

Monday, August 28, 1967
9:00 a.m.

65

MR. PRESIDENT:

Herewith Gen. Taylor makes two proposals
for strengthening the base of public support
for our Viet Nam policy -- abroad and at home.

I believe both should be explored, as General
Taylor suggests.

W. W. R.

-CONFIDENTIAL attachment

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

65a

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 92-374

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

August 25, 1967 By CL NARA, Date 9-16-94

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

During our recent tour of the Far East, allied leaders of the countries visited often expressed concern to Mr. Clifford and me over the unconvincing quality of the defense of our common policy in Southeast Asia before the outside world. They generally expressed the view that they were sure that we are doing the right thing but we are failing to get the message across. When we asked them for specific suggestions as to how to do better, they were obliged to admit that they had nothing constructive to offer.

Since returning home to what Clark has called the "miasma of pessimism of Washington," I have given some additional thought to this question of how to present our case better both on the international and on the domestic front. I have developed no profound thoughts on the subject, but would advance the following suggestions:

a. For the purpose of establishing a common front in explaining the events of Southeast Asia to the rest of the world, I would suggest that the State Department organize a monthly meeting of representatives of the seven Manila Conference nations for the purpose of identifying informational problem areas and of preparing replies to the critics for common use. Various U.S. agencies have prepared question-and-answer background documents from time to time for use of our own spokesmen on Viet-Nam policy at home and abroad. I would think there would be some merit in organizing a community effort in this field to assure that we are all speaking with a common voice. If such documents were then placed in every Embassy of all seven of these countries throughout the world with instructions to Ambassadors to speak out vigorously in behalf of our Southeast Asia policy, we might do somewhat better in shaping international opinion.

b. The domestic problem is deeper and more serious than the international one. You and your principal officials have given vast amounts of time and effort to keeping a strong majority of our people on the side of our Southeast Asia policy. However, there is endless work which remains to be done and I am sure that you share my concern over the signs of defections among some of those who have supported the policy in the past.

Apart from continuing past efforts, a new device worth considering would be the creation of a high-level touring panel of Viet-Nam experts who would make the rounds of the U.S. publicity media (press, TV, radio, Hollywood) on the kind of schedule which you had me follow shortly after my return from Saigon as Ambassador. Such a panel would be headed by a national figure with broad experience in the problems of Southeast Asia-

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

- 2 -

(for example, Cabot Lodge); a qualified spokesman for the military situation (for example, Major General William E. Depuy, former J-3 to Westmoreland, and Commanding General of the 1st Division; a political expert such as Philip Habib (former head of the Political Section of the Saigon Embassy); a specialist on the Pacification program (such as Mr. Richard Holbrooke or Lieutenant Colonel Robert Montague from Mr. Komer's old office in the White House); a spokesman for the economic situation in Viet-Nam (such as Mr. Leroy S. Wehrle, presently Economic Counselor in Saigon but soon to return); and a State Department representative familiar with our efforts to open negotiations and with the difficulties and pitfalls attendant upon such negotiations.

I could conceive of a number of uses for such a touring panel not only in off-the-record contacts with the leaders of publicity media, but possibly in extended TV discussions of the basic problems of Viet-Nam. While there has never been a dearth of TV discussions by all manner of people, the usual half-hour discussion period is never adequate for an exposition in depth of some of the basic problems.

Also, the academic world is always seeking spokesmen qualified to deal with the broad aspects of the Viet-Nam problem. This panel could be made available to meet with university groups, faculty and student, and perhaps allay some of the concerns which are disturbing our college campuses.

For such a panel to justify itself in terms of effectiveness, I would think it should be prepared to be on the road intermittently for about a three month period. The individuals whom I have mentioned are all convincing speakers.

M.D.T.

M. D. T.

Rostow to try out a on State _____

Christian to try out b on State and Defense _____

See me _____

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~