.

Years later I met the Major again. We had both exchanged military titles for somewhat higher civilian ones. But although we were to see a good deal of one another, not always under the pleasantest circumstances, it never seemed to me that our relationship would be improved by probing the events of that memorable range practice.

As United States information chief in Vietnam for more than four years, Barry Zorthian set a rugged pace. In a *Life* magazine profile he was described as a man who spared no effort to keep himself informed and who preferred to be in the field seeing things firsthand instead of remaining cloistered in Saigon.



Looking back over the past year, it is clear that the possibility for dialogue on the Vietnam war has slowly been evaporating. By last spring, convictions had hardened to the point where people invariably defended conclusions instead of discussing issues—all quite different from the well-intentioned if sometimes meandering search for answers that characterized the teach-in, the academic community's first attempt to come to grips with the questions raised by the war.

Just how far this damming up of discussion on the war had gone was brought home this fall when Barry Zorthian visited Yale. It was easy to anticipate that Zorthian's three-day visit as a Poynter Fellow would be extremely lively; it seemed certain he would be grilled intensively, perhaps even greeted rudely. If those opposed to the war wanted to confront someone intimately identified with it—indeed, the person in Saigon who was most responsible for the way the government presented the war to the public—then Zorthian was the man.

But it didn't turn out that way at all. Instead, his reception was tepid; his appearances seldom drew more than a handful of people and in news conferences and public meetings the questioning was polite, superficial, disconnected. Even Zorthian himself was surprised. He had expected, he allowed at one point, many more sharp questions, even some hostility. His reason for coming to Yale, he said, was in part to find out what students were thinking, and he must have left with the impression that the war no longer figured very prominently in their thoughts.

The very fact, though, that Zorthian's visit was something of a non-event had its own importance. It said a great deal about the mood on this campus with regard to the war and it implied or suggested a number of ways in which people, here and elsewhere, have coped with the impact of the war.

The Reasons for Quiescence

Undoubtedly, a number of external circumstances contributed toward making Zorthian's visit remarkably quiet. First is the matter of context. Although he had served as the chief U.S. information officer in Vietnam for more than four years—during which time he was singled out by *Life* as "one of the most powerful Americans in Vietnam"—Zorthian was a private citizen, not a government spokesman, when he came to Yale in November. In July 1968 he had resigned his dual post in Saigon (as Minister Counsellor for Infor-

mation and director of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office) and returned to Washington to take a temporary position at the headquarters of the United States Information Agency. By the end of the summer, however, he had accepted an executive position with Time, Inc. and moved to New York City.

If leaving his position in Saigon made him more accessible, it also made him less interesting, less central. Somehow the relaxed civility of Yale—in contrast to the shirtsleeve energy of Zorthian's tenure in Vietnam—only served to emphasize his remove, both in space and time, from the war effort. People at Yale responded to him more as the corporate executive than as the hard-nosed professional who served in Saigon longer than any other senior American official except General Westmoreland and who was informally known throughout Vietnam simply as Zorro.

A second circumstance influencing Zorthian's reception at Yale was the diminished level of campus frustration concerning the war. A year ago, those seriously troubled by the war, or flatly opposed to it, saw little likelihood of change in American policy. Then President Johnson's decision not to seek reelection, the Paris negotiations, and the bombing halt promised to bring peace into view. While progress since has been slow, there has been the prospect this fall that a new administration would be able to seek peace with new energy. As a consequence, the atmosphere here and nationally in the last six months has been a little less supercharged than it was during the previous six months.

More specifically, frustration among students was not as high this fall because the draft didn't appear as threatening as it had. Last spring, when graduate student deferments were eliminated, the prospect of impending conscription brought the war very close to many students. But then, over the summer, the expected assault by the draft on those intending to go on to graduate school never materialized. While draft calls in the past two months have cut more deeply into the graduate student population, there is not yet any sign that the draft is creating the degree of active student opposition to the war that it did last year.

The overall effect of the less explosive attitude toward the war on campus was summed up succinctly by one faculty member: "If Zorthian had appeared here a year ago he would have been crucified. Opposition to the war today is no less implacable; it's just less on the offense."

The last, and possibly most important,

circumstance affecting Zorthian's visit was that it coincided with Coeducation Week. Most of Yale's activist students were otherwise occupied, and it was perhaps encouraging to note that a positive demonstration took precedence over a negative one. Apparently the only member of SDS that Zorthian met was over dinner in Silliman College Master Elias Clark's house, and by all reports the conversation was more pleasant than probing. In brief, the collective attention of the University was turned quite inward during the days Zorthian was here.

A Few Sparks

If overall there was little electricity in the air as a result of Zorthian's presence on campus, sparks did fly during a Yale Reports program when he was interviewed by Dr. Robert Lifton, a research professor of psychiatry, and Jaroslav Pelikan, Titus Street professor of ecclesiastical history. But the program also illustrated the degree to which confrontation over the issues of the war has replaced discussion.

From the beginning, Zorthian and Lifton were poles apart. Lifton, whose scholarly work has for the most part been done in East Asia and who spent several weeks in Vietnam a year-and-a-half ago, took essentially a moral position while Zorthian took a political one. The predictable impasse was that Zorthian took off from the conclusion that the war was in the national interest of the U.S. while Lifton felt it was indefensible in any terms at all. At a few points in the program, the exchanges were heated enough so the thread of conversation was all but lost in the flurry of interruptions and counterinterruptions:

Lifton: You say the Vietnamese in the South are bearing the brunt of the war. Indeed, they are. They are suffering and dying in much larger numbers than Americans, there is no doubt about that. And hundreds of thousands of civilians among them are dying too.

Zorthian: Not hundreds of thousands, Dr. Lifton.

Lifton: Hundreds of thousands of civilians have died. . .

Zorthian: No.

Lifton: I don't know how you can contradict that.

Zorthian: Dr. Lifton, I am sorry, we have gone into this very thoroughly. This is a disservice a person like you does to your own students in passing on that type of statement.

Lifton: I am not involved in the subject of how many thousands or tens or hundreds

In addition to his responsibilities for dispensing information, Zorthian also headed the U.S. psychological warfare effort. "You can't divorce communication from programs," he is fond of saying. "The actual American programs at the grass roots level have more psychological impact than mere leaflets."



of thousands of civilians have been killed in this war.

Zorthian: But flat statements are being circulated. You do sort of shoot off hundreds of thousands without a thought.

Lifton: Over the course of the Vietnamese war hundreds of thousands of civilians have not been killed, is that what you are saying?

Zorthian: What do you mean, hundreds of thousands? How many? Seriously, because I have read a figure that said a million have been killed and this couldn't be more inaccurate.

Lifton: Hundreds of thousands have been killed.

Pelikan: Some 200 thousand plus.

Lifton: That's right, at least plus. Now having said that, which is a true statement, let me go on.

Zorthian: May we leave that? I disagree with the truth of that statement. I think my knowledge of it is probably much more detailed. . . .

Just beneath the surface of this kind of exchange lie a number of very important issues that have to do with the complexities of the Vietnam war in particular and the capacity of our system of government to respond to a high level of complexity on matters of policy in general. For example: As a public, we are very statistic-oriented, but at the same time we are very naïve about statistics. Just what do "facts" mean in a situation as complex as Vietnam? How can the public sort out competing claims of "fact"? And what of those facts that can, quite legitimately, be interpreted to support totally opposite points of view?

Another issue: Clearly there is the presumption in foreign affairs, quite rightly, that the government has access to more information than the citizen at large. At the same time, though, that presumption cannot disqualify the citizen from registering his point of view based on the information that he has (in the way that Washington "disqualified" many critics of the war) without isolating the policymaking process from public accountability except at infrequent intervals.

These are the issues that Zorthian was squarely in the middle of during his tour of duty in Vietnam. And most of his informal conversation at Yale was devoted to giving his perspective on some of the questions growing out of these issues. If on the one hand he failed to catalyze opposing points of view on the war, on the other he took advantage of the resulting calm to reflect on the communication processes that tie the government and the public together.

A Double Perspective

In his career, Zorthian has worked on both sides of the slough of distrust that generally separates government and press. After graduating from Yale in 1941 (where he was sports editor on the *Yale Daily News* board chaired by Kingman Brewster), Zorthian served briefly as editor of a Vermont newspaper before enlisting in the Marine Corps. At war's end, he was discharged as a major and returned to New Haven to resume his journalism career.

Within a year he moved to New York to become senior news editor of the international section of the Columbia Broadcasting System, then left a few months later to take a position with Voice of America. While serving as program manager for VOA, he attended evening sessions at the New York University Law School and received an LL.B. in 1953.

After nine years with VOA, Zorthian moved to the United States Information Agency and in a variety of assignments over the succeeding years he traveled to more than 80 countries. In 1961 he was named USIA's deputy public affairs officer in India. That assignment, in turn, was the springboard for his appointment in February 1964 as director of the U.S. Information Service in Vietnam.

His tenure in India was so successful that it probably played a large part in his selection to take over the badly frayed public information campaign in Vietnam. One friend told a *Life* reporter: "He's a great talker, and I think the Indians finally met someone who could talk longer and argue better than they could. They were charmed." Also pleased were the journalists he dealt with, who found his frankness a happy change of pace from the rounds of "no comment."

Once he was established in Saigon, Zorthian quickly gained a reputation as a low-key but hard-driving, courageous professional. He released more unvarnished information than any of his predecessors ever had; said one friend, "Barry works twice as hard as anyone else because he thinks he was born two steps behind." Burly in build and deliberate in manner, he presided regularly over the daily press briefings that were known throughout Saigon as the Five O'Clock Follies.

An index of Zorthian's effectiveness in his relations with the press is the fact that most veteran reporters feel the now-famous credibility gap was a product of Washington, not Saigon. "We cannot exist without reality as a base," Zorthian once told the press; "if I cannot talk about something, I simply *don't* talk about it. But I have never lied to the press."

In a speech at the National Press Club last fall following his return from Vietnam, he summed up the substance of his relationship to the press: "That the government and the press had differences is hardly news. And that there were periods of hostility between the two is not a startling revelation. But I would submit that eventually we eliminated most of the hostility—and while we had very real differences in outlook, in evaluation, and in judgment, we also had dialogue: hours and hours of dialogue at many levels and in many settings. . . . And out of the heat of these discussions came an awareness of the problems that faced us both."

In a New Milieu

Zorthian had lost none of his press briefing skills by the time he arrived at Yale. He was clearly at home with an audience, and had the easy grace with reporters that only men who dispense information regularly and are quoted often seem to exhibit. The only signal that he was on a university campus rather than still in Saigon was his habit, early in the visit, of prefacing his answers to questions dealing with broad areas where he felt no special competence with, "You may know more about this than I do, but . . ."

The burden of much of his discourse at Yale was devoted to emphasizing the complexities of the Vietnam situation. The residual instincts from his Vietnam tour of duty could be seen in the frequency with which the "Yes, but" syndrome appeared. Zorthian's standard rejoinder to a number of questions was to point out the alternative set of facts or the alternative interpretation before launching into a fuller answer. "Isn't the level of corruption in the South Vietnamese government terribly high?" "Yes, but you must remember you are judging by Western standards. Much of what we would label corruption are standard emoluments of office in a Confucian society."

"Hasn't the government erred too often in its predictions about the war to be credible any longer?" "Perhaps, but we are all human. Let's not forget that the press has erred too—for example, with regard to Khe Sanh—but people don't seem to remember that."

"Hasn't the war claimed the lives of great numbers of South Vietnamese civilians?" "Yes, but don't forget that this is probably the most restricted army in history in terms of rules governing when they can fire their weapons. Beyond that. . ."

(When asked what he thought of co-education, Zorthian's response was char-

acteristic: while he wasn't enthusiastic about it personally, he said, the only thing that surprised him was the apparent unanimity of opinion on campus. Where are the people, he asked, who are opposed—there must be another side to it.)

Early in his visit Zorthian established a context for his remarks by giving his own view of the war. Like most senior mission officials, he said, he had doubts about the way in which U.S. policy was executed. However, about the policy itself he had few doubts at all: "We are essentially, it seems to me, in Vietnam to enable the South Vietnamese to control their own future, develop their own society. This I think is done in the U.S. national interest."

In the past year or so, the questions in his mind concerned the price that the war was exacting at home. "The picture we had in Saigon was of great national doubt, division, and dissent." While Zorthian acknowledged that the insularity of Saigon may have heightened the sense of division, he nevertheless felt that Stateside reaction to the war had to figure prominently in the equation determining the scope and conduct of the war. Public opinion, in one form or another, sooner or later, would have to be reflected in matters of policy.

Particularly because of his own responsibilities in Vietnam, Zorthian had a great deal to say about the factors which help to shape public opinion and about the ways in which the press, government, and people relate to one another. The Vietnam war represents, in his view, the most difficult task of communication this society has faced in the post-World War II era. And while the government has had unprecedented access to the media, and the press has had unprecedented freedom of movement and coverage, he feels the war has been communicated to the public in such a way that, by and large, Americans have been unable to assimilate the complexity of the issues it has raised.

At fault are all three parties, Zorthian feels: the government has not presented the war well, especially in terms of making its reasoning clear at various points of decision; the press, despite some outstanding moments, has had difficulties in dealing with some of the new problems presented by this kind of conflict; and the public itself has been a little too anxious for simplistic answers, a little too quick with emotional responses.

Four Sets of Questions

Reduced to a sentence, Zorthian sees the essential problem as how to assure clarity in transmitting relatively complex, in-

Generalizing from his Vietnam experience, Zorthian suggests that government officials need more training in public affairs, more training in dealing with the press. The result, he feels, would be more candor, more relation to reality, and a better realization of the function of a free press.



volved, and qualified concepts to a mass audience. To the degree that the performance of the press offers a handle on the problem, he suggests four kinds of considerations that deserve close attention.

First, since there are so many judgmental aspects to the war, how is it possible for reporting to be fairly balanced? As an example: A year-and-a-half ago, during the election campaign in South Vietnam, there were 11 candidates running. Of the 11, all voiced hope that peace would be forthcoming soon, but only one, Truong Dinh Dzu, talked peace in terms of negotiation with the Vietcong and immediate abandonment of the war effort. On election day, Dzu surprised everyone by coming in second with 17 per cent of the vote. What is the significance of that fact? Is it that a significant portion of the population—almost as many as voted for Thieu—wanted peace at any cost? Or is it that 83 per cent of the voters, while spread over ten candidates, were rejecting the peace at any cost approach?

Zorthian points out that interpretation of events and selection of "significant" facts is a constant difficulty facing the Vietnam correspondent. To do his job, the journalist in Vietnam has to be combat reporter, political analyst, sociologist, economist, and investigator all rolled into one. How well he does any of these jobs will depend on his background, experience, and language competence (for access to all shades of opinion, knowledge of Vietnamese and French is practically a necessity).

Thus the qualifications of the reporters are likely to weigh heavily in how well they accomplish their aim. The problems of qualification in Vietnam have been complicated by the usually short tours of duty given a correspondent (Zorthian says over 2,000 journalists have been accredited in the past four years, representing a full spectrum of competence).

A second set of difficulties arise when a reporter, no matter how well qualified himself, attempts to convey information to the U.S. public. Clearly, the usual Western yardsticks and definitions have limited usefulness. In general terms, the Vietnamese war has been the occasion for the public's first extended exposure to Eastern society, culture, and politics. Is it really fair, Zorthian asked at one point during his visit, to evaluate the function of a new constitutional democracy in South Vietnam on the basis of American standards?

Even in the matter of semantics Vietnam poses new problems. What, for instance, constitutes progress in this kind of war? When people, not territory, is the objective, how is it possible to convey an

accurate reflection of the actual state of the war?

A third set of problems grows out of the voluminous coverage the Vietnam war has received. It is generally accepted that this is the most thoroughly reported war in history, yet no one is quite sure whether comprehensiveness has led to obfuscation or clarification. One reason for the volume of reportage, Zorthian feels, is the competitiveness of the media; there is always the pressure to get a story before another network or another paper does. As a result, some unconfirmed—and ultimately misleading or inaccurate—information has been reported. In addition, the emphasis in reporting has sometimes been on the superficial "color" story at the expense of more substantive analysis.

Lastly, there is a web of problems that are peculiar to television reporting. For one thing, television is at a disadvantage when it comes to reporting the story that takes place over a long period of time or which is non-visual in its substance. Even with combat stories, though, a five-minute film clip on the evening news can convey only a limited amount of information.

The more interesting questions about television coverage of the war have to do with its impact on the public. What has been the effect of the constant exposure of the public to the war? Has the result been to callous people's sensitivities and make them more aware of political realities? Or, as is more likely, has it brought the realization that all war is ghastly and thereby generated a wave of general anti-war feeling? These are the kinds of questions, Zorthian said, that we really have not had time yet to evaluate; but he emphasized his feeling that it was questions such as these that will have to be at the core of any examination of public opinion and the war.

In raising these issues, Zorthian was careful to explain that he intended no indictment of the press. Many of the same problems, he said, were shared by the government, which has hardly revised its methods governing the distribution of information in 20 years. It is just that questions such as these "deserve frank recognition and searching examination for the lessons they contain and the guideposts they can provide for the future." As he had said a few weeks earlier in his National Press Club speech, which covered much of the same ground, his observations were motivated by his conviction that on issues of national affairs the press and the government have "a joint and parallel responsibility for communication with the public: the government out of its obligation to

inform the electorate; the press in its capacity as the watchdog of the government in behalf of the people."

The Unexplored Ground

There is no question that the issues which Zorthian raised during his visit are important and deserve study, particularly with regard to the future conduct of foreign affairs and the responsiveness of the policy-making process to informed public opinion. But at the same time, it is wrong to assume that the divisiveness the war has caused can be attributed solely to a "communications gap." The sense of estrangement because of the war—at least on this campus—goes much deeper than that. In one student's words, the "moral devastation wrought by the war is a function primarily of a loss of faith—in our government, in our effectiveness as citizens, in our goals and our lives—and that kind of wound takes a great deal of time to heal."

That sentiment explains, in large part, the uneventfulness of Zorthian's visit and the evaporation of dialogue about the war. But the great danger of the kind of polarization that renders debate useless is that it also makes learning impossible. And if there is a compelling need at the moment it is that we dissect the Vietnam experience in order to formulate what we have learned so it can be applied in the future.

The present mood of the country, though, seems to be leading us generally in the opposite direction. There is something of an avoidance neurosis about Vietnam, a desire—especially since the beginning of the Paris talks—to avoid intensifying old divisions, to leave tender scar tissue undisturbed. For much of the public, it amounts to a retreat from the complexities in issues and judgments that have been posed by Vietnam.

The academic community is where one would expect that trend to be reversed first, where the probing examination of what has occurred would provide a basis for deciding what should occur in the future. And Barry Zorthian's three days at Yale was only a tiny step in that direction.

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THE DIMENSION OF COMMUNICATION

BARRY ZORTHIAN

MY ASSIGNMENT this morning is to talk to you about the U.S. Information Agency; but, if I may, I'd like to speak more broadly about communication—communication by our Government with the public, primarily through the medium of the press.

In the last analysis, our society depends on the existence of an enlightened public, a public that is in possession of the facts and makes considered and reasoned judgments, particularly on issues of national affairs. Our ultimate source of authority is that same public, and public opinion must play a major role in the conduct of our Government.

I would suggest to you that today this process of communication is in trouble, even though we have made tremendous progress in purely technical terms. This morning we will try to transmit television signals from the Apollo to ground stations, but we are having great difficulty right here on this planet in communicating intelligible signals from people in Government offices to people outside them.

This is understandable. The world is becoming more complex, issues and problems are more involved. Mass understanding and appreciation, particularly in foreign affairs, are very difficult to achieve.

What people think is almost as important as the facts themselves. The "image," of course, is itself a fact. More than anywhere else, recently, this has been an issue in Vietnam. What

really happened? What did people think happened? Both questions are important. But what people think about Vietnam is, in many ways, even more important than the actual situation on the ground.

Many of you will someday occupy positions of importance in the conduct of our national affairs. Your participation in this process of communication is essential. To me, it seems tragic that today you can reach that high level of responsibility with little experience in communication, with almost no confrontation or dialog with the great communications media. I would hope that, as we develop our training programs for potential senior officers in Government, we can add more of this dimension of communication and provide a doctrine for this process of talking to the public and dealing with the communications media. We don't have such a doctrine today, and at times the consequences can be discouraging.

Vietnam is an example. Our senior officials there are required to deal with the media every day. Some are superb. But others fail miserably.

I don't think we can afford to leave this task to chance or to the individual personality. I firmly believe that, if it is to be performed effectively, we will need more preparation in institutions such as this, in order to develop a better understanding among our future senior officials of the fundamental principles of dealing with the public.

The Government has two audiences, domestic and foreign. The U.S. Information Agency (USIA) is its instrument for dealing with the foreign audience. Our concern with foreign opinion, of course, goes back to the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence; but in a formal sense we need look back only to the Committee on Information, the Creel Committee, in World War I. After the war we disbanded this agency and did not establish another one until the eve of World War II, when the Office of the Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs was set up to conduct an information

MR. BARRY ZORTHIAN is a senior member of corporate management at Time, Inc. A graduate of Yale University (A.B. 1941) and New York University (LL.B. 1953), he is a member of the New York State Bar. He joined the Voice of America in late 1947, holding such positions as Chief of the News Branch, Chief Policy Adviser, and Program Manager. Mr. Zorthian has been one of the key men in America's overseas information program. He served 3 years in India as Deputy Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and 4½ years (1964-68) in South Vietnam where he was Director of JUSPAO (Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office) and then Minister-Counselor for Information. In Vietnam, he was responsible for policy direction and coordination of the American Mission's entire information program, including both press relations and psychological operations. On returning to Washington, Mr. Zorthian was named Special Assistant to the Director of USIA.

This talk was condensed and edited for publication here with the author's approval from a transcript of his presentation to the College on 14 October 1968.

program in Latin America. During the war, the Office of War Information was in general charge of public information. Still later, the basic legislation for what became the U.S. Information Agency came in the Smith-Mundt Act, Public Law 402 of 1948. At first, the Agency was a semiautonomous institute within the State Department, but in 1953 President Eisenhower gave it independent status.

Two other pieces of basic legislation should be mentioned. The Fulbright-Hayes Act of 1961 broadened USIA's mission, giving it more responsibility and authority in the international information and cultural-exchange fields; and a Presidential directive to all overseas missions in 1961, making the Ambassador the Chief of Mission for all U.S. activities in a particular country, also gave USIA responsibility for the public affairs activities of the U.S. Government overseas in all areas except the Joint Commands.

USIA today is spending roughly \$180 million a year. It operates a worldwide communications network, the transmitters of the Voice of America. It has facilities both in the States and overseas for publications, moviemaking, and utilization of the various media. It employs some 12,000 people, including 7,000 foreign nationals, and is represented in about 100 countries, where it is known as the U.S. Information Service (USIS). The key USIA official in each country is the Public Affairs Officer (PAO), a member of the country team on the Ambassador's staff.

The mission of the USIA is twofold. It has the task of creating support abroad for the United States and its policies and, in a broader sense, for developing a sympathetic understanding by foreign peoples of our country, our institutions, and our way of life. Its other major task is that of advising all elements of the Government, from the President on down, on the potential impact of our actions on foreign opinion. In other words, it is responsible for injecting into the policymaking decisions of our Government a consideration of the factor of communication with foreign audiences.

The Director of USIA is a member of the National Security Council. He attends Cabinet meetings on appropriate occasions; he is the principal public affairs adviser to the Secretary of State; and, insofar as foreign audiences are concerned, he advises the Secretary of Defense and other Cabinet officers. Overseas, the Public Affairs Officer plays a similar role on the Ambassador's staff.

Let me speak for a few minutes of USIA's staff advisory role. In theory it is clear and unequivocal, but in its acceptance and execution I believe it is honored more in the breach than in the observance. Too often, despite what the organization manual says, the Public Affairs Officer or Information Officer is simply brought in after a decision is made and told to exploit it as best he can. He is not brought into the policymaking process itself. Yet it is crucially important that the public affairs dimension—the dimension of what people think, of the impact of our actions on world and domestic opinion—be brought into this process at the very start. It need not rule that process. There will be occasions when an action is so necessary that it must be carried out regardless of its effect on opinion. Nevertheless, the public affairs dimension is an essential part of the policymaking process and one which I feel is ignored far too often. As professionals in the business say, we are always in on the crash landings but not often on the takeoffs. We must be in on the takeoffs if we are to do what we should do and what is expected of us.

Today it is more true than ever before that actions speak louder than words. The mechanics of reporting and interpreting actions in communications media are important, but far more important in shaping the message communicated is the substance of the actions reported. USIA's job is not just to turn out a pamphlet or a film or a radio show. People, even ordinary people in less-developed parts of the world, are more sophisticated than they used to be. The capability for communicating has grown so great, and the volume of communications grown so enormous, that people are becoming increasingly immune to words as such. The PAO overseas is often told, "Go out and make some propaganda on this." But in the world of 1968 you don't make propaganda, at least not in the old-fashioned way. You must communicate through the hard realities of your actions.

The trained communicator is less a publicity man than a "substance" man. He has a professional appreciation for political realities. He has a feel for the people of a country, for what and how they think; he can sense how they are likely to react to a given policy or action. The professional communicator also knows how to use the media to best advantage. He knows their limitations and their capabilities and how to circumvent the one and exploit the other.

I would urge you to make use of this professional. Principals too often try to be their own

communication specialists, substituting their own judgment for the professional judgment of the trained communicator. I am not questioning the authority and ultimate responsibility of the commander or accountable official who must make the decisions. I do suggest that the PAO be regarded as more than a mere specialist or technician whose only function is to explain or interpret to the public decisions already made—often, indeed, using a dictated “approach.”

In any case, foreign audiences are sometimes less influenced by what we tell them in those countries than by what we do and say here in the United States. What happens in Washington becomes known all over the world in very short order. Washington has a large corps of foreign correspondents; it is a nerve center of worldwide communications. A Presidential press conference, an action by the Department of Defense, a policy statement by the Department of State may affect public thinking abroad, through almost instant dissemination by the media, more powerfully than the efforts of the USIS on the scene overseas.

Remember, too, that by comparison with the huge volume of communications through commercial and private channels, the efforts of USIS in a foreign country are almost marginal. Communications traffic between the United States and Great Britain, for example, is so heavy that all the USIS can do locally is to provide a little more perspective and depth through local contact work.

There are, in short, severe limitations on what can be accomplished through public affairs activities abroad. The PAO on a country team cannot control the whole process of communication to a local audience. Often his influence is only marginal. Far from evoking a positive public reaction to given actions, he may do well if he is able to mitigate to some degree a negative one.

Let me turn now to a very controversial question, the relative responsibilities of the Government and the press in the area of public information. A little while ago I said that our society depends on the existence of an enlightened public. Both the Government and the press have, it seems to me, a heavy responsibility in this matter. I do not deny, or excuse, the shortcomings of the press in discharging their responsibilities, and I have often discussed those shortcomings with my friends in the press. I would suggest, however, that it is preferable for us in the Government first to examine ourselves and to clean our own house before we criticize the media.

You may recall a statement made by a television executive not long ago that it is the business of the press to tell the Government how to conduct its business, but not that of the Government to tell the press how to conduct its business. This, it seems to me, embodies the whole concept that lies behind the first amendment to the Constitution. The press in our society has the role of a watchdog, a judge, an independent observer of events. In this capacity it represents the people, and it is to the people—not the Government—that it is ultimately accountable. This concept is basic to our type of society, but it is too often given only lip service by some of us in Government service. There is a tendency, after spending years in the Foreign Service or the military service, to become insulated from this aspect of our democratic system, to forget that a free press and free expression are essential parts of it and that we in the Government are subject to the scrutiny of the press and the public.

But this is as it is. The press, the media, and this need for an enlightened public are not going to disappear. This is not a burden on us. It is not additional duty, if you will. It is built into our very concept of government. It is built into your very basic responsibility. The dimension of communication, in this day of instant communication, becomes more and more integral in the execution of whatever responsibilities you have.

So I would suggest that we need, first of all, to adopt a positive, constructive attitude toward the press and its representatives. We should not look on the correspondent as a nuisance to be tolerated or circumvented. He is an intermediary between us and the people, performing a function vital to our society, a function that in execution may cause us some discomfort. Between him and us there is a relationship of mutual dependence. He needs our cooperation to do his job effectively and play his role in our society—and we, equally, need him because we cannot afford to insulate ourselves from the public to which he reports and interprets our actions.

I would not argue that our interests are identical. We in Government naturally want the public to see our actions in the most favorable light. The press and other media, for their parts, have no natural disposition to present them favorably. I would even argue that they have some obligation to present them in a *less* favorable light than that in which we ourselves view them—because, you might say, we are interested parties while they, the media, are dis-

interested observers. In this sense there is a real conflict of interest between Government and the media. But this does not mean that the relationship must be one of hostility. It can and should be a relationship of mutual respect and mutual awareness of each other's point of view.

I think we have two functions in this communication dimension of Government. One is to make the facts known as we know them. In so doing, we must recognize that the media have a right to review the facts as we present them and to determine, by direct investigation if necessary, whether these facts are incomplete or possibly inaccurate.

The second function is to set forth our own evaluation of the facts as the basis for our policy judgments. Here again, like it or not, that evaluation is subject to review. Moreover, it is often reviewed by individuals who are less informed than we are and less qualified to appreciate all its ramifications. Here, it seems to me, we have some responsibility, even though this may sound patronizing, to educate the press representatives, to give them, insofar as we are able, an opportunity to learn all the relevant facts and to understand the judgments we have made based on those facts.

There will always be correspondents who are unresponsive, who lack desired qualifications, or who carry a chip on their shoulder. But I can assure you, on the basis of having dealt with more than 2,000 correspondents in Vietnam, these types are in the minority. Most of our press representatives are responsible individuals, dedicated to the defense and well-being of our society. They have a job to do, a job that we must respect, and they play a role that we must learn to accept.

I often get the feeling that some of our officials regard the press simply as an outlet for their publicity releases—in someone's words, as a handmaiden of Government. This, I submit, is a grave error. The function of the press is to give the public its own, independent view, not just the Government's view, and it is foolish for officials to be annoyed or disappointed when the press performs this function. We must accept the fact that our actions are subject to press analysis. We should ask only that such analysis be responsible and balanced—which, of course, it sometimes is not.

In dealing with the press, there are a few simple principles that need to be observed. One has to do with the withholding of information on grounds of security or sensitivity. In the first place, I believe restrictions of this kind should be kept to the absolute minimum. Secur-

ity should not be used as a pretext for holding back unpalatable truths. When the claim of security or privilege is bona fide, then the only thing to do is simply to refuse to discuss the point. Any responsible correspondent will accept a "no comment" if he is persuaded it is based on legitimate considerations. In Vietnam we asked the press to observe voluntarily certain ground rules concerning publication of specified categories of military information. Over a period of 4½ years, only six violations occurred that were serious enough to lead to a withdrawal of accreditation—and we had some 2,000 correspondents.

The second rule is even more simple: No deception of the press. Our Government faces a credibility gap today. The reasons for it are complex; but, for our purposes this morning, they are not really relevant. The point is, the gap exists; and when the good faith of the U.S. Government is questioned by large segments of its people, then I submit to you that we are in trouble. Whatever the truth of the charge in the past, I think it goes without saying that we should avoid giving any grounds for it in the future. Of course, we are not always able to present all the facts, and the facts we do have may sometimes be incomplete. All that can be expected is an honest presentation of the picture as we have it and full recognition of the right and responsibility of the press to check the information for itself by going to the scene of action and interviewing the participants, if feasible. A correspondent is not doing his job if he is simply a transmission belt for what you tell him.

The third principle has to do with the impact of that first story about an event to hit the papers or television. When a troublesome item has to be released to the press, I think we all are inclined to stand back and take an "if asked" posture—"Don't respond unless you have to." That attitude, it seems to me, defeats its purpose. In such a situation we should be forthright—present the facts, our evaluation of them, and the position or action we propose to take. Too often, in Vietnam, we found ourselves trying to catch up with stories about which half the world had already made up its mind. The classic case was the use of tear gas, a perfectly legitimate and humane weapon, widely used, as you know, in riot control. Yet, we were coy and secretive about it when it was first used in the field. Two correspondents who happened to be on the scene rushed out with a story, based on incomplete information, under a headline proclaiming that American troops in Vietnam had used

gas. Enemy propaganda had a field day, and many people throughout the world still believe that American troops in Vietnam are using toxic gas. If we had taken the initiative and put out a full and frank account of the facts, I am convinced we could have avoided most of the damage that was done.

My final principle also relates to the matter of credibility. In releasing information and evaluation to the press, I would urge that we give some thought to the sophistication of the press and the audiences they reach. Don't hand out a story that paints a complex picture in pure blacks and whites, that describes ambiguities as though they were absolutes, or that covers up the close balance between pro and con considerations entering into a policy or decision. We will get more credibility if we "tell it like it is" at the outset. Eventually the whole picture is going to emerge anyway, whether we like it or not.

The rhetorics and the absolutes of the past are no longer adequate. We talk about a new politics. We in the Government have to design a new communication for today. And many of the methods and many of the principles under which we have operated in the past are no longer adequate.

I would suggest that the full, balanced picture, with a presentation of it by us, is part of this process of new communications and in the long run will bring positive results, rather than negative ones.

Up to now I've been talking about the Government's shortcomings in the public affairs area. The press also has its share. Some of the problems it faces have been clearly demonstrated in Vietnam. The most difficult is finding professionally qualified correspondents who can understand and report something as complex and alien to our experience as what is going on in Vietnam. The volume of coverage and the number of media are greater than ever before. I'm afraid that, too often, the press is being staffed by people who, though highly motivated, are inadequately prepared for their jobs. To some degree, we can help the press to overcome this shortcoming—and I believe we should—by sharing our knowledge with the correspondents as fully as possible so that they can learn on the job. It is as much in our interest as in theirs that a correspondent be well qualified.

The press also needs to try harder, I believe, to adjust certain conceptual terms common in our own culture, such as progress, democracy, and stability, to a local context. The same applies to our standards and criteria of judgment.

Do we appraise Vietnamese society and government by the standards of Jeffersonian democracy? Or do we see their elections, for example, as an attempt by a traditional, authoritarian Asian society to adapt democratic procedures to their own situation? Both we and the press, I believe, are guilty of automatically thinking in Western terms in interpreting and evaluating what is happening in other parts of the world; and, of course, the misconceptions of the press are transferred to the public. This is another area where I think we should conduct a continuing dialog with the press in order to educate each other and, ultimately, the public.

Finally, I worry about the whole institution and practice of modern journalism as it was reflected in coverage of the Vietnam war. I am speaking of such things as the effects of media competition on the accuracy, completeness, and slanting of press reports; the effects of "overkill" in assembly-line reporting of trivial events, and reliance on questionable sources of information. I wonder whether all this makes for clarity or confusion in public understanding. I worry, too, about the tremendous impact of television, which I am certain is providing a distorted picture at times. People in the television industry itself are also worried about it and trying to do something about it. I'm not sure what the answers are.

I would like to suggest that, for those of us in this room, these problems—the challenges to us as Government officials, and the challenges to the press, and the areas in which we can help them—are ones that are becoming increasingly important in the future of our society.

The importance of this dimension, I think, is one that must be recognized; and it is one that you, as the potential principals in embassies and in military commands, must begin to take much more into account in the performance of your command responsibilities than has been the case in the past.

Discussion

QUESTION: You mentioned that military security was the only kind of restriction you would place on correspondents. Would you comment on the problem of zealous correspondents whose criticism of the national effort in Vietnam amounts to a campaign of psychological warfare in reverse? Might this not be just as damaging as a violation of military security?

MR. ZORTHIAN: I may be in a minority on this question, even within my own agency. We often considered censorship in Vietnam and

always concluded that, both as a matter of principle and for practical reasons, it was not feasible—except, of course, with respect to military security. This is the only kind of censorship we have had in our country, going back to World War I when it was first tried. I happen to believe it is the only kind admissible in our society. As soon as you begin to use the criterion of comfort to the enemy in suppressing information, you are well on the way to stopping all dissent, criticism, and independent evaluation. That will be the end of our open society. North Vietnam, with a closed society, enjoys a definite advantage in this respect. We have accepted this handicap. I don't think we can have it both ways.

One correspondent in Vietnam told me, "I'm out here deliberately to make this war look bad, because my paper doesn't think we should be in this war. My paper thinks the greatest service I can perform to the American people is to show the evil of this war. This is our ultimate responsibility to the American public."

Personally, I believe he is wrong, dead wrong. But I'd also hesitate to set myself up as a judge and censor his dispatches.

QUESTION: In justifying the influence of the news media, I gather the argument is that they don't take positions and that they constitute a broad spectrum of the population. How do you reconcile that claim with the fact that correspondents actually represent only a narrow segment of the population?

MR. ZORTHIAN: I doubt whether you could argue that the press refrains from taking a position. Objectivity has been discarded by a large part of the press in favor of fairness, and even this applies, in theory at least, only to the actual reporting. Many would argue that even the reporting is often quite unobjective, almost advocacy. But there is no doubt that a wide variety of opinion is reaching the American public, not only in the editorial columns but through periodicals, films, and all the other media.

Furthermore, the press would point out that the amount of coverage given to official positions, through quotations from the President, the Secretary of State, and on down the line, is far, far greater than comment from all other sources. There is no lack of opportunity for the Government to get its views to the public—through press conferences, press releases, television programs such as "Face the Nation" or "Meet the Press," and many other outlets. Of course, there are ample outlets for the Government's critics, too. I don't really see a problem with regard to diversity of opinion. In fact, it's

the reverse; I would question whether there is enough straight reporting.

QUESTION: Let's take a look at the situation in this country. Isn't it true that the reporting of campus disturbances—such as when 200 students at Columbia rioted and closed the administration office—has tended to obscure the fact that a handful are denying educational opportunities to a vast majority of the students?

MR. ZORTHIAN: The central problem here is not press reporting but television coverage. The television lens has only so much scope and shows only so much of the picture. And yet some thoughtful reporters will say, "Part of our task is to report the unusual deviation from the norm." I wouldn't quarrel with that, but I would urge the importance of deeper perception and more balance. This is what people in television are starting to worry about. More than Vietnam, the criticisms of what happened in Chicago have bothered them. I don't think they have any answers yet, but they are experimenting. For example, on CBS and NBC in these past few weeks you have seen this new program, a sort of 1-hour, newspaper-format type of approach. In short, serious professional journalists are worried about just the type of question you've raised.

QUESTION: Mr. Zorthian, would you discuss the role of JUSPAO¹ in psychological operations in Vietnam?

MR. ZORTHIAN: JUSPAO is a unique organization in our bureaucracy, though the concept is not altogether new. The essential idea was to get away from the normal bureaucratic structure—the State Department, DOD, AID, USIA, and so on—and to approach the task of communication on a functional basis with a single organization. In management terms, it's a horizontal organization, providing communication support for the entire U.S. Mission press effort in Vietnam.

It is truly a joint organization—not USIS (although we provide the bulk of the civilian employees), not military, not AID, not State. It represents all four on a completely integrated basis. The personnel are completely layered, civilians supervising military and military supervising civilians. Funds are provided by all elements and thrown into a common pool.

The basic reason for setting up JUSPAO was the nature of the communications problem in Vietnam. You could not distinguish clearly between audiences. You couldn't talk to a foreign

¹ Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office.

audience, a Vietnamese audience, or a Hanoi audience in a compartmentalized fashion. The only answer was to bring it all together.

JUSPAO's responsibilities range from press activities to support of USIS posts in other countries to the internal psychological operations program. I am sorry we have not discovered a better phrase than "psychological operations," which has some connotations of "psy" warfare, almost a department of dirty tricks. We interpreted the term to mean the whole task of communications by the Vietnamese Government with its population and by the American Mission with the Vietnamese population.

I would give us, maybe, a B-plus on organization, and perhaps a somewhat lower rating on substantive performance. There are several factors involved. First, we had no trained personnel prepared for the particular task. USIA's experience in underdeveloped countries was close to the mark but not altogether applicable. Second, there was our own problem of communicating with the Vietnamese. An American division can replace a Vietnamese division in combat, but Americans cannot substitute for a dialog within Vietnamese society or a government responsive to its own population. We tried, but without too much success. Our terminology and our approach to the Vietnamese sounded too much like translated English.

So we tended to rely too much on what we could do well—turn out billions of leaflets, set up hours and hours of loudspeaker missions. Last year we dropped 5 billion leaflets in Vietnam; that's an awful lot of reading for a small population.

I don't want to knock us down too much. We learned techniques, and we are better this year than we were last. But there was too much reliance on a mechanical media-product rather than face-to-face communication.

To some extent the operation was dated almost before it began. JUSPAO was technically set up on 1 July 1965. It took about a year or a year and a half to get personnel and resources in place and the product coming out. By that time the Military Establishment was up to 400,000 people or thereabouts; and, as you know, it has gone much higher. The war became more conventional, and "psy" war a task for the military rather than one of communicating with the population. Eventually we made an agreement with MACV that the psychological effort against the enemy was their responsibility and that aimed at the friendly population was JUSPAO's responsibility. Even so, there were some jurisdictional problems.

On balance, I would say that the basic concept of JUSPAO, the functional approach to this problem of communication, is valid. It is much superior to the traditional bureaucratic one, with AID providing hardware and training and techniques, and MACV specializing in training of ARVN,² and USIS trying to project the United States and acting as a surrogate information service for the Vietnamese. JUSPAO deserves careful analysis after the war is over for its potential applications elsewhere, particularly to insurgency situations.

² Army of Vietnam.

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Saturday Evening General Session

Thank you, President Hitch, Mr. Reeves. Having a name that begins with Z, this role of bringing up the end of the line is not a new one for me. I assume that by this hour you've had your fill of the media, foreign policy and the rest that goes with it. I'm not quite sure what's left for me to throw light on, or to clarify. And in this situation, I've decided the only approach is the offense -- so I hereby declare Zorthian's dictum which, in a situation like this, says: Act as if nothing prior occurred; ignore all previous discussion; speak as though your revelations are unique and your observations original. This is what I propose to do and I beg your indulgence in this exercise.

I'm here tonight not to try to discuss the substance of the Vietnam war with you and certainly not to try to persuade you of the merits of our involvement there. I'm not sure there's much dialogue left on Vietnam. It seemed to end about two years ago when just about everyone made up his mind. The pros and cons of Vietnam have become a subject on which people's eyes almost glaze.

If I speak about Vietnam almost in a past tense, it is not because I am not aware that it is very much with us at this very moment, in fact, but simply because my own experience there is in the past and because the subject matter with which I want to deal calls for an analysis and perspective. Tonight I want to talk with you about the process of communication, the difficulties we face in our society in this regard and, together with you, analyze and examine the case of Vietnam for whatever it may hold in the way of lessons for all of us, for the future, for other complicated problems which we face in other aspects of our society today, and will face as we go along.

Our goal in this process of communication, I would assume it is agreed, is that of an enlightened public, a public that can exercise a knowledgeable, wise judgement on major problems of foreign or domestic affairs, problems that may involve life and death, war or peace, if you will.

I'd suggest to you that this goal is the very essence of the society in which we exist; and the very heart of the task we face today as a society. And I would also suggest the obvious, that the process of communication is trouble.

There are many dramatic examples we could use to discuss the problem. The choice of Vietnam is a personal one for reasons of reference and experience. It is also, I think, probably the most dramatic, most complex and most difficult task of communication, which our Government and the press together have faced in the past generation. As I say, perhaps distillation and analysis will give us some lessons that can make the job of communication, the process of communication, easier and more effective in the future.

I approach the particular subject with some reluctance and some reservations. Perhaps we are still too close to Vietnam for any real perspective. It is difficult to take an historical approach to the task when headlines about Cambodia face us in the daily newspapers. The intensity, the bitterness if you will, the divisions created by Vietnam are still very real. To put aside emotions and adopt an outlook of detachment towards the problems seems very hard to ask.

Furthermore, Vietnam is a problem that has had its effects and is inextricably entwined with the other problems of our society today, with the disenchantment of our youth, with the issues of a gap in communication of our generations, with the entire credibility of the government. And whether it can be isolated and judged by itself is very difficult. But, even with these reservations, I think the need is so great that we must undertake the task.

In attempting to evaluate Vietnam, the temptation in commenting either on the government or the press is to deal in absolutes, to provide you with sweeping conclusions that lay the blame, or the fault, or the credit strictly on one side or another and leave no room for doubt. I want to avoid this, not through any sense of moderation or through any desire to compromise, but simply because the record is an involved one and does not justify the absolute.

There were very few blacks and whites in Vietnam, very few final judgements that could be made. And certainly the role of the press, the process of communication was among these. If I may, then, let me fall back on the "yes, but" syndrome, the effort to try to identify the problems that existed in this process, the shortcomings as I would see them on the part of both the government and the press, without seeking to weigh the balance or to measure the contribution or the failures of either of the major parties.

To adopt and to look at the problem a little more clearly, I suggest it's necessary to step back, initially, a little further and look at the background, the stage setting of the 60's during which this experience of Vietnam took place. We find a stage that almost argued for a focus for many forces which were coming into play in our society; a society which was growing disenchanted for many reasons, in which communication was becoming more difficult, and in which the generation gap was growing.

Now there is a chicken-and-egg question here. Was Vietnam a product of the disenchantment in the divisions in our society? Was it the cause of them? I suppose sociologists will have to provide the final answer to that question. I would simply note at this point that Vietnam was very much at the center of our problems and that the society and the mood and temper of the times in which it took place was both a result of Vietnam and at the same time had a very major effect ultimately on our national attitudes and our Administration policies towards Vietnam.

The 60's was the period also of an Administration led by a President whose very personality was controversial, whose difficulties in communicating with his electorate had application and implications for Vietnam. The national controversy about LBJ certainly had effect on national attitudes in Vietnam and again, ultimately, on our national policies involving Vietnam.

The 60's were also a period of an amazing explosion in our capability to communicate; a period when, literally, instant communication became possible world-wide. And I would suggest that, as a corollary of that capability, indiscriminate communication became available world-wide. Communication was so immediate, so fast, and so visual that the essential element of discrimination in communication which was possible in the age of the printed word disappeared. And one of the troubles we faced in this task of communication during the 60's was the failure to discriminate; the fact that almost anything said by any public official, whether in a whisper or a shout, was addressed through this technological capability we had to the world at large.

Furthermore, this age of instant communication, of expansive communication came during a period where journalism itself was changing concepts; when there was a requirement in terms of manpower to meet the needs of this communication capability that led to an overwhelming coverage, and I would argue to an over-coverage of most events that took place.

The fourth major element in this stage setting of the 60's was the impatience of the public. A public with a very limited attention span, satiated almost by the information available to it, ready to look for new interests very quickly, looking for simple solutions and quick resolution of problems, without providing the proper evaluation of the complications that exist in our world today.

This, if you will, was the backdrop for Vietnam. Let's turn to Vietnam itself and some of the unique aspects that created problems in communicating. Vietnam presented a society far distant from this country, distant not only physically, but ethically, culturally, socially. It was a Confucian society in a setting that barely existed in our consciousness before 1950, certainly did not exist before World War II. For a European-oriented country, such as ours, to turn suddenly to Asia, even with the experience of World War II and the Korean War under our belts, was a task in shifting of gears which became extremely difficult to undertake. This society, with its own ethics, its own mores, its own heritage, its own values, was one that we found very

hard to understand and, I would argue, still do not fully understand. The nature of the war we face, the guerrilla war, war of liberation, or whatever label you want to put on it, is certainly quite distinct from the conventional wars of our experience. It certainly was not the ball game, the box score type of war, the war where there was clear advance or retreat, where territory was the main objective and the measurement of the war was relatively simple. Instead, this was a war where the essence was an appeal for the support of men's minds, for political commitment, almost impossible to measure; where the war was fought among the civilian population; where the degree of support given to either side was virtually impossible to measure, and where control shifted very quickly and sometimes within 24 hours, back and forth.

It was also a war in which the bench marks were not agreed upon, where we didn't know whether casualty figures had a meaning or not, whether the support of the government through payment of taxes or through participation in an election had meaning or not; a war which the American public found very difficult to fit into its experience, and one which perhaps, even today, has not been so fitted.

Furthermore, the start of the war without a national consensus made popular reaction to it much more difficult. There was not a clean-cut Pearl Harbor, not even a 38th Parallel. This was a piecemeal war, if you will, one which we backed into step by step, so that at each point along the line discussion and dissension were possible and, in fact, continued. There was no cut-off point where the national interests were clearly challenged or when the nation as a whole closed ranks.

Again, in Vietnam, new to our experience, a host government, a sovereign government which was not prepared for the overwhelming presence of the Americans, either officials or the press. At one point, I'll never forget, a Minister of Information in Vietnam told me in response to a complaint by me about the cable facilities for the foreign press: "Barry, this country simply wasn't made for 300 foreign correspondents". His point was a very valid one, not just in terms of the press but in terms of the whole, enormous presence we had in Vietnam. The Country simply wasn't ready for this kind of a war. And the result of these shortcomings, of this capability of handling this enormous Western presence, was very damaging to the Vietnamese as a people in terms of acceptance and sympathy on the part of the press and, ultimately, of the public in the West.

Finally, this was the first war in our history which we have had to try to fight on center stage, the first open war, if you will, the first war without censorship of copy, without complete control of the substance of communication. This is a price we pay for the society we have, but it was a price that we must recognize we did pay. The Vietcong, the North Vietnamese were the closed society that were able to control the information which emerges. We very often felt we had the spotlight on us on center stage,

under complete scrutiny in which every flaw and every defect was magnified and immediately discerned. A difficulty, I suggest, which has a great deal of effect on the communication about the war since all the drawbacks were readily visible.

In this situation, facing these difficulties, how did our two protagonists, the government and the press, perform? I use the word protagonists advisedly because I am convinced, and I hope you would agree, that the basic concept we have of our government and the role of our free press makes an adversary relationship between the government and the press essential. I avoid the use of the word hostile because it need not be hostile, but I am convinced that it must be adversary. I would like to examine the performance, again the shortcomings, if you will, on the part of both.

While I lay emphasis on the shortcomings, let me hasten to say that where there was much that was on the plus side for both, and I would remind my colleagues on the press side that this applies to the government as well. But in terms of drawbacks, let us first look at some of these shortcomings which I suggest existed on the part of the government.

First and foremost, let me suggest that the government does not have, and did not have a concept of press relations, a doctrine for handling the press. It is still true that in our career services an officer can become an ambassador or a general, reaching positions of major responsibility without ever having really been trained to deal with the press or even to face the press.

This is an area I would suggest which deserves a great deal of attention. This lack of a press doctrine, this lack of an instillation in our career officers of a concept of how to deal with the press led to a number of subsidiary shortcomings. The most important I would state in almost civic textbook fashion was a lack of respect and acceptance for the role of the press.

Now, I don't mean not paying lip service to the First Amendment. I mean a failure to really absorb and accept the full implications of what a free press means to our society. That means accepting the role of the press as an independent judge, as a watchdog, if you will, a press that has not only the prerogative, but almost a constitutional responsibility to pass judgement on the facts as the government knows them and on the policies which grow out of those facts.

While I state it as a generalization to which there were certainly individual exceptions, I would contend that institutionally the government did not fully respect the basic concept of a free press and that this constituted a major shortcoming on the part of the government in regard to Vietnam.

Secondly in this area was the government's failure to see the press as an opportunity, not an obligation, an opportunity to communicate with the electorate, to develop that enlightened public which we established as our objective. Too often, more often than not, the press was a burden and sometimes a very frustrating and annoying burden --- at best an obligation --- to

be dealt with. Not often enough was the press seen as a channel of communication with the public.

Again, a shortcoming on the part of the government, again subject to all the drawbacks of generalization, a failure to undertake communication with the candor and sophistication that was essential in the years of the 60's; too great a reliance, if you will, on the rhetoric of the past, the gap between reality and statement that was perhaps acceptable in a World War II but is no longer acceptable in the 60's and 70's by a public which is being inundated with information and is gradually becoming more discriminate.

And again under this general heading: too great a readiness on the part of the government to use the cloak of security as a cover for shortcomings, for failures, for mistakes; too little recognition of the difference between information and publicity, a belief too often -- almost a concomitant of that failure to respect and recognize the role of the press -- a belief too often that the press's role was to serve the government, to become a handmaiden to the government.

And while I do not accept that the government lied frequently, certainly not in Vietnam, I do accept that too often it was a little less than candid, a little too disingenuous in the presentation of its version of events.

Finally, let me suggest a very real and practical drawback on the part of government -- the failure to organize properly for handling the press; a failure to coordinate sufficiently the various elements of the government; a failure to appreciate fully the customs and the tribal habits of the press and to deal with them accordingly.

Now, this seems a fairly strong condemnation, a fairly lengthy list of shortcomings of the government. Lest I seem to have turned too much against my former association, let me say very clearly that the press had sins enough of its own. And if we may, let us turn for a mement or two to some of those shortcomings.

I would suggest that the major shortcomings of the press could be listed under two broad headings: one, the institutional aspects of the press, the institutional aspects of the press as it functions today. I think it is hard to measure, but nevertheless there is no doubt in my mind that the quality and the effectiveness of the coverage was affected significantly by the intense competition which exists in the press today, not just between different media, but within media. The competitive situation between a Huntley-Brinkley and a Cronkite show put a premium on the dramatic, on the sensational. The effect was one that very often gave only a limited and, if you will, unbalanced view of the war.

It seems to me that the nature of the press today, with its tremendous emphasis on volume, on completeness, on thoroughness, very frequently obfuscated the war rather than clarified it. And the individual reader or viewer was very often inundated with information which was not essential and not particularly informative.

Very often, I would suggest, the demand for speed, the emphasis on promptness in coverage, and again this a result of competitiveness, had an effect on accuracy. Heywood Broun used to say there is no deadline for the truth, and I would suggest that our press today might well apply that standard.

Furthermore, in this period of instant communication, a tendency to a simplistic interpretation, a catering, if you will, to the public desire for quick solutions, and a catering which the press can ill afford, particularly, when the story is as complicated as Vietnam.

I would contend that the second major shortcoming on the part of the press was in the area of qualification of the individual correspondent. During the time I was in Vietnam, we accredited some 2,000 different correspondents. This is large enough for a four-year period. If you count repeat visits, second and third trips, we had something like 4,500 accreditations over a four-year period. To speak about this many people as a group, to talk about "the press", is obviously not valid. For among that number were a great many highly competent, well-qualified journalists, the best we have. But far too often there were too many journalists with major outlets who arrived in Vietnam either for too brief a period or with minimal qualifications, and often with no qualifications. It was not unusual, I suggest to you, and the individual cases can be cited to have a correspondent plucked out of Atlanta, or Chicago, or Los Angeles, put on a jet airliner, plunked down in Vietnam 26 hours later and have him broadcasting or writing for an audience of 10 or 20 million Americans within 24 hours after his arrival, with definite judgments on the nature of the war. This I submit is not responsible journalism and is a shortcoming that journalists must face up to and remedy.

Equally, I would suggest that not only was there no preparation in terms of time and experience, there was very little, if you will, preparation for the country. Too many journalists faced Asia for the first time, faced war for the first time, faced dead bodies for the first time. There was a cultural shock, a cultural shock which reflected itself in their coverage. Vietnam was an area where journalists had almost no knowledge, again with the few exceptions, of the history, the heritage, the background of the war, the nature of the competing parties, the standards by which they functioned and the goals they were seeking.

Now perhaps you can take the correspondent with no aptitude or preparation for this kind of a complicated task and ask him to cover an individual combat situation. Perhaps he can then answer the question of whether one side or another side has won on the battlefield. But I'd suggest that he can't do much more than that without adequate preparation. And even in the case of battle, there was a need to interpret the significance of the individual battle in terms of the political implications and impact on civilian thinking.

Now I would agree readily that this type of shortcoming was equally applicable, the criticism was equally applicable, to the government in many cases. But our infantrymen, who had very little background in Vietnam and very little qualification (to) judge the war, were not writing for audiences of 20 million. And the government did seek, ultimately, to try to improve its qualifications, the caliber of its manpower, by investing a year to 18 months of preparation for its key personnel. We did end up, ultimately, with personnel who spoke the language, who could communicate with the Vietnamese in terms the Vietnamese understood because they'd had some preparation on the history, and the background and the culture of that country. Too few correspondents were equally qualified.

The six-months' tour for a correspondent was not unusual. The three-day, quickie, tourist approach to Vietnam was not unusual, and, again, while government personnel very often worked only a year or at the most 18 months, the press's turnover was even faster. In four years in Vietnam I dealt with five generations of correspondents, and by that I mean five different bureau chiefs for the New York Times, certainly as many for NBC and CBS, three at least for the Associated Press, and an equally fast turnover for other major agencies. Again, this is a shortcoming that the press must recognize and remedy.

Finally, let me point out that there was a tendency for the press to regard itself as an internationalized, uninvolved observer. In one way this perhaps is a plus. It certainly increases and underlines objectivity. But it also meant very often that, in terms of individual correspondents, there was almost an anti-American overtone to the coverage. And particularly on the part of non-American representatives, non-American media, the press that arrived in Vietnam came too often without an open mind, with their stories virtually written, with their conclusions certainly determined.

The press, if it is going to claim standards of objectivity and fairness, must begin applying them to correspondents, and to insure that those who approach a story as complicated as Vietnam, do so with some measure of objectivity. My classic example in this case is the New Yorker's running of a series of stories by a young man named Jonathan Schell (that) led to a very moving and effective and damaging book in terms of Vietnam, in support of the Vietnam war, "The Village of Ben Suc". The New Yorker certainly has a right to run just a story, and Jonathan Schell certainly has a right to write about Vietnam in any way he wishes. But what was missing was the notification by the New Yorker to its readers that Jonathan Schell is a confirmed pacifist, which he also has a right to be. But when I read his material, I want to know the preconceptions, the outlook from which he's writing. And when that is not done, the reader is not being provided a basis for a fair judgement on the article.

What must be done in this situation? Well, by implication, the reverse of some of the shortcomings I've listed. In terms of the government, the creation of a press doctrine, the training of its career personnel to understand, respect and respond to the role of the press in our society. A readiness on the part of government officials, from the highest to the lowest, to recognize the existence of the press as an opportunity, as a channel of communication with an electorate. An increased readiness to deal with the public with candor, with honesty and with the degree of sophistication which the public has been led to expect and can absorb. A minimal use of security to cover up. I've never known legitimate correspondents to argue with military security where it was legitimate. They will respect thoroughly a tactical military security. In four years we only had to suspend credentials of four correspondents for violation of military security. But when military security is used as an umbrella or camouflage to cover other ills, the attempt has not been accepted by the press and, properly, has been disregarded. The government's secretiveness and tendency to restrict information must be liberalized, must be loosened up. And, finally, for individual government officials, to acquire a greater understanding, if you will, of the customs and methods of operation of the press, of a recognition of the importance of that first headline and of the initiative in establishing and releasing information under terms of the government's own choosing. A recognition that stories can no longer be limited to a domestic audience, or a world audience, a recognition that agencies of the government are inter-related, that they cannot work in isolation and must be thoroughly co-ordinated.

If you will, on the part of the press again, the reverse side of the criticisms I've mentioned -- an examination of the institution of the press that exists and an effort to remedy some of the shortcomings resulting from the emphasis on speed, and competition and volume. The development, if you will, of new methods, new techniques and new approaches of communicating in the face of these shortcomings. A much greater investment in the preparation of personnel for complicated tasks. An investment in terms of time, if you will, in terms of resources to insure that those who have undertaken the responsibility of communication to millions, are qualified to exercise that responsibility.

And for both the government and the press, if you will, some agreement on standards, some agreement on yardsticks, some agreement on semantics, whether it's a war in Vietnam or a war on poverty here, or a civil rights issue. What do we mean by the terminology we're using? And too often, again, the fact is that in Vietnam, as well as elsewhere, the government and the press using the same words have meant different things. There must be a dialogue, there must be a readiness to agree on basic terms so that the public, in turn, can accept and absorb these same terms and understand them in the same way.

Too often, in Vietnam, we would use words like democracy, or morality, or freedom without any real agreement on their true significance, either among ourselves and certainly not in terms of Vietnamese standards.

Now if all this is done, is the problem solved? I'd suggest not because a third element in this equation is the public. And again, perhaps, from some of my comments you can distill what I regard as the shortcomings in this situation on such complicated stories on the part of the public. Less impatience, greater commitment, greater discernment, greater sophistication and intelligence. These are easy to ask for. I'm not sure this best of all worlds will come about readily. I do suggest that it is a goal we must seek and one which has as a goal that ideal of an enlightened public.

If we'd achieved this goal on Vietnam, I don't know how accurate my crystal ball is, and I certainly can't prove the point, but I do suggest that we might have had a much greater national dialogue before we entered and therefore a more effective one and a more knowledgeable one. And then when we did make a decision, whether we entered or not, we would have had greater consensus. And if we had entered with that greater consensus, I'd suggest that we would have had greater support for the war and a shorter and less costly war in terms of manpower for ourselves and in terms of manpower for the Vietnamese.

This is a crystal ball, and I'd readily admit that perhaps it would not have turned out that neatly. Because what we're dealing with here in this area of communication is not a science, but an art. But it's also an art that we must learn to manage and to handle effectively if we are going to achieve that enlightened public that will insure the continuation of the world in which we live on a decent basis. Thank you very much.

"The guerrilla swims like a fish
through the sea of men,"
according to Mao. What is our
course when the sea is an inviting
one for the fish?

Where Do We Go from Here?

By mid-1969, it had become perfectly obvious that in one way or another, sooner rather than later, the United States was going to disengage in Vietnam. Whatever the precise terms of that disengagement, whatever the ultimate resolution, the effort at counterinsurgency in Vietnam was coming to an end and the way was clear for the inevitable next question: What now? Where do we—the United States—go from here?

The first and easiest answer to the question would undoubtedly be a fervent "never again." And the so-called hawks might be just as emphatic in this response as the doves. For the agony, the bitterness, the tensions which our society has suffered at least in part because of Vietnam have constituted a very heavy price indeed. If there is any reasonable way in which another Vietnam can be avoided in the future, all sensible Americans would accept the alternative. Indeed, the present administration in the now famous no-direct-quote briefing on Guam prior to President Nixon's mid-summer visit to a number of Asian nations laid down just such a national policy: "No more Vietnams."

But while national policy may or may not be able to maintain such a heartfelt intention, prudence requires acceptance of the possibility that our best preventive efforts may be insufficient and that once again somewhere, sometime in the foreseeable future, some country will

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again face an insurgency situation which our national leadership will decide involves our essential interests and requires our assistance. Such a prospect hardly seems likely in today's atmosphere but, nevertheless, only the foolhardy would rule out either the possibility or the need for preparing for that possibility.

An estimate of the likelihood of this prospect is measured best by examining the past. We must recognize that the course of events in Vietnam was such that renewed use of the techniques of insurgency, of wars of liberation at other vulnerable points is possible and even likely.

For neither sentiment nor self-delusion should blind us to the merits of a Communist contention

that Vietnam has proved the validity of the Mao-Giap thesis that a determined, skillful "peoples' effort" can bring the world's most powerful industrial and military power to heel in certain situations short of total war. We can reassure ourselves in many ways. If we want to so argue, we can hold that we succeeded in our basic objective of preventing the takeover of South Vietnam by military force, and in this sense, we have seen to it that aggression has not paid and have forced the aggressor to revert to a political track for his goals, but we should be clear that the other side of the coin is a very persuasive one to dissident elements everywhere in the world: application of insurgency tactics as perfected by the Viet Minh and their successors, the Viet Cong, provides a blueprint for success for "Wars of National Liberation." This Communist brief could be argued regardless of further developments in Vietnam. While the Viet Cong and Hanoi have come to the negotiating table, the fact is that we are there too, dealing with them not as defeated parties but as equals. The argument can extend ad infinitum with point and counterpoint. For the purposes of this presentation, let it simply be acknowledged that there is more than a color of a respectable case to be made from the viewpoint of potential insurgents—and the United States as the prime target for the dissidents of the world would do well to recognize the challenge

may well be mounted once more.

Vietnam, of course, had unique characteristics that made the application of insurgency concepts easier: the largely uninhabited and easily penetrated border areas that permitted infiltration with little hindrance; a tradition of popular opposition to a central government of any kind, let alone one identified with a foreign power; a political, social and historical heritage that facilitated the role of the insurgent; and above all, legitimate political, social and economic grievances on the part of a major portion of the population that needed correction. The specific proverbial ocean was an inviting one for the fish.

But if Vietnam contained characteristics that encouraged the particular type of war which it experienced, it should not be regarded as impossible to reproduce elsewhere. Each potential setting for insurgency will have its special circumstances but resourceful insurgents need only adjust and modify techniques to that particular situation. The effort will not always be effective, but there is no doubt that the basic theories of Mao and Giap can be modified for situations of many types. It will be largely a matter of imagination and skill that will determine whether an insurgency presents a real threat which requires assistance beyond local resources.

Fortunately, there can be a corollary flexibility in the response to insurgency, provided certain essential bedrock principles are observed. It is these principles that this paper will seek to identify and examine. These principles are relatively few in number and simple in concept but extremely difficult to apply consistently in the face of counter pressures. The problems of application have been discussed at great length in the continuing analysis of Vietnam. At this point, we limit ourselves to the exercise of distilling the lessons of Vietnam and pinpointing fundamental requirements for future successful responses to insurgency—no matter how determined and skillful. Furthermore, the requirement for modification in application to particular situations is a demanding one but is not considered here simply because

the basics must be absorbed first—and then the variation can be almost infinite depending on the individual setting.

This act of identification of essentials accompanied by the development of doctrine and capability has an additional prospective virtue of serving as a deterrent to future challenge. For, while the potential insurgents of the world are likely to be encouraged by the course of events in Vietnam, so the counterinsurgents have also had the opportunity to test their methods and should be better prepared in any future contest. If that better preparation is evident, then the likelihood of needing it is reduced. If you will, the United States has to be visibly less of a mark, less of a big, hopeless, sitting duck for every small fry movement that wants to demonstrate its insurgency prowess—and the challenge may be discouraged by the elimination of such a tempting target.

Our creditability in this context of preventive readiness will be better established by a vigorous distillation and acceptance of the lessons of Vietnam—a process that has been relatively neglected under the pressures of the immediate problems facing us in the recent past. The agencies of government—primarily the military—directly involved in Vietnam have been so busy trying to fight the war and our society as a whole has been so absorbed debating it that there has been too little effort devoted to a concerted and systematic evaluation of the Vietnamese experience or to the corollary development of a strategic doctrine for counterinsurgency. We have had much on tactics; too little on strategy. We have in effect had too few qualified specialists writing for us on how to meet the challenge of insurgency.

The emphasis on "we," the United States, is a deliberate one. For our concept of response to insurgent challenge must necessarily grow out of the nature of our role in a prospective insurgency situation—a role in sharp contrast to the problems facing the existing local social structure and government.

The most likely prospect and the one that will require the greatest

skill is a situation similar to Vietnam: an insurgent challenge to an existing government which we regard and continue to treat as independent and allied rather than subordinate and submissive. We differed in Vietnam—and the likelihood is that we will differ in future situations—from the British in Malaya, perhaps the most relevant of previous counterinsurgency situations. The British were in charge with a direct line of authority in Malaya. When we talk about the United States meeting an insurgency challenge, we are really talking about a situation in which we will be assisting an existing government; in fact, we will be in an allied role, not a position of command. The difference is enormous.

This fundamental characteristic will inevitably color our approach, our policies and our actions. It determines the principles which we seek to apply and provides the basis for our participation and effectiveness. It also limits the pertinence of other experiences and situations. It is why we must develop a doctrine based on the type of situation and relationship with the local government in which we are likely to find ourselves.

It is in this context that we can identify four essentials of counterinsurgency for future American involvement. While these principles seem primer level in formulation, the failure to observe them fully in spirit and concept led to many of our difficulties in Vietnam and similar shortcomings in the future would cast doubt on the potential effectiveness of any response by us to a resourceful insurgent movement.

These principles, of necessity, revolve around the basic ingredients in the type of situation likely to face us: the United States, the host government, the relations between the two and the process of communicating to our respective publics and to the world as a whole. It is useful to examine each of these broad segments and establish some basic considerations which must be observed.

Perhaps one note of caution or limitation is essential if the following presentation of principles is to be placed in proper perspective.

Discussion of insurgency—or counterinsurgency—should not be undertaken in the context of the more conventional war that eventually evolved in Vietnam through the presence of more than one-half million American troops and many tens of thousands of North Vietnamese regulars. Many of the principles enunciated below still have relevance even when the conflict reaches the classical third stage of insurgency that finally emerged in Vietnam but the desired application of these principles is intended to take place long before that phase—indeed, in time for the third phase to need never arrive. For though these principles will still have relevance, it is also true that they are harder to apply and even less effective as the war grows; changes if you will from the relative fluidity, political as well as military, of an insurgency to the rigidity and massive bluntness of a more conventional war. Our remarks are to be read in the framework of a true insurgency; not an insurgency transformed into a battlefield war.

FIRST, the involvement of the United States: the principles governing the American part of a counterinsurgency effort break down into two broad categories—basic philosophy and organization. The two are closely interrelated.

In terms of philosophy, we must first and foremost accept fully in deed as well as in word the truism that insurgency movements almost by definition—and the response to them—are essentially political or at most political/military, not exclusively or even predominantly military. Without the acceptance of this principle, we are on a completely false footing and we can save ourselves a great deal of disappointment by not getting involved. In insurgency, it is the political agent backed up by the military capability who provides the cutting edge and the response or “defense” must be based essentially on the same approach. As simple as the point may seem, we have not given much evidence of learning the lesson in the past while the Communists have demonstrated full apprecia-

tion of the basic principle for more than fifty years. Our involvement in terms of assistance to a host government cannot be limited to hardware and/or economic assistance; it must extend into a political area without apology or hesitation. Or, perhaps stated better, we must have assurance that an effective political program will be undertaken by the host government and we in turn must insist and assist in such a program.

Secondly, our approach and the organization for our assistance must be determined by this interrelation of political and military factors. Some of the most astute observers in Vietnam insist that the greatest contribution made by the Viet Cong to the art of insurgency has been organization—and there is much to be said for the theory. Conversely, it might be argued with considerable validity that the greatest American weakness in Vietnam was organization. In effect, we sought to conduct our portion of the effort for many years through the mechanism of a bureaucratic structure designed for normal government operations in Washington. We worked closely with a military that, like the military in all underdeveloped countries, was intensely political—and told our own military to stay out of the political aspects, a restriction our own military accepted much too willingly. Similarly, our civilian agencies—State, AID, and USIA—avoided the military aspects of the effort for too long. Only the CIA tried to bridge the gap but it was too inhibited by its very nature to serve the purpose. It was not until the late stages of the war that some of these artificial barriers began to break down—and in truth, we must recognize that the essential erasing of agency distinctions was never complete, nor was command and responsibility in Vietnam ever truly unified under one chief.

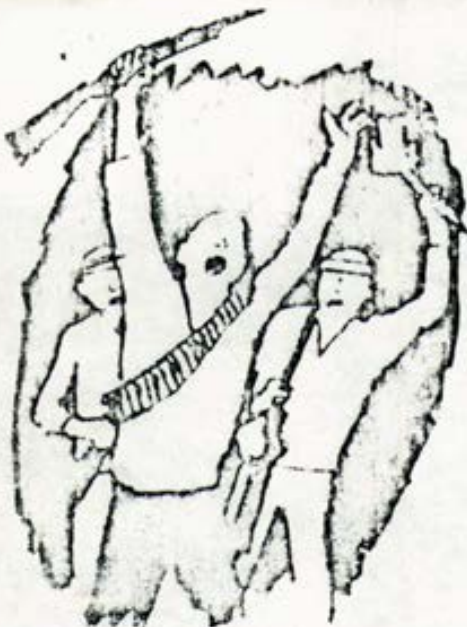
For the future, we need to establish a United States governmental organization that is designed specifically for counterinsurgency rather than conventional war. Such an agency must initially break down the rigid distinction between military and civilian personnel and among Washington agencies just as

our doctrine of operations must break down the artificial distinction between the political and military aspects of the war. Recognizing that an insurgency situation is essentially a political problem or at most political/military need not predetermine the category of personnel who should conduct the effort. Not only is the military not ruled out of such an undertaking but quite to the contrary: the military must participate, provided it recognizes the nature of the effort and becomes qualified to contribute to the political dimension. This is particularly true and particularly difficult for our own military which traditionally has either avoided politics completely or has tended to be identified with the status quo. An insurgency situation requires our military to be political—as distinguished perhaps from engaging in politics in a domestic sense—and to be sensitive and responsive to the need for political change in the host country.

Similarly, civilian—or political—personnel must recognize and accept the military dimension of the insurgency situation with full appreciation for the problems and capabilities of the military forces. Separating the civilian participant from the military aspects of the situation is just as damaging to the effectiveness of the overall effort as separating the military from the political aspects.

It is not until one has served within our government that one appreciates the depth of the heresy involved in the foregoing statements. But, if we do not catch up with the Communists now after fifty years and several major examples of this interrelationship of political and military factors and the need for proper organization and personnel to conduct an effective campaign, then perhaps we should not even try to undertake a counterinsurgency effort again and simply concede that we are not capable of meeting a challenge of this type.

More than anything else, the direction of any future United States effort in counterinsurgency needs the distinguishing characteristic of a coordinated, integrated single channel of political/military authority and organization.



THE second essential to consider is the role of the host government. If Vietnam has taught us nothing else, it has taught us the importance of the nature and calibre of the host government which we are assisting: if that government represents only the status quo, an oligarchy or a dictatorship, which has neither support nor potential support of the population nor any interest in gaining such support, then we are better off rejecting whatever reasons justify our involvement. A dictum applies. If the host government is not interested in undertaking the programs necessary to gain the support of its people, then all the assistance we provide will be useless. The critic will say that this is a circular argument; that if the existing government were interested in the welfare of the people, the insurgency would not have been able to start in the first place. The objection does not necessarily hold. There are certainly governments seeking to respond to the needs of a population which have not had the time or the means to do so; there are elements within societies that recognize popular needs but need encouragement to emerge and assurance of assistance and support to carry out needed reforms; there are progressive political parties which prefer evolution to harsh revolution. These are the type of groups with which we must associate ourselves. Without them, it is preferable to save ourselves the heartbreak and blood and treasure for in the long run, we will expend all three and have little to show for

any. In any counterinsurgency effort, we thus need a host government interested in responding to the legitimate needs of its people rather than a simple preservation of the status quo—and that government must be prepared to mount and carry through a necessary program of political, social and economic change. Here again, the concept is deceptively simple, the execution extremely difficult.

RELATIONS between the two governments is the third fundamental aspect that must be considered. Here is an area which raises all kinds of sensitivities and limitations, both for us and for the host government. Our role, presumably, will be one of assistance: the host government will be sovereign and independent. And yet, with due regard for public sensitivities and visible humiliation, we must not permit our surrogate role to inhibit the use of our assistance—military and economic—as leverage to press for the desired goals of political, social and economic responsiveness to the needs of the people. How we apply our pressures is a matter of skill and adaptation to the peculiarities of the nation involved, but applying such pressures when required is essential to success. Once more we find a fundamental principle which is relatively easy to state and enormously complex in application. In Vietnam, we either refrained from applying our leverage sufficiently or, when we attempted to do so, we did it so crudely and visibly that it was almost self-defeating. Perhaps the ultimate test of diplomacy in an insurgency situation is the effective application of leverage based on our assistance. We have a perfectly valid rationale for such pressure. Our lives and resources are involved and our stake in the effectiveness of the host government is a very real one.

FINALLY, the fourth principle in the basics of counterinsurgency is the effective communication of the nature, goals and progress of the effort to the public of both the United States and the host country—and indeed to the population of the world at large. Volumes can, have

been and will be written about the communication process in the Vietnam war. For purposes of this particular discussion, it is enough to note that the effort of the United States government fell short of the needs; that the lack of understanding and support at home led inevitably to the presidential speech of March 31, 1968, and the subsequent American determination to disengage almost regardless of consequences. In a very real sense, as seen from Hanoi, history has repeated itself. If the French effort against the Viet Minh was lost in metropolitan France, with the climactic factor being Dien Bien Phu, the American effort might similarly be said to have been lost in the metropolitan United States with the ultimate disillusionment coming in the Tet offensive of 1968.

It is patently clear that popular support is needed for a counterinsurgency effort—both in the country of origin and in the country of assistance. That support must be based primarily on the substance and attractiveness of the political/military program being conducted by the host government and leadership—and thus the relative appeal of the competing sides from the viewpoint of ultimate justice. But communication in today's world has become so immediate and pervasive that, even with a valid program, the failure to communicate effectively can leave an information vacuum which will inevitably lead to an erosion of support. The requirements for successful communication in such circumstances are demanding but failure in this vital area ultimately can undermine the entire program.

For it is no longer valid to assume that US official identification with one side assures an automatic base of support in the US body politic; in fact, given the nature of today's skepticism about official acts, US involvement might almost mean the opposite. A major communication effort is essential right from the start—an effort based on candor, openness and dialogue.

STRIPPED of all elaboration, the bedrock requirements of a successful counterinsurgency doctrine for
(Continued on page 46)Y

the United States in the role of assistance to an existing government thus can be stated as follows:

1. Recognition by the United States that a successful effort depends on an integrated and responsive political/military program; and organization of our own considerable resources in accordance with this principle as a means of maximum effectiveness.
2. Recognition of the same basic philosophy by the local leadership which we assist and a readiness on its part to carry out aggressively and energetically an effective program along these lines.
3. A readiness to use American assistance, both military and economic, as leverage on the host government to pursue these goals consistently and vigorously.
4. Effective communication of the program and the effort to

the people of the the assisting and host countries.

As important and critical as these four essentials are, they are still relatively easier to distill and identify than to apply. And in this latter task lies an additional great challenge for future American practitioners of the art of counterinsurgency. To take full advantage of our experience in Vietnam, to insure that the trained manpower we have acquired is not dissipated, to provide an effective ready capability in this highly specialized field of endeavor, some center of coordination and development is necessary. The exact nature of that center can be flexible. One approach would be to have some existing agency of government, such as the Kennedy Center at Fort Bragg, serve as an executive agent for the whole government. Another possibility would be to set up an independent planning office, such as the Office of Emergency Planning for Civil De-

tense, to serve the same function. But in one form or another, the United States needs a center for counterinsurgency to evolve on behalf of the entire government, military as well as civilian, a doctrine for the future based on our experiences in Vietnam and elsewhere and taking into account the refinements in tactics and theory which Communists will undoubtedly develop and disseminate in the years ahead. Such an agency would also draw up contingency plans for possible trouble spots in areas of potential American vital interests.

The creation of an independent center with interagency authority for this purpose would probably require special approval by Congress. The necessary legislation could provide the planning agency with a small budget and modest manpower to undertake training of personnel from all appropriate military and civilian agencies and a charter to evolve national counterinsurgency doctrine. Such an agency could also keep a master list of

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skilled government personnel, regardless of service, who have demonstrated special aptitude for counterinsurgency roles and even train limited cadres of personnel in the language, culture and political situation of countries where insurgency might involve the United States. The integrated civilian/military approach cutting across existing government agencies is essential in this process of preparation. Not only should the development of doctrine and the training process draw on the personnel of many agencies, but these same personnel could play a missionary role in spreading concepts during their service with their parent organization.

Once a situation deteriorates and a national determination is made that American assistance is required in an insurgency situation, the agency could even play an operational role. Initially and at a low level of activity this agency could work perhaps within the existing diplomatic structure in the same

manner that CIA or Special Forces elements have functioned in various situations in recent years. But, when the situation becomes more critical, when and if we approach the scale of assistance to Vietnam of the early sixties, then the President could transfer responsibility for direction of American involvement in the country over to the insurgency agency. Thus, all American elements in that country—State, Defense, CIA, AID, USIA, etc., would come under one direction and one leadership. In effect, the President could apply the joint command concept to the insurgency field, establishing a channel of single authority reporting back through any necessary intermediate levels to one point of authority in the United States—the National Security Council, a specially constituted Civilian/Military Chiefs of Staff or whatever other structure is devised. The principle is the important point: total integration of the civilian/military effort both in the field and in Washington.

There is much to be said for the proposition that only through some such device—whether an agency specially established for this purpose or assignment of the function to an existing organization in the role of executive agent for the government—can the United States properly prepare for and, if necessary, conduct the counterinsurgency effort of the future. Integration of effort, a breaking down of bureaucratic barriers, an acceptance of the interrelation of all aspects of counterinsurgency is absolutely essential for our future readiness. Whatever unorthodoxy is required to apply these principles must be accepted.

At enormous cost in Vietnam, we have gained the experience and foundation necessary to conduct more effective national efforts in counterinsurgency situations. If we build on this base along the lines of the fundamental principles which can be distilled from that experience, then perhaps the price we will have to pay need not be nearly so high if there is a next time. ■

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THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS
IN COMBATING "WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION"

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OUTLINE

"The Use of Psychological Warfare Techniques in Combatting Wars of National Liberation" - Barry Zorthian

Introduction:

Our tradition and experience give us little aptitude or skill in the conduct of psychological operations. Our performance is influenced by our belief in:

1. The separation of the military from political affairs
2. Our concept of an open society
3. Our past military experience which has been conceptually simplistic and conventional
4. The confusion created by the term "psychological operations".

Basic Principles:

This shortcoming must be remedied if we are to perform effectively in future insurgency situations. Psychological operations must be based on five principles:

1. The psychological operator must participate to the fullest in the policy making process as well as the communicating process.
2. The psychological operations message must adhere closely to reality.
3. The psychological operation cannot transmit inconsistent messages to different audiences.
4. The assisting power cannot substitute for the host government in the task of communicating with its people.
5. The process of communicating must be undertaken on the basis of functional integrity.

Having identified these five basic principles, the presentation then examines functions, organization, personnel and techniques for psychological operations. All should be characterized by one essential feature: integration of effort between personnel, between audiences, between functions.

In the case of functions, psychological operations has a major staff role - first, in the identification of desirable programs and then in participation in the policy-making at the highest levels. In both, he must insure the greatest possible consideration for the psychological factor. Beyond this role he then has the function of actual communication - the operational role. While this latter is the more conventional of his roles, it is actually the lesser in comparison to the staff function.

In the case of organization, the basic requirement is integration under central direction. The actual placement of boxes in the chart is more a matter of preference and local considerations than one of rigid standardization provided that all aspects of communication - domestic and foreign audiences, press relations and psychological warfare, staff and operational functions, military and civilian operations - are under one general authority.

In the case of personnel, again integrity provides the keynote with use depending on capability and skill rather than military vs. civilian identification. Personnel from the host government must be from and of the people while those from the assisting government need aptitude and background. All need training in the task of communicating to that particular audience. The elimination of distinctions between military and civilian so both appreciate the complementary nature of political and military efforts is essential to effective operations.

In the case of techniques, many detailed considerations are involved

depending on audience and attitudes. In general terms, however, the points of consistency and relation to reality must be observed. Domestic friendly audiences should receive emphasis on positive accomplishments of the government while hostile audiences should be dissuaded from actions supporting the insurgency. General conditions must be carefully and accurately described and promises scrupulously kept.

Facts and reality should be observed also in communicating to foreign audiences with the foreign press regarded as an opportunity rather than a burden. There is considerable backlash effect in communication to foreign audiences - and this interaction can serve to strengthen internal efforts.

Finally, the entire psychological operations effort depends on the merits of the government's program and actual execution in terms of the aspirations of the population. If those are not well selected and skillfully executed, then all other aspects of the counter insurgency program will be ineffectual and that result will be particularly true of psychological operations.

Introduction

Despite the increased attention it has received during the past ten years in Vietnam, psychological operations remains the least understood and most undeveloped of all our concepts in regard to wars of insurgency. This deficiency must be corrected if we are to be more successful in our response to challenges of a similar nature in the future.

It should be noted at the start of this discussion that the term "wars of insurgency" is used here almost interchangeably with wars of national liberation. The former could of course be non-Communist and might even be justified and merit our support in the right circumstances while the latter is a term of Communist origin and significance. However, for purposes of this discussion, we are assuming that the government being challenged by insurgents is one which we should and do support against an internal challenger, aided usually by foreign powers hostile to United States national interests.

Psychological operations is defined and used in this paper as nothing more -- and nothing less -- than the whole process of communication in a war-time situation and is critical to the effort to counter insurgency. It is also one area in which Americans should logically excel. Who else made the "opinions of mankind" such a tenet of faith? But our aptitude and capability in the field are questionable and an analysis of the reasons for these limitations as well as the precepts which should guide us is essential for an improvement in the effectiveness of our efforts in any future insurgency situation.

Our shortcomings in this field are rooted in both our basic concepts of society and our particular national experience in war and near-war. The size and scope of this discussion permits at best only a cursory commentary on these

sociological and historical elements but at a minimum, identification of them is necessary to provide some of the background for our experience and lessons in Vietnam.

The first difficulty which should be recognized is our basic belief in the separation of the military from any political role. The reverse of that proposition is also true of course: the civilian is supposed to stay out of purely military operations (except of course for the ultimate civilian control of the military represented in the role of the President as Commander-in-Chief). This separation is as fundamental to American tradition as the separation of church and state and the roots go back almost as far. (Such seeming exceptions as General MacArthur's pro-consul role in Japan eventually proved the point since his dismissal was a result of his involvement in the political side of the Korean War.) This paper reflects neither desire nor possibility of changing such a basic tenet of our faith - but certainly the effects of the principle should be recognized and appropriate compensation made where the situation or circumstances require. And wars of insurgency (and probably most wars of the future except brief nuclear holocausts) are such situations.

Another one of our basic beliefs which affects the practice of psychological operations is the concept of an open society: a philosophy that is particularly significant in these days of mass communications, both visual and audio. The overwhelming presence of the media today magnifies our tradition of close public scrutiny of all government action and stands in sharp contrast to the control of motives and actions available to a closed society. Here too, the basic concept is cited rather than criticized.

The first of these affects our organization for psychological operations as well as our general outlook for it means that when we talk about a combined political/military effort, we are running against tradition and habit and that established walls must be demolished. The second means that when we think or act in the area of psychological operations, we do so on center stage in the

full glare of spotlights and with little possibility of inconsistency or impropriety - even if we should want to indulge in either.

Both problems are complicated by our martial experience. For psychological operations in any real sense have hardly been essential to our military operations in either of the great wars - or even of Korea. (Earlier wars are less pertinent to the present body of living Americans.) Ours was a simplistic approach and success: banners flying; military power blunt and dominant; civilian populations almost incidental. All our history and image of war has been relatively uncomplicated. When the bugles blared, politics was put aside and the military took over in classical fashion. Psychological operations were used in a most limited tactical sense at the battlefield and perhaps in the broadest strategic sense in terms of an Atlantic Charter or a Fourteen Points but, certainly, they were never intertwined as an essential part of our effort from grand strategy down to front line platoon operation.

Furthermore, our basic experience in conflict usually involved only civilian populations of ethnic and cultural background that had some mutuality and relevance to our own experience. Primarily, this meant Europe with a similar Christian-Judeo tradition and, thus, with roughly the same ethics and values. Remember we never fought the war with Japanese in Japan or really made much appeal to the Japanese people during World War II. The Korean War was closer to the population but even that was limited since the sustained fighting took place largely in the underpopulated areas. We really had no experience relevant to Vietnam from the viewpoint of psychological operations, let alone military tactics.

For all these reasons - presented above in the most abbreviated and simplified form - Americans have had little feel for psychological operations at

any point and almost no skill in execution where force and circumstance made them conscious of the need for it. Our concept of execution was perhaps summed up best in the directive issued so often by the uninitiated in psychological operations: "go out and make a little propaganda on this action."

As a result, our performance in the past has been almost primitive, starting with the most fundamental error of all: the identification of psychological operations as a separate dimension of war, as an add-on if you will to the military and economic and political policies under which the effort is conducted. Certainly, there are psychological operations and psychological operators just as there are economic operations and economic operators but the very first lesson we must learn is a rejection of any thought that the psychological dimension either exists in a vacuum or can stand on its own feet. In the fullest sense, and particularly in the war of insurgency, psychological operations must be considered as integral to every action and policy; must be woven into every move and decision; must be as natural and instinctive as the air we breathe. What else is the true meaning of Mao's famous aphorism about the fish and the ocean?

Part of our difficulty in understanding the role of psychological operations is the very term. Here again, one goes back to history. Psychological operations was a somewhat strange new field to Americans, certainly outside the American tradition, questionable at best, something alien at worst. Psychological operations and psychological warfare and propaganda and dirty tactics and sometimes even black magic seemed mixed all together into a new art conducted quite separately from the more familiar and comprehensible tasks of the infantry and artillery and armor.

Because of these implications, there is great attraction to the thought

of discarding the entire phrase "psychological operations" and seeking an alternative which comes closer to the desired meaning. But by now, the term is ingrained in general use and there does not seem to be an acceptable substitute available: propaganda, psychological warfare, information - all have their own definitions more limited in scope and use than psychological operations and therefore do not serve the purpose. One that comes close - and tends to be used by the Communists in this context - is political warfare but this too has evolved somewhat different meanings of its own in our use by connoting the determination and execution of policies as well as their communication. So, both because of habit and because of lack of an adequate substitute, this discussion will continue to use the term "psychological operations".

Whatever it is called - and I hasten to add that the semantic problem is not an inconsiderable one because of the connotations to unsophisticated participants in the war - the basic concept of this dimension as integral to every other part of our response to wars of insurgency is essential. The validity of this fundamental principle was accepted by the Communists many many years ago and constitutes dogma for them in wars of national liberation. In fact, though the concept is not ideological, it has been effectively used only by totalitarian groups - at least in the twentieth century. To overcome this shortcoming, we must develop techniques and organization which make full use of psychological operations in the framework of an open society in responding to wars of insurgency.

This is essentially what was tried in Vietnam. And though our conduct of psychological operations there was closer to requirements than in past wars, the importance of this consideration, the complexity of the situation, and the lack

of effective mixture of the Confucian and Christian-Judeo outlooks represented by the partners made the performance limited in success even at its most effective stage. We meant well and understood the needs better but our achievements were generally quite modest. What is needed now is an examination of this performance and distillation of lessons and doctrine to guide us in the future. The inquiry can be best conducted through a review of basic principles, functions, organization, personnel and techniques.

Basic Principles

Without attempting a listing and presentation of all the basic principles which should be applied in the conduct of psychological operations, reference to at least some of the most pertinent is worthwhile. If insurgency is the effort to overthrow the established government by leading eventually to Giap's third stage of a general uprising which commands the support of the population, then the government's equal desire to maintain and intensify the support of that population is the essential objective of the government's program. Just what constitutes appropriate actions towards that end is a question which need not be answered here. In Vietnam, we would usually list these requirements under five general headings: a "just" government, land tenure, education, medicine and economic improvement. The point is that the needs of the people, the actions necessary to gain their support must be determined and acted upon. That, if you will, in all its complexity is the task of the government seeking to resist insurgency - and I would suggest the role of psychological operations is support of that effort by communication.

But if the psychological operator is to be effective in his share of the overall task, then he must have a voice in the determination of those policies

which he must communicate. In fact, the impact of those policies when communicated should be one of the principal considerations in their adoption. And the determination of what will make an impact leads to an important role for the communicator: responsibility for the survey or research that points to the desirability of various actions. The results of that search must be incorporated into the policy-making process. And thus we have the first basic principle which must be observed: the psychological operator, the communicator must participate to the fullest in the policy-making process as well as the communicating process. In fact, his contribution in this regard may be even more important in final effect than the actual task of communicating. The point will be discussed again in the context of functions for the psychological operator but, here, the basic principle must be stated.

The essential need of course is the determination and adaptation and execution of effective, attractive, beneficial policies designed to garner support of the population. The other part of the process, the actual task of communicating, is also critical and both grows out of and must be tied closely to the first. The second psychological operations principle that needs citing is this requirement to base communication on reality. There can be no gap between the two - not even in societies that we consider somewhat unsophisticated in communications terms. For one thing, just as a matter of ethics, there should not be a gap between message and reality. For another, a gap cannot remain unnoticed for long. It does not require modern communications to reveal the discrepancy. The bamboo telegraph does perfectly well. The gap between Diem's promises and actions was quickly discovered. The gap between Viet Cong promises and actions took a little longer because it was less visible right away but the facts caught up. And with the transistor radio - and now even

television - in wide use, the time required for the public awareness will be telescoped even more.

This requirement for close adherence to reality is somewhat at variance with the concept of psychological operations as something separate and apart from the main thrust of operations. It violates the thought of clever, deceptive frontline psychological warfare. Actually, there are circumstances under which short-lived psychological tricks in the tactical sense are both possible and profitable but these are at most limited exceptions to a fundamental rule of basing psychological operations on a foundation of reality.

On this score at least, the concept of an open society which was described earlier as one of the drawbacks to our effectiveness in psychological operations constitutes an asset - the existence of that unblinking spotlight represented by the press constitutes a force for observation of the rule; it helps to keep us "honest" if you will and, in the framework just described, becomes a plus on the side of effectiveness.

The third principle for psychological operations is consistency of message to different audiences. There are distinctions to be sure between rural and urban audiences, between domestic and foreign, between friendly and hostile but those differences are ones of emphasis and interest. Just as there cannot exist a gap between message and reality in the long run, so there cannot exist a gap between the substance of messages to these different audiences. A different content may be delivered to different audiences but a contradictory one may not. Both ancient and modern means of communication and the efforts of the other side will serve to provide extensive public circulation of any differences.

Once more, the open society concept is a restraint on violation of the

principle - or in this situation perhaps is the foundation of the rule. For the press in its broadest sense becomes so pervasive through the scope of its transmission that the distinction between audiences disappears. Modern communication is intense, instant and indiscriminate and the communicator in war or peace cannot assume any compartmentalization of audience on subjects of interest - and in war or limited war, interest extends virtually to all aspects of the confrontation. This interrelationship of audience is a factor that is too often disregarded by the unskilled psychological operator.

A fourth basic principle for this process of communicating is recognition that the assisting power - in our terms, the United States - can never be a substitute for the host government in the act of communicating. Some of our most nettlesome difficulties in actual operations in Vietnam grew out of our failure to observe this principle. The reasons were understandable. The difference in pace and concepts, the difference in ethics and customs, the differences in desire and capability led Americans to conclude repeatedly - and perhaps rightfully - that the Vietnamese were not doing the job. As a result, proverbial American impatience led to the inevitable effort to do the job ourselves. The effort was doomed to failure before it started. Americans are having considerable trouble communicating with themselves, let alone with Asians in a completely alien setting. When we realized that we could not do the job for the Vietnamese, we finally devoted greater attention and resources to getting them to do the job themselves. And then again, we erred. We insisted that the task be done with our tools through our techniques in our image. What emerged was something neither American nor Vietnamese and was often characterized by the worst of both. Certainly, there has to be effective communication but it cannot be effective through surrogate channels; the host government must be the

communicator with its own tools through its own techniques in its own image. The assisting forces have their own message to communicate - the reason and nature and actions of their contributions - and they can assist the host government with hardware and advice behind the scenes but this is a subsidiary role at most and there can be no diminution of the responsibility of the host government in communicating with its own people.

Finally, a fifth principle which is equally fundamental is the need to recognize that the process of communication must be approached on the basis of functional integrity. To put it simply, there is no compartmentalization in the task. This statement has implications, of course, for organization and those will be considered in due course but the essential point involved in the one of substantive unification. This means that there can be no separate or uncoordinated approach to the military, political or economic aspects of the task just as there can be no essential distinction between audiences. Communication is of one piece - and disregard of the principle leads to disaster in effectiveness for inevitably, the different parts end up at cross purposes. Particularly is this true for military and civilian aspects. If the distinction has any validity at all in insurgency situations, it has none in the task of communicating. And here we require considerable adjustment in the traditional thinking of both our military and civilian elements for the concept requires each to accept the other's interest and involvement and joint participation.

Functions

These principles lead to the statement of functions for psychological operations. If the policy process of identification, adoption, execution and communication of policy is observed, the role of the psychological operator

becomes easier to define. His tasks fall into two broad categories - staff and operational - and then in turn into a number of subordinate functions.

Under the heading of staff functions, he must help both identify and determine policies and here all his knowledge of the people and his awareness of the preferable in communication terms comes into play.

The task of determining needs is far from a simple one. The great leader will know instinctively what his people want and the government that has its roots in the population will find the knowledge evolving from its ranks. But insurgency usually means that the government in power has lost at least partial touch with the people and has not facilitated development of natural channels for determining its people's needs and so an identification process is essential.

Here is a major task for the psychological operator for even if the sophisticated survey organizations of advanced societies were possible, usually they would not be effective in obtaining an accurate index into people's needs. So the communicator must use methods of determination that are at once both primitive and skillful: primitive in actual appearance and highly sophisticated in penetrating age-old cynicism and distrust in order to reach the people's innermost thoughts. The question arises as to the means for attaining these results. The site and circumstances will determine that, of course. But certainly the whole process must be indigenous. Simply put, the surveyers must come from the ranks of those being surveyed and must speak their language and know their burdens. The Viet Cong were particularly effective in this regard - more so certainly than the representatives of the Saigon government who too often not only did not go into the hamlet but when they did, were patently town boys wearing white shirts and store shoes with little knowledge and experience

in the lives of those being surveyed. In such circumstances, the results of the survey inevitably were virtually useless. The surveyer must probe, must distill and must present perceptive conclusions to the policy maker. Armed with this insight into the people's needs, the psychological operator then faces a further staff function in the process of determining policy. And here he must play a bold and active role. For while the popular appeal of particular actions cannot always be the controlling factor in the adoption of policy, it should certainly constitute a major consideration and should be ignored only for the most overriding reasons. Further, if the factor of appeal must be overlooked, the communicator can often offer modification or method of presentation that will increase its acceptability. But this is the negative aspect of the communicator's task; his role in the policy-adoption process must be more positive and constructive. Having determined the appropriate course of action through survey and research, he is in a position to make a vital contribution to the determination. And his skill and persistence in advocating the desirable course of action can often spell the difference between selection and rejection. Furthermore, it is essential that this participation and contribution take place in the inner circle of policy-making so that the critical importance of the psychological role, including the subsequent task of communicating is both accepted by subordinates in all categories as fully supported by senior authorities and achieves the greatest possible impact because the need has been taken into account in the policy decision.

Once having influenced the adoption of policy, the psychological operator does not have a primary role in execution but he has an important function nevertheless. His is a role of monitoring - policing if you will. For if

message cannot be separated from reality, the communicator should seek to insure that reality is close to intention - or more properly to what was intended as reality. The psychological operator's monitoring of the rules of war (the ground rules for military operations) in Vietnam were often essential to insure adherence to those rules. And since the rules in turn were designed to have the most positive effect possible on the population, this honest broker's role was important.

It is in the area of staff participation - identification and adoption of policy and monitoring of performance that American psychological operations in Vietnam played a greater role than has been the case in the past. Psychological operators both helped to identify necessary actions and sat in the highest councils of the American Mission to help determine policy. This was not true on the Vietnamese side and actually the degree of influence on the American side varied with different direction in the Mission. Nevertheless, the participation in the American effort came closer to the desirable than has usually been the case.

In addition to his staff responsibilities, the psychological operator has the duty of transmission of the message. Here he is more a technician - a skilled one hopefully, but essentially a conveyor of messages, rather than an originator. In this capacity, he faces a variety of tasks and audiences. He is in turn a direct communicator to the population or an advisor to the host communicator as his origin or capacity dictate; he communicates with the domestic audience, the friendly alien audience, the hostile alien audience, the assisting nation audience, the military, the civilian, the bureaucracy, the peasant, the urban dweller - all as required. He may be communicating face to

face or through media; through his own media or through the foreign press. Again, some subsequent discussion of these tasks is necessary under the heading of techniques, but here at this point, we need to recognize this function of the psychological operator as the actual communicator.

The basic principle also needs restatement: in all these roles as an operator, he must observe the requirement for substantive cohesion - consistency of outlook and message.

This operational task of communicating is the most visible and conventional of the functions of psychological operations. It is extremely important but there is some question as to whether it is the most important of the psychological operator's functions. This observer, for one, would contend that the staff role and the operational role are both important and complementary, but if one must be selected to the exclusion of the other, then the staff role is the more critical one. For in the final analysis, the process of communication cannot be divorced from reality, and if the reality is not good enough, then the message will not take. But on the other hand, if the reality is attractive, then it will have an effect on its own merits - with or without communication by psychological operations, perhaps not as fast nor as effectively but the message will penetrate eventually on its own. For this reason alone, if none other, the staff role, the voice in the determination of policy becomes the most important of the functions faced by the psychological operator.

Organization

Many of the features of effective organization for psychological operations have been implied in earlier comments. The essential organizational

consideration is inherent in the basic principle of functional integrity in the whole process of communication. If the message must be unified, then so too should the organization. The concept requires the unification in one organization of elements dealing with military and civilian support, press relations and psychological warfare, domestic and foreign audiences, staff and operational functions. All must be part of and contribute to the whole. Here too, Vietnam broke new ground in bringing together the entire psychological operations apparatus under the one roof of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office. The integration was never perfect and did not extend to either the Vietnamese or to Washington and there were flaws in performance but nevertheless the concept was tested and proven valid. As such, the experiment represented significant forward movement in our application of effective concepts in this field.

Organization thus follows the substantive need - if one may borrow a concept from another field, form follows function. Integrated operation requires integrated organization. The variations are considerable but the essential need is a line of authority to a central point. And this requirement applies to all elements taking part in the process of communication - whether "informational" or "psychological warfare" or any variation in between. Lest the JUSPAO experiment in Vietnam be regarded as the only justification for this statement, Sir Robert Thompson's comments in his book "Defeating Communist Insurgency" are relevant:

"The best organizational arrangement is probably for the psychological warfare section to be in the position of an independent subsidiary to the information services as a whole but working in close liaison, so that under no circumstances is there any contradiction in what is put out by each of them. The information services, which have their normal function quite outside the insurgency, should still be the government's main

instrument in handling the whole of its public relations and publicity towards the population. These services are responsible for putting across all that the government is trying to do in accordance with its policies."

Once the concept is established, the actual organizational structure becomes more a matter of preference and local considerations than rigid standardization. The elements dealing with the foreign press probably should be in a special unit and the staff and operational functions separated though centrally directed, and thoroughly coordinated. So also should be the functions of direct communication with the domestic population and that with any enemy population. And in fact, military and civilian support elements may have to be separated particularly in regard to tactical psychological operations at the unit level. And of course, some vertical field structure leading from the lowest jurisdictional unit, the hamlet or village, up to the capital must be established. Perhaps even the nature of the task will require different units - culture on one side, the various media on another, advisory still different. But the important point is not the particular placement of the boxes on an organizational chart, but the integrated nature of the structure. And in this sense, there should be no distinction between personnel in uniform or mufti except as individual aptitude and experience dictate. The blurring of military/political lines in policy requires an equal erasing of military/civilian lines in the organizational structure and use of personnel.

Personnel

These thoughts lead naturally enough to the question of personnel. Like other problems, the key lies in integration - and if that word has become repetitious, it is only because it deserves the emphasis. But while integration,

particularly between military and civilian elements, constitutes the goal, the other vital ingredient in terms of personnel is training, of course. This latter requirement extends not only to the representatives of the assisting power but to those of the host government as well.

For the earlier statement about the need to undertake research through indigenous channels applies to the selection and training of personnel for all other aspects of psychological operations as well. Unfortunately, the established bureaucracy has a tendency to perpetuate itself in outlook as well as other respects and eventually the bureaucracy, including the communicating element, becomes insulated from its own roots and finds itself unable to communicate. This is particularly true in underdeveloped countries where the aspirations of the bureaucracy are often aimed at escape from the masses rather than involvement with them.

These probable characteristics of the host government favor the type of techniques used by the Viet Cong who recruit from within the ranks - and in fact seek those whose natural talents would lead them to positions of leadership but who are blocked from progress because of social and economic barriers to upward mobility. These barriers must be overcome and the communicator - more than perhaps any other elements in the government's apparatus - must be of the people and able to communicate with the people with empathy and true knowledge. The "of, by and for the people" concept has great relevance to the selection and effectiveness of the communicator.

So the ideal becomes selection of personnel essentially from the people - whether military or civilian - with subsequent training for the task of serving as effective representatives of the government.

Selection and training of nationals to support the government at least does not involve training in ethics, customs or language, although even here there may be need for training for actual communication with the mass. But the selection and training of representatives of the assisting power involves these more complicated problems to a much greater degree. Even recognizing that these advisors cannot substitute for the host government, their assistance and advice will be more effective if they are selected for their basic aptitude for communication, trained properly, and kept in their assignment until they have gained sufficient experience and knowledge to contribute in a significant sense. Selection must obviously be based on a whole range of intangible factors - empathy, cross-cultural curiosity, language aptitude, perhaps interest most of all. But training then becomes critical and every moment spent in learning culture, history, religion, ethics, language, communications techniques is time well spent. And once trained, extended use is desirable. In the case of Vietnam, the training program for Americans eventually developed to desirable levels but utilization was much too brief and the role of the advisor was inevitably less effective because of its revolving door aspects.

The other element of personnel that seems to raise questions because of its somewhat unorthodox nature is the intermixture of military and civilian personnel with assignment and utilization based on skill rather than organizational origins. Once the initial hurdles were finally breached, neither in JUSPAO nor subsequently in CORDS did the mixture prove impractical. There were difficulties, to be sure, but most were superficial and once the mechanics were resolved, the organizational origin seemed to matter little. What is needed is a readiness

by the parent group to forgo continued parochial loyalty and to accept the guidance and operations of the integrated organization as serving its best interests. At times, this ideal attitude was achieved in Vietnam.

The repeated references to the integration of military and civilian aspects of the effort - most pronounced perhaps in the above comments on personnel - violates of course our historic emphasis on separation of the military from political affairs which was discussed briefly in an earlier portion of this paper. Penetration of this barrier does not constitute of course a recommendation that the military undertake either partisan politics or support of a particular and separate ideology than one supported by the United States itself. It does take into account the reality that there is not and therefore cannot be a sharp line between political and military aspects of an insurgency situation and that programs and efforts in either area must be determined as complementary parts of a whole and conducted with due regard for both.

This thesis also means that in terms of personnel, neither military nor civilian have a monopoly on aptitude or wisdom in either area and that both must contribute their skills without artificial restraint to operations in both fields and both must accept and take into account the problems and validity of both dimensions. Certainly, there are both military and political undertakings which are sufficiently distinctive to require the assignment of responsibility to a specialist but in the best of all counter insurgency efforts, even this specialist will realize the importance of thoroughly coordinated, mutually supporting political/military integration to his more limited assignment. And the greatest guarantee of this type of outlook is proper training of personnel in both categories.

Techniques

Having listed principles, described functions, outlined organization, and cited personnel needs, we turn now to the methods appropriate for this apparatus -- the techniques to be utilized. The subject is clearly a broad one that warrants extensive discussion - certainly a subject that is beyond the scope of this paper in terms of great depth. This is an area that has been a favorite subject for the specialists on guerilla warfare - Thompson and Duncanson and Cross and Trinquier and Galula - and reference to these commentators is recommended for a thorough examination of the question. But in this area also, identification of the essentials is important to this brief survey of the broad field of psychological operations. The subject should be looked at from two general viewpoints: the first, the use of the various media; the second, the nature of the emphasis and approach to the differing audiences.

First a word on the media. In the normal insurgency situation, i.e. the underdeveloped area where the aspirations of the mass have not been met and the government in power is somewhat isolated from the people, the best and most effective medium is the God-given one of oral communication. It is a lesson that Americans could not apply in Vietnam for obvious reasons and the Saigon government could not apply because its representatives, particularly in the countryside, were not willing or able to communicate with the people. The Viet Cong never had this particular difficulty. Their communicators came from the ranks if you will and talked in the language of the ranks - peasant, urban proletariat or the Vietnamese version of the G.I. And the term "talked" is literal. For like most Communist organizations, the one modern medium used by the insurgents, radio, was essentially a means of communicating instruction and background to

the cadre, rather than communication with the mass. Forsaking radio and without extensive circulation of print and without television or any other modern means for reaching their targets en masse, the V.C. used the one other technique available - the most effective one. They talked to people face to face.

There is almost a mathematical rule reducing the effectiveness of communication in direct proportion to the distance between the communicator and the audience. If it is face to face, it is most effective. If it is by near-by loud speaker, it is next effective. If it is via picture whether in print or tube, it comes next. If it is cold print or disembodied radio, it is still less effective; and if any of these come from a great distance, then they become weaker by the mile. Particularly on subjects of direct involvement, the greatest discount is applied to messages from the foreigner via radio or leaflet drop when placed in direct competition with oral communication from an articulate and trusted neighbor. The impact or ineffectiveness of any message is even greater, of course, if it is supported by first-hand experience or physical evidence. Hence, the virtue of basing the message on reality.

So starting with oral communication, we move backwards in a sense through the media to loudspeaker, picture, television, tactical print, radio and so on. Actually, there is little purpose in arguing the order of these media. The important considerations are relevancy, immediacy and intimacy with the audience.

As for development of the media, our frustrations led to an inevitable result in a situation where the Americans could not communicate and the Saigon government would not, at least initially. We resorted to the typical American reliance on machine and volume and went overboard in the provision of hardware in order to make up the existing shortcomings. It is difficult to realize the extent we went in this regard but one statistic perhaps reflects the pattern. In the

year 1967, we dropped some five billion leaflets in North and South Vietnam - a reliance on machine and volume that taxes the imagination. All this leads to the statement of a firm dictum which should be observed scrupulously by the assisting government in a counter insurgency situation: provision of any piece of equipment should be undertaken only after satisfaction of an extremely demanding set of yardsticks for proof of need.

This is not to argue against a comprehensive national newspaper or radio or television system. Quite the reverse. Each of these media can be extremely effective if properly utilized by the central government as a means of communicating with the friendly population - and even with supporters in areas under insurgency control. But these media are complementary to the vital need for oral communication. It is at the local level that substitution of mechanical product for direct contact must be avoided assiduously.

In terms of emphasis to the differing audiences, there are perhaps three that should be considered by the host government with the assisting government helping in each regard as well as undertaking its own communication when appropriate. The first is the domestic public; the second is the public under hostile control; and the third is the foreign public.

The easy distinction is an informational approach to the domestic and foreign publics and a propaganda approach to the "enemy". But though this difference is favored by some commentators, the difference is largely semantic. The requirement for all is the same. The message should be designed to meet audience interests; it should be stated in terms the audience understands; it should be based on reality; and it should be consistent, though not necessarily the same, with the message to the other groups. Furthermore, it should not be assumed - in fact the reverse is perhaps more likely if the insurgent rule is

harsh - that the population under hostile control is unfriendly to the host government. It is probably apathetic and might even be receptive. And these possibilities should be taken into account in setting the tone of the message.

With these requirements in mind, the substance of the message becomes somewhat easier to determine but the formulation still depends on the expertise of the actual communicator. We have commented at various points throughout this presentation on the nature of the message for the friendly population: the reliance on fact and the recognition that the government's policies are being conducted in a goldfish bowl sets certain standards for this communication. The audiences deserve and will insist on adherence to the actual facts.

It should be noted that the emphasis in communication to the non-hostile population - friendly or simply apathetic - should be positive and constructive. If you will, it should focus on the accomplishments of the existing system as supported by evidence visible to that population. But part of the communication effort may also be designed to dissuade that same population from either apathy or actual action which consciously or otherwise helps the insurgent. One special rule of caution is critical in this regard: the population must never be asked to undertake action that is unrealistic and that usually means action that is contrary to its direct self-interest. The most obvious instance of this type is action which leads to physical jeopardy or, in the extreme, to death. The population will not undertake such action if it is aware of the consequences and therefore the appeal will fail or if it does take such action without awareness of the consequence and the outcome is harmful, let alone death, the authority that sponsored the communication, presumably the government, will not be listened to easily again.

Comment is also appropriate on the message for the population committed

to support of the insurgent either out of conviction or involuntary involvement. Here, the same principles of adherence to reality and consistency apply, but the emphasis in the message has a specific purpose: a withdrawal of support for the hostile effort and defection in place or in person to the host government. Thus, a surrender program of some kind - or at a minimum, a dissuasive program - becomes the core of the effort towards the enemy. Once more, the message must be based on reality. Description or discussion of conditions in friendly territory; offers of inducements for return to support of the government; programs of retraining and rehabilitation must be completely accurate and supported by actual performance and any promises must be scrupulously observed. Here too, the bamboo telegraph will communicate any discrepancy promptly, as it did in Vietnam, even if no specific element seeks to do so.

An additional dimension of this problem of communication to the "enemy" is the use of "psychological warfare" in frontline tactical situations. We have observed that special circumstances can justify some short-lived tricks but even these cannot be completely divorced from facts for memories are long when lies or deception have been used. This does not rule out exploitation of superstition, custom, myth, even tradition in appealing to the hostile population to either withdraw support or reverse attitudes towards the government.

Finally, some comment is necessary in regard to communication with foreign audiences - which range of course from highly friendly to highly hostile. At times, these audiences - and their representatives, usually and primarily the press - seem to constitute an unbearable burden to a government not properly prepared for the full impact of a free press and an open society. And so they may well constitute problems - practical as well as emotional. But they come with an open society and the trick is to convert them into an opportunity and

perhaps even an asset. Given the need for adherence to reality in internal communication, adherence to the same principle in communicating through the foreign press should not be impossible. While shortcomings can be magnified in these circumstances, accomplishments can be equally exploited. And above all, facts can receive wide circulation. Furthermore, the communication through the press to foreign audiences can help communication with domestic audiences for there is a clearcut backlash - particularly in urban areas - from foreign reaction to the effort. One feeds on the other - and consistency can help make them mutually beneficial to the government in power.

Conclusion

This completes a brief examination of the precepts which should be applied to psychological operations in wars of insurgency. The effectiveness of all this effort depends on one essential ingredient that has been present throughout the presentation by implication only thus far and needs explicit statement at this point. The ultimate effectiveness of the emphasis on message and reality, openness and consistency, indigenous communication and direct dialogue depends eventually on one fundamental feature: the inherent merits of the government's policies and programs, whether military or civilian. These must reflect an effort on the part of the government to respond to the needs of the people and must be effectively executed in support of that goal. If this is not the case - if they are not the proper programs or are not carried out skillfully or do not meet the aspirations of the people - then the rest of the effort comes largely to naught. And that end result will be true of the psychological operations effort most of all.

"You don't have to like correspondents to deal with them (though it helps), but you should understand them and their ways."

Corrected

A Press Relations Doctrine for the Foreign Service

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL's September issue on the press provided a highly welcome contribution to a subject that has received far too little attention from the career foreign service in recent years despite efforts during this period to improve and modernize the role and performance of the service generally. However, while the JOURNAL provided long overdue reportage and analysis, it did not attempt the next step of proposing a program to remedy existing shortcomings in the service's handling of press relations. It is this next task that now merits priority attention, for development and adoption of a program in this field—a press relations doctrine, if you will—is one of the basic needs for a foreign service that is adequately prepared for the problems of the '70s. The service must conduct itself in this frequently controversial and frustrating area with the same skill and knowledge that are expected in the political and economic spheres.

The very thought probably raises hackles among the traditionalists. Certainly, at one time the term "press relations" would have been regarded as anathema even in concept for the career foreign service. The posture for the foreign service was the one of a silent, professional, non-exposed service and the press be damned, sir. way to

We're past that stage now. Today, even the most conservative foreign service officer would concede that effective conduct of for-

BARRY ZORTHIAN

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ign affairs requires an effort in the broad field of public communication. But even today, most officers would take the position that the task is one best left to the political elements of an administration on the domestic side and to the specialists (read "technician"; read "USIS") overseas. As for press relations specifically, most foreign service officers would rather deal with the devil himself, or even the local political party out of power, than plunge into that particular pool of professional jeopardy.

The proposition presented here is quite the contrary. The contention is that the foreign service needs much greater participation and expertise in the field of press relations. (It should be noted that the word "press" as used here means all the news media and most decidedly includes television.) The point can be demonstrated best within the larger context of public communication—and before dealing with the specifics of press relations, it is useful to examine the wider

stage of the foreign service role in communication generally.

There is a great deal of appeal in the preference of the careerist for a passive role. It leaves a difficult—and usually thankless—chore to presumed skillful hands and permits the foreign service officer to devote his energies to those tasks for which he is especially trained. So powerful, in fact, has this appeal been historically that during the fifties and sixties, the foreign service establishment—in theory at least—adopted just such a division of labor, although we shall find that practice was somewhat different. Assistant Secretaries, Ambassadors, and occasionally DCMs were involved in communicating. (although a surprising number of the latter said, "I will never, never talk to a correspondent and only reluctantly to the USIS"). But the average foreign service officer dealt with the press only in very exceptional circumstances—or when he had a touch of unauthorized "leakage" in mind.

Now, with the '70s ahead, this whole series of precepts should be re-examined. What is needed is an airing of the role of the foreign service in communication in general and, as this article will seek to argue, in press relations in particular. A conclusion that urges greater foreign service activism in this field will undoubtedly violate established practice, but here at least is one advocate who says that past practices are dated and the foreign ser-

vice had best be right in the middle of the communications arena.

The theory that the foreign service is not involved in the communication task probably had its origins in pre-World War II practice but became fully established in the post-war development of the foreign affairs organizational structure that led to specialization on an Agency basis. Those principles seemed valid enough at the time, but they are no longer adequate, certainly not in the '70s, and they need modification to a considerable degree both in theory and in practice.

On both counts, the foreign service proper has a role, an important role, and there is need for active training and participation. Certainly, this is not a plea for uncontrolled or, in current terminology, "unstructured" efforts at communication by everyone on the Department's payroll. The Department is already notorious for self-serving, and often uninformed, contacts with the press in Washington. It does not need more of this type of unauthorized press relations. Nor, before attack by former colleagues in USIA, is this a plea to undercut those quite esteemed professionals in the tasks assigned them either by law or by the President. And final disclaimer: an administration certainly must and should remain the principal public advocate of its foreign policy.

What then is suggested? Simply that the foreign service officer must acquire a much better appreciation and develop a much greater skill and undertake a much more active role in the task of communicating. Such a development should not displace the existing machinery but rather, provide greater body and depth to the present machinery. The officer should have the background, experience and feel for the task that will permit both skillful performance on a personal level and knowledgeable guidance to subordinates when he is given senior assignments.

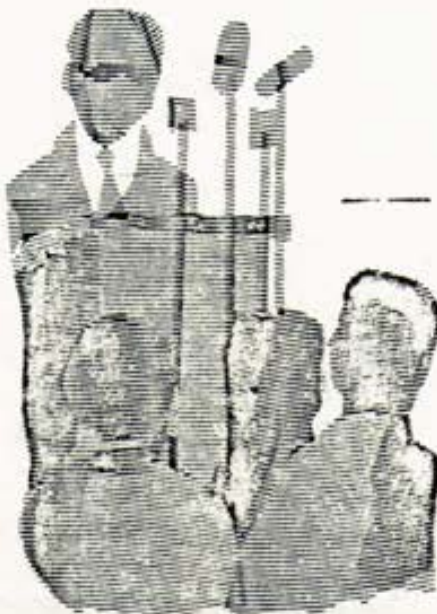
Many foreign service officers today do just that. They are effective communicators. They constitute important assets in the task of communicating our foreign policies. But the skill is individual and almost accidental. It is still possible to be-

come an Ambassador in a major post, or a senior Washington official dealing with extremely controversial and involved foreign policy issues, without any experience or training in the art of communication. Institutionally, the foreign service has no communication skill.

This judgment is not directed at the Department's press affairs office. The task faced by Deputy Assistant Secretary Robert McCloskey is quite distinct from the requirements for the foreign service, although the two obviously are related. What the judgment does say is that foreign service officers are not prepared for the task of communicating at home or abroad. It becomes largely a matter of accident whether they are at all effective in the field when they reach a position where it is important to have the skill.

The need for the skill is clear. Whatever the merits of particular policies over these past few years, the importance of public understanding and support for the successful execution of those policies has never been more apparent. And the key to public support is effective communication—not communication solely by specialists, whose effectiveness may be discounted simply because they are in the business, but communication by those who formulate and carry out policy.

The task is one for the political administration in office in regard to the broad aspects of foreign policy,



but the professional has an important supporting role to play even in this respect both here at home and even more of a role overseas where he is both more visible as the national representative and more available. And at a more detailed stage or on policies of lesser world magnitude, the professional has even more responsibility for its communication.

This utilization of the career man is perhaps unorthodox, but it is proper in both cases. For the public both wants and is able to receive more information about the conduct of its affairs, and since the professional at a minimum has great influence in the formulation of that policy and at a maximum is responsible for making it, he should be subject to public scrutiny and dialogue.

These considerations make foreign service activism in modern communication important in theory. There is an equally compelling case for visible activism when present practice is examined.

Except in unusual situations where the professional communicator (the press officer in Washington or the PAO overseas) has a specially favored relationship with the Ambassador or is an individual of unusual skill and strength of character, the foreign service officer either in the role of Ambassador or DCM or Political Counselor or Assistant or Deputy Assistant Secretary usually ends up making the basic decisions behind the scenes on issues of substance in communication. He may not decide what magazine or movie comes from Washington, but he usually decides when and how a particularly difficult foreign policy issue is surfaced—and even more important, how it is explained. Furthermore, very often it is the foreign service officer, rather than the communicator, who must bring the element of public affairs into the decision-making process simply because the latter frequently does not participate in that process. Thus in practice, decisions involving communications are very often made by the foreign service officer even though he may not be qualified to do so and even though he may not accept any responsibility for the actual task of communicating publicly.

All this is not necessarily bad. In fact, if you accept the thesis that the participants in the formulation and execution of policy must also play a role in communicating it, then this role of the foreign service officer in practice of making decisions on communication can be a plus. But it is a plus only if he is trained and experienced in the field. Just as he brings into play his training and accumulated experience in the formulation of policy in the political and economic areas, so he must have training and accumulated experience in communication to bring to bear.

Thus, the foreign service has a communications role both in theory and practice but its qualifications for filling that role are questionable. The remedy is not withdrawal but an even more active role based on training and experience.

THE primary area for this training and subsequent active participation is the field of press relations; foreign service officers cannot and should not attempt to duplicate the technical skill and experience of USIA personnel in the various media. But they should develop insight and experience in communicating foreign policy to the public—abroad or domestic. While public speeches and articles are important aspects of such a skill, the heart of the effort normally will be directed towards the press and the effectiveness of that effort in turn depends on "press relations"—the art of dealing with and communicating with the public through the press.

Even if the foreign service officer wants to contend that he should not deal with the press directly, he will recognize the importance of skillful press relations in the process of public communication by others. And if he is to participate, or even if he is to perform effectively in the role he fills behind the scenes in setting policy on communications, he has a stake and needs to be knowledgeable about effective press relations.

The career service hardly prepares him for the role. As a junior, he gets at best only a passing acknowledgment that there is such a field as press relations. What exposure he receives is usually limited to the most perfunctory tasks. The situation does not improve by

mid-career. By then, if anything, he has accepted a deep-seated prejudice about the press from his seniors and he is given little opportunity to modify that attitude through firsthand exposure or dialogue with the press. By the time he reaches principal officer assignments where dealing with the press is often a critical part of the job, he is often indifferent or hostile and almost always ignorant about the press.

There are exceptions, to be sure—not just non-career Ambassadors who have earlier experience in communicating but competent, articulate foreign service officers who have an instinct and aptitude in dealing with the press. And there are, of course, a good many USIA officers who are effective in handling the press because of previous experience (although as the USIA becomes more and more a career service, this area of practical press relations experience is one that will suffer).

Whatever the number of exceptions, the charge of inadequacy is basically valid and remedies must be sought. The first and most important element in providing that remedy is development of a Press Relations Doctrine to serve as the basis for training and the framework for consistency in practice throughout the service. There is really no doctrine in existence today—not in the Department, or in the foreign service, or even in USIA for that matter. Individual senior officers may have personal concepts that they apply, but there is no institutional doctrine that survives the change of personalities.

It is tempting, of course, to ignore this institutional requirement for a press doctrine because it can lead to change and contention. Far easier to concentrate on the drawbacks of the press, which can absorb an evening of good cathartic dialogue that does away with the need for self-examination. But this article concedes readily that there are many, many flaws in the press in the United States. (~~Mr. Vice President, please note this positive and declarative sentence.~~) It then says that the purpose of the present discussion is not to propose solutions for the press's shortcomings, but rather to look for a doctrine that will help the service to deal better

with that very same inadequate press. Furthermore, a doctrine that becomes part of foreign service tradition and practice can serve as a highly important influence on the determination of press policies at the departmental level.

That doctrine cannot be precise and absolute. Press relations is an art and the practitioners will disagree on many aspects because a good deal depends on personal skill and relations. But there are some basic elements on which it should be possible to reach consensus or at least utilize as a starting point for further discussion and refinement.

There is one important preliminary to making a press doctrine meaningful: the individual foreign service officer should learn more about the tribal customs and mores of that somewhat amorphous profession known as journalism, particularly of foreign correspondents. You don't have to *like* correspondents to deal with them (though it helps), but you should understand them and their ways just as you want them to understand foreign affairs and the foreign service. What is the difference in role and approach between the wire services and the specials? Between dailies and periodicals? Between the print and the audiovisual media? What are the characteristics of journalism in the United States that affect coverage of foreign affairs? Just as important, what are the ground rules under which you are dealing with a correspondent? What is "background"; or "attribution"; or "off the record"? These must be clearly understood and accepted for contact with the press to develop into mutual confidence and dialogue. All these questions are just starters. But while the field has its share of needless esoterics, just as any other profession, the elements that the non-specialist has to learn are not so difficult that they are beyond the scope of reasonable inquiry. And the knowledge is important to the effective application of the ten principles listed below—the Ten Commandments of Press Relations.

These principles have been formulated in terms of a functioning free press such as we have in the United States. Clearly, there is an equally free press in many other parts of the world and the same

principles apply. Where there is not a free press, and the press functions as an instrument of the government in power, some of these concepts are not applicable although others are still worth practicing because they may have some impact. But regardless of the status of the press in the host country, the foreign service will still have to deal with free press representatives, including American, in that country and there is an important impact both in the United States and in other free press countries from communication through such representatives. So the principles are worth attention even when the local application may not seem worth the effort.

The ten:

• **Respect the Role of the Press:**

The first and foremost of the cardinal rules is a genuine respect for the role of the press. And this of course requires an understanding of it. The statement of this principle may sound like the opening lines in a high school civics lecture. But the number of cases when foreign service officers pay lip service to the concept of a free press and object to it in practice is surprisingly high. The requirement is not merely acceptance of the simplistic schoolboy concept of a free press but full appreciation of the whole constitutional role of the fourth estate. Our system of society is, of course, based to a significant degree on the existence of a press that serves as a watchdog and observer of the government. And in this role of adversary to the government, the press is—and constitutionally should be—free and independent. Even when it hurts—as the press does at times. Even when it's irresponsible—as

the press is at times. Even when it is simplistic or superficial or uninformed—as the press is at times. The foreign service officer must accept the function and the role of the press in our concept of society even when the press falls short of the mark.

• **Look at the Press as an Opportunity:** This principle is almost a corollary of the first cardinal rule. If we accept the basic concepts of our society, the goal is an informed public which passes enlightened judgment on governmental policies. High school civics again? Perhaps. But again, this is a basic that is frequently overlooked in the course of aggravation by the journalist as an individual. The Jeffersonian ideal of an informed public is more important than ever today and the best means to that goal is the press. The press represents an opportunity and a channel, not a burden or obstacle to the effective conduct of foreign affairs which would be the evaluation given by most foreign service officers. Positive thinking about the press thus becomes a cardinal virtue.

• **Educate the Press:** This basic guidance sounds somewhat patronizing and would be if misunderstood. But in a constructive sense, education of the press by the foreign service constitutes a highly purposeful exercise. In many cases, the instrument of the press, the correspondent, is lacking information for either an accurate report or a balanced evaluation. The problem may be even more basic; he may not even be qualified. Rather than dismiss the problem out of hand, the effective foreign service communicator seeks to impart his knowledge and expertise to the press. He informs, he

explains, he expands. Within the limits of national security, he provides the correspondent with all experience, knowledge and wisdom which he has acquired. He has little to lose. Regardless of the motivation or preconceptions of the correspondent, the subsequent product will not be less accurate—and might in fact be much more so. The fact is that most journalists welcome as much background information as possible—even though they will reserve the right to pass judgment on the accuracy or validity of that information. The foreign service's relationship with the press will be adversary; it need not be hostile for there is a joint, if parallel, responsibility to the public.

• **Distinguish between Information and Publicity:** All of which leads to principle four—the need to differentiate between information and publicity. Herein lies the source of many of the service's past and current problems.

The State Department ~~BULLETIN~~ is publicity. Most press releases are publicity in concept and intent. Difficulties—and disappointment—arise when the press refuses (properly) to act as a conveyor belt for publicity, the transmission of information or facts from the originating source to the public without evaluation, review or screening. The government communicator has two obligations to the press: make the facts known as he knows them and explain the policies he has evolved and is seeking to execute based on those facts. He must recognize that the role—the constitutional role—of the press discussed under rule number one permits the press (obliges or requires the press would be more *accurate* terminology) to review, check on and pass judgment on the accuracy or adequacy of those facts and review and pass judgment on the wisdom and effectiveness of those policies. When the foreign service officer begins to stop being disappointed or hurt because the press has not served simply as a transmission belt for his version and interpretation of the situation but instead has acted as ~~the~~ independent watchdog and judge, he will be at the point of maturity in press relations.

• **Be candid and forthcoming:**

(Continued on page 55)



PRESS RELATIONS DOCTRINE

continued from page 23

Is it still necessary to state the obvious: "Don't lie"? Well, don't. A far more necessary warning: don't be disingenuous either. Or even too clever by half. It never works and credibility gaps are born from ignoring such fundamentals. A "no comment" is far preferable to deception or obfuscation. The world has come too far for the service to depend on the rhetoric and circumlocution of the past. The public is too sophisticated; the press too skeptical. What may have been acceptable even a few years ago is no longer good enough. The gap between words and reality must be eliminated. The terminology, the concepts, the style must be credible, forthright, sophisticated and balanced. Otherwise, it will almost certainly be rejected out of hand or at best lead to such a degree of skepticism that it will face increased security or hostility. And when legitimate security considerations enforce silence, once more the "no comment" approach is far pre-

ferable to deception or verbal camouflage and certainly much more respected by correspondents.

• **Restrict National Security to a Minimum:** National security is a legitimate restraint that is highly abused in practice. Today's world is almost a goldfish bowl and there is little that remains confidential for long. The responsible journalists—and most are—recognize that certain situations require discretion and respect the limitations of information when this is the case. But they also object to misuse of the protection when it is simply camouflage for either shortcomings or a cloak for activities that merit public exposure. Properly limited, national security will be respected; normally, it is resorted to so frequently that it has tended to lose meaning. The basic principle for the foreign service practitioner is the greatest possible limitation on its use.

• **Take the Initiative:** One of the characteristics of the modern press that leads to this cardinal principle is its intensity and pervasiveness.

The facts of life decree that most of the time the first cast to a story provides the shape for its ultimate thrust and impact. The old policy guidance, "If asked, etc., etc.," is a dated concept. Far better to surface your story, even the most negative one, under circumstances and terms of your own choosing. Just about anything damaging is going to become public somewhere along the line if you let nature take its course, and a variation of Murphy's Law seems inevitably to come into effect: the story will emerge under the worst possible circumstances. Call it managed news if you will, but usually you'll do better, even in a negative sense, when you take the initiative and provide the setting and time. And in view of the brevity of the public span of interest on most stories, contrary interpretations may never catch up with your pre-emption of the field.

• **Bear in Mind the Interrelationship of Government:** Gone are the days when State was State and Defense was Defense and never the twain need ~~coordinate~~ *get together*. Even State

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and Commerce now have to get together. The reality once more dictates the concept that all government agencies are interrelated. It is becoming increasingly hard to differentiate between civilian news and military news, or between political news and economic news. Agencies of the same government have to pay more than lip service to each other's existence and interests. Coordination, common press policies, even inter-government communication would seem in order.

• **Bear in mind the Interrelationship of the World:** There was also a time when there was a foreign audience and a domestic audience. Witness the restrictions placed upon USIA. But if the distinction was ever valid, it is not valid any more in this era of instant communication. The words from the steps of the White House are heard as clearly and promptly in New Delhi and Bangkok as in New York and Chicago. There is no such thing as comment to a restricted audience. Technically, communication today can take your words whole and immediately transport them any-

where in the world to a different setting that may well lead to a different meaning. It is important to bear in mind this capability of modern journalism when communicating. The audience is a vast and diverse one. And if the subject is of sufficient interest, it is a universal one.

• **Finally, remember this is an Art:** Between cardinal principle one and cardinal principle ten are a whole series of warnings, admonitions and guidances. But in the end, the practitioner must be aware that press relations is an art and if all the nine earlier principles are faithfully observed and effectively executed, there is still no assurance that the results will come out as intended. And once more, that is not necessarily discouraging. There is no such thing as a 100 per cent favorable press coverage; by the very nature of things there should not be. You may be eminently successful if that story is less negative than it might have been otherwise. And you are probably highly effective if you have a batting average over .500. For foreign policy is not

meant to be popular at all times; nor is the nature of the press such that it feels comfortable in the role of constant supporter. So the tenth and last cardinal principle is to count your blessings if you get a fair deal by objective standards—standards other than your own.

Having listed all these guidelines—these Ten Commandments of Press Relations, this foundation for a State Department Press Relations Doctrine—there is the need to warn against expecting too much from skilled efforts in this area. Effective communication, skilled press relations is not a substitute for substantive policies. It is only a complement and supplement to them. But as such, it can often constitute the ingredient that marks the difference between success and failure in the conduct of foreign affairs. And it is a skill—whether based on this set of principles or another—in which the foreign service needs training and experience if the service is to meet its responsibilities in the conduct of foreign policy in the '70s. ■

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SOCIETY FOR HISTORIAN OF AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS

GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, 1984

BY BARRY ZORTHIAN

Thank you, Ed, for the kind introduction.

I'm very pleased to join with you today. I must confess that when Gen. Simmons asked me to make this presentation, I had some reservations. I've played a number of roles in my life but certainly historian is not one of them.

However, I also realize that Vietnam where I spent a very intense period of my life, is now coming under renewed scrutiny by you and your professional colleagues. A key aspect of that re-examination must be the communication of that war to the American public and the effect of that communication process on public support of the war and its ultimate outcome. And that question in turn raises the subsidiary questions of the respective roles of the government and the media in the process and the relations between the two.

The issues raised by these questions are as controversial still as any that deal with this most complicated and unhappy of our nation's experiences in this century. Ultimately, it is you, the scholar-historians, who will have to provide the definitive answers for it is only you who will have the perspective to find the balance and that most elusive of all commodities, the truth. It was Walter Lippman who said, "As the free press develops, the paramount point is whether the journalist, like the scientist or scholar, puts truth in the first place or the second." I would suggest that insofar as Vietnam is concerned the same thought would apply to free government as well.

And I suggest that this is the basic question you will have to answer - whether the media and the government provided the truth in Vietnam.

Let me try to contribute to this undertaking of yours by giving you some personal thoughts, thoughts incidentally which have evolved over the years and been tested over and over in the intense dialogue during this time between representatives of the two. I would not suggest that consensus has been reached - far from it - but perhaps the parameters of the discussion are better established now. It will be up to you to find the middle way.

Except for a brief visit in the fifties, I began my service in Vietnam a little more than twenty years ago - very junior by some standards, a real old-timer by others. Mine were what I call the Middle Years - the period between the Diem government overthrow and the build-up of American forces to a level of over one half-million in mid-1968. I might note parenthetically that the press corps in Saigon grew proportionately almost as much during the same years.

I speak with intimate knowledge only of those years. For the other years in Vietnam, my experience is that of an interested and involved observer but not of a first-hand participant. The positioning is important. Vietnam was many things in many periods. There are few generalities that apply to the whole period of American involvement and few lessons that are valid for the whole span of our participation and experience.

One is tempted to answer the question of whether the government and the media communication on Vietnam to the American public was good, bad or in-between with the flip answer "all of the above." Such a response is probably closer to the truth than any flat, conclusive judgment. But unfortunately it does not contribute much to understanding. So let me try to probe a little deeper but before doing so, it is important to identify some of the particular characteristics of the stage upon which the actors - the media, the U.S. government, the South Vietnamese, Hanoi - operated.

For these characteristics which made Vietnam so unique in many ways in our national experience certainly are significant factors in a response to the questions I have posed.

I suggest the following as important elements in understanding the communication of the Vietnam war.

- Vietnam was the first open war in modern history - at least during the period I am talking about. Whatever the merits - and there is much dispute still about whether there should have been censorship or not - Vietnam was conducted without pre-censorship and with unprecedented access for the press to the war itself and to the people involved. The result was a goldfish bowl atmosphere that brought with it periodically a tendency on the part of the government to compensate.

• And yet for all this openness and the huge corps of journalists usually in that country, I would remind you that Vietnam can accurately be described as a war half-covered. Sure, there was an occasional carefully controlled visit to Hanoi; sure, a Communist journalist sometimes filed a dispatch supposedly from V.C. front lines. But the North Vietnamese and the V.C. hardly faced the scrutiny of dozens of probing, skeptical and critical journalists looking at every facet of their actions and communicating their findings in great and uncensored volume to a public at home.

• Vietnam was also the first television war - the first complete exposure of all the horror and destruction of war to a mass audience in color in the comfort of the home. And while some specialists believe that television in the final analysis did not make a difference, certainly television news came to maturity in Vietnam - and its impact was considerable in intensifying conceptions and emotions.

• Vietnam was our first nationally-shared experience in this century with guerilla warfare - the government's, the media's, and the public's - complicated by a distant setting for which we had little knowledge and little empathy. The subtleties required for this war and for this setting were hardly in the American manner or experience. The clash was not only of men under arms but of cultures, concepts, outlooks, and, yes, even methods of communication to the world at large.

- Vietnam developed in its early stages and continued to have throughout an element of not only the normal and desirable adversary relationship between government and press in our system but a degree of hostility and dispute that fed on itself and destroyed any prospect of mutually developed solutions to some of the problems of communication. The government was cast in the position that its word was automatically questioned until proven correct in contrast to the past when its word tended to be accepted unless proven otherwise. The word of the press seemed equally challenged in many segments of the electorate.

- Judgments made now about practices then should be based on the ground rules existing then. Vietnam came in the midst of a social revolution in the United States - whether cause or effect I leave to the social scientists. But the government's relations with the media were changing. Indeed, the government's relations with its electorate changed. Many of the problems between the government and the press grew out of these changing relationships.

- To generalize about virtually anything in Vietnam was most often misleading and frequently dangerous. The war extended through many phases and many administrations; the press - and throughout these comments I use the word to include the audio-visual media as well - contained many outlets, many forms and many viewpoints. To talk about "the government" is as

inaccurate as to talk about "the press." There was no monolithic institution or control in either category. But what comment I do make about "the press" in these remarks applies to the major media, the national media, certainly not the dozens of "non-journalists" who were present.

Now having cautioned against the practice, let me proceed to try to answer in general terms the questions that I have raised. But in doing so, let me set my own limitations: I speak of 1964-68; I speak of Vietnam; I speak of the coverage of South Vietnam and the operations, programs and actions there; I speak not of the Diem period or the post-Johnson administrations in the U.S., not of debate or dispute about the war in the United States, not of coverage of Hanoi, not as to whether we should or should not have been in Vietnam, not even of the morality of war.

(Opt.) It is not helpful in attempting to make judgments in this framework to say simply, as one distinguished journalist wrote in 1977, that "more often than not, and for far too long, what the press was getting from the government over the long, agonized, tormenting years of Vietnam...was trash." Nor to say on the other hand as another experienced journalist wrote in 1981 "But never before Vietnam had the collective policy of the media - no less stringent term will serve - sought by graphic and unremitting distortion the victory of the enemies of the correspondents own side." The truth as usual is much more difficult and complex and it should be our goal today to move a little closer to that truth so that we can learn for the future. (End Opt.)

Here then are some bottom line responses based on the period and limitations I have stated:

- More often than not, the press was more accurate in covering the situation in Vietnam than the official government public reports - at least up until Tet. And yet far too often at key points on critical issues, there were stories that contained inaccuracies, distortions and misinterpretations.

- More often than not, the U.S. public was well served by the performance of the briefing authorities, military and civilian. And I base this judgment not just on the on-record briefings but also on the voluminous backgrounding and on the extended and constant access the media had to government sources. And again I say, this is not to mean that there were no flaws in the government's performance and no need for improvements.

- More often than not, the press covered military operations better than the political aspects; the American presence better than the Vietnamese; the individual G.I. better than the big picture.

- Far too infrequently, in fact virtually never, did reporters transmit accurately the policies and objectives of the National Liberation Front and the government of Hanoi.

- Were reporters "used"? What does that mean? Were they given information with the motive of seeing a particular story appear in print? Of course they were - by the government, by the critics, by the South Vietnamese, by the V.C., by Hanoi; and, by each other.

- As the number of U.S. troops increased, did the press switch from political analysis to an emphasis on battle coverage. No but the press did let its growing opposition and criticism of the war begin to show up in the nature and tilt of its coverage - not more often than not but in far too many cases.

What are the lessons of all this? Certainly Vietnam was a failure in terms of government communication to its electorate. I would suggest that perhaps it was not an overwhelming success in terms of communication by the media either. How can the two sides do better in the future? The particular set of circumstances that appeared in Vietnam are not likely to be repeated elsewhere but there can certainly be situations that lend themselves to the same kind of problems of communication. If there are, let me suggest some principles that need to be observed.

For the government:

- Expect and anticipate an open war with full exposure to the media - to a pervasive, probing skeptical media. Censorship and control may be possible in a conventional type of war but it

is not likely to be practical in the type of situation we faced in Vietnam. Remember that for better or worse, the open society which we have chosen puts a premium on the role of a free press. The American public has never accepted censorship of the press in war except for protection of tactical military information. It is not likely to do so in the future. The non-military stories and judgment which are what gave you the most grief in Vietnam are part of the ground rules that are likely to exist. Understand them, respect them and plan to operate with them in effect.

- Develop a government doctrine in dealing with the press based on a concept of an independent press and as open a government as is possible. Make such a doctrine part of the training of your military and civilian officials - particularly the foreign service and the military officer corps.

- Provide full and candid information to the electorate on your actions and judgments. Maximum candor with minimum security is a principle well worth observing. Your communication must conform with the facts and with reality on the ground. And I add that it should be consistent, between Washington and Saigon, between general and lieutenant.

(Opt.) • Develop a better method of collecting information on military operations to meet the needs of the press and, beyond it, of the electorate. (End Opt.)

(Opt.) • Learn from the press. Use its observations as a source of information, as a check on your own channels. The added input can be extremely useful. (End Opt.)

And for the press:

• Re-examine the institutional characteristics of the media. The pressures of time, competitiveness, volume and dramatic impact distort and intensify coverage to a degree that obfuscates rather than informs or clarifies.

• Place more stress on qualifications. The government was criticized for putting both military and civilians in Vietnam on a short tour. It was called a revolving door policy. But was the media any different? One week wonders and six month veterans passing overall judgments on this most complicated of situations. Sure there were experienced and knowledgeable hands but how does the reader or viewer tell one from the other, particularly when the newer is making dramatic and absolute comments in the effort to make page one or the evening news. The media has a need to spend more time and resources in developing qualifications of its personnel for complex and difficult assignments - time spent learning language, culture, history, politics, mores, even the nature and conduct of the war if that is what is involved.

(Opt.) • Don't generalize from the particular. And for the government, don't dispute the particular on the basis of the general. (End Opt.)

- Be skeptical indeed of the government's public posture. But be equally skeptical of all your sources. Look for the motivation - even from the critics, certainly from the other side and most of all from any of the actors on stage to whom you do not have access. At least one major news magazine found out after the war that its most trusted Vietnamese employee, the man who had been senior assistant to at least five bureau chiefs, was a longtime V.C. agent.

- Discriminate and limit the authority of your sources to the extent of their expertise. The President and the private both spoke in Vietnam - and the press solicited and sometimes gave equal weight to both.

- Beware of the home office and its pressure for competitive copy. Beware of the herd instinct and your peer pressures. Beware of your own biases and sympathies. Save your opinion for product labeled as such. Kepp your reporting to reporting.

- And finally when you think you see everything clearly, when you feel you have all the answers, when everything makes sense, when you begin to speak in aboslutes and feel you are the sole guardian of truth and morality, run, don't walk, to another country. The time for reassignment has come.

And that would normally be the end of my story. But like one of those semi-documentary television programs, this story deserves a postscript. How have the actors fared since Vietnam came to a close for the United State in 1973 - and where do they stand today.

Well, let's fast-forward to the current era. For the media and the government went through further years of hostility and adversial relationship for a period after the war - is it necessary to mention Watergate - and relations which applied to the military as well. But then new generations arrived on the scene and relations seemed to improve gradually. While there were still strains and disputes, normalcy seemed to be returning. That trend was disrupted late in 1983 by an operation called Grenada when the military, with the backing of the Administration - partly out of confusion and partly out of distrust - prevented the media from covering the operation for two days. I will not review for you the specifics of the controversy that erupted. You are well aware of that dispute but perhaps you are not as familiar with the prospective ultimate post-mortem. For the controversy over the media in Grenada led to the appointment of a commission of active military and retired journalists on which I served to review military-media relationships and coverage of combat operations in the future. That in turn led to recommendations to the military that have still not been endorsed but we are told will probably be accepted in whole that are perhaps more indicative of the relations between the two institutions than the Grenada experience.

While it would not be proper to go into too much detail on the Commission recommendations until they are made public, it is appropriate to note that the group concluded "the U.S. media should cover U.S. military operations to the maximum degree possible consistent with mission security and the safety of U.S. forces." And its most important specific recommendation would codify the key principle of an "open war" - media coverage of combat with voluntary adherence to limited restrictions on tactical military information but without pre-transmission censorship of copy or broadcast.

(Opt.) The military could choose otherwise. It could revert to the Korean War and World War II patterns of formal censorship of combat coverage. There are many both in the military and in civilian life (and even some journalists) who prefer the great safety and reassurance (and shifting of responsibility) of pre-transmission censorship. For "open wars" have been almost as unpopular on the democratic side of the world as the communist in the years since our involvement in Vietnam. Some of our closest prospective Allies have chosen formal censorship in their most recent military operations: the Israelies in their abbreviated operations involving their Arab neighbors and the British in the Falklands. (End Opt.)

(Opt.) Acceptance of the Commission's recommendations would constitute a gamble by the military. The critics have some ground for concern. Unrestricted coverage is not without its problems.

The prospect of either inadvertant or even deliberate violation of the tactical rules by inexperience or hostile correspondents can lead to a good deal of distress for front line commanders. Field generals contemplate with considerable concern the possibility of real time coverage of the battlefield that may reveal important information to eavesdropping enemy intelligence. And the thought of unrestricted nightly coverage of combat on television is not likely to bring restful nights to political leaders. (End Opt.)

There would be of course some leverage remaining in the hands of the military. Violation of the ground rules could lead to suspension of accreditation - but this condition is one that virtually all journalists are ready to accept.

Even with this, the military would be sticking its neck out by opting for "open war." It seems ready to do so largely because of the track record in Vietnam, for despite all the disputes and controversy surrounding the press in Vietnam, there were only half a dozen recorded violations of ground rules that required the lifting of credentials while I was there. The controversy and criticism was over stories that would not normally be subject to censorship - judgmental stories on strategy, leadership, performance, political factors, etc.

There is of course no guarantee that an "open war" policy would not be overturned at some future date by another Pentagon leadership but I suggest that the apparent readiness of the Pentagon to endorse the concept now is a valid indication of

the attitude of the military towards the media - a vote of confidence in the media's responsibility and competence. And the media itself has stated flatly its readiness to accept and exercise this degree of responsibility.

It's a nice positive thought with which to end these comments - the development of a healthy, mutually respectful relationship between the government and the media. It is a desirable prospect for it will mean that the electorate - the ultimate foundation for both the government and the media will be served more effectively.