

## If Censorship Comes to Vietnam

With the Vietnam conflict assuming all the proportions of a genuine war, albeit undeclared, the U.S. military high command has begun to weigh the advisability of press censorship at the fighting front.

As of now, correspondents are operating under a form of "voluntary censorship," which is variously observed and variously breached, depending on the individual reporter's interpretation of the ground rules.

Inevitably, as the American forces have begun to absorb heavier losses and suffer occasional setbacks, the military's belief in mandatory censorship grows stronger.

Leaving aside for the moment the basic issue, there are certain practical problems that must be considered, stemming mainly from our relations with the South Vietnam government. No censorship would be worth much unless it were observed equally by U.S., Vietnamese and foreign newsmen. (At last accounts 300 reporters, including 121 Americans, were covering the war.)

11/29/65  
LAT-Ed  
This, of course, could be arranged by a relatively simple agreement between the two governments, who have already reached accord on the much thornier matter of command strategy itself.

Censorship of stories about U.S. action, naturally, would fall within the jurisdiction of American authorities.

It goes without saying that no thinking person, whether on the homefront or the battlefield, wants to publish anything detrimental to our cause. Lives are at stake. So might be the ultimate outcome of the war.

But it should also be clearly understood that censorship, if imposed for valid reasons, must concern itself solely with safeguarding military security.

The powers of the censor can be dangerously broad and arbitrary if not carefully defined in advance. There is always a temptation to gloss over the realities of a situation.

Any attempt to use copy control as a cover-up for inefficiency, for propaganda purposes, or to spare the feelings of the high command would ill-serve the American public.