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Saturday, October 14, 1967 -- 5:45 p.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

SUBJECT: News Media Contacts

*Pres file*

Monday, October 9, 1967

Marquis Childs telephoned me on Monday, October 9, concerning the Otepka story in the Stl Louis press. He asked if he should do an article attacking Otepka as a McCarthyite. I did not encourage him to do so, but turned the conversation into a philosophical discourse into the meaning of the passing of Che Guevara.

Thursday, October 12, 1967

Jack Leacacos, The Plain Dealer, Cleveland, came in for another long session on his book. I discussed in particular the special relationship that has been built up between the President, on the one hand, and Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, on the other.

Roscoe and Geoffrey Drummond came in to receive the material on bombing which you had approved. I turned them over to Bob Ginsburgh who worked with them for some time. They should be equipped to do an intelligent and helpful series of articles.

Friday, October 13, 1967

Endre Marton, AP, called. After clearance by you, reported by George Christian, I gave them the following limited statement for quotation: "I have not read the Otepka document which is part of a privileged hearing, as I understand it. But, since 1951, I have been continuously under security clearance from various government agencies."

Don Oberdorfer, Knight newspapers, came in. He is going out to Vietnam. He is going to concentrate, out there, on the condition of the VC. I promised to give him some background information. At this time, however, he is writing an article on the public opinion in the U.S. with respect to Vietnam. He said this is the critical front. What were my views? And, in particular, did the policy of the President towards Vietnam change with changing public opinion and the polls? I said that your policy towards Vietnam was fixed a long time ago. You were constantly exploring new ways of fighting the war or bringing peace. There was no tactical rigidity but I doubted that your basic approach to Vietnam would change; and I was certain that it was guided by your judgment as to what was right to do and nothing else.

We then discussed the public attitudes. I expressed the faith and hope that as people came in the heightened context of a Presidential election year to face their choices in Vietnam, we would stay the course as a people and this fact would be reflected in the position of both major political parties. He expressed the thought that your speech at San Antonio and Sec. Rusk's press conference had halted an erosion. He hoped we would continue to take the offensive.

Seymour Topping came in to meet me, in his new role as Managing Editor of The New York Times. He had two themes:

-- Why don't we stop bombing unconditionally and rally the country, if necessary, by proving that Hanoi would not negotiate.

I explained to him some of the complexities in any such decision, using the key elements in the San Antonio formula as the basis.

-- He tried to convince me that the news columns of The New York Times "were completely independent" of editorial policy.

I expressed some skepticism but also expressed the hope that under his leadership this would prove to be the case. More in sorrow than in anger, I said it was sad that for someone who had respected The New York Times all his life, to feel its news integrity was being corrupted because of a judgment on a current issue.

I used the occasion to talk about other aspects of your foreign policy, beyond Vietnam; and arranged that he would come in again to discuss some of the larger purposes and achievements of your Administration in foreign policy.

Saturday, October 14, 1967

I had lunch with Joe Alsop, at his suggestion, at the Metropolitan Club. He gave me an extremely vivid account of progress in Vietnam. It is his belief that by June of next year at the latest we will see in the coastal provinces of I, II and III Corps such obvious progress that "even The New York Times will not be able to deny it." The Delta will improve but more slowly. It is wholly possible that the VC infrastructure of most of the country will "roll up like a carpet in this time period." He is not sure what the North Vietnamese will do in the face of this situation which is perfectly real to them: they may try protracted negotiation, tied up with a stoppage of bombing in the north; they may try to put in more North Vietnamese troops across the DMZ; or they might negotiate to end the war. He is strongly against a stoppage of bombing which, in ways which cannot be put into statistics, ~~is~~, in his view, certainly limiting the pressure significantly that Hanoi can apply in the south.

Tom Lambert, Los Angeles Times, telephoned to ask if there was anything useful he could do about the Otepka matter, which he regards as ugly. He said he had persuaded the Los Angeles Times not to run the story. He said Sen. Strom Thurmond will have a release on Monday which will make a snide remark about this problem. He said that if I ever have any suggestion as to how he can help, just let him know.

I thanked him.

W. W. Rostow

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