

Pentagon Papers trial

Halperin tells of reasoning behind

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Morton H. Halperin, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs, was the man directly responsible for preparing the written history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the study known as the Pentagon Papers.

This week he testified for the defense in the Pentagon Papers Trial how and why the study was written, its purpose, and, in particular, what Daniel Ellsberg's participation in the study was. He testified that Ellsberg had authorization to see all the volumes of the study during the period that the government charges him with unauthorized possession.

Now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, one of the few "think tanks" not funded by governmental contract, Halperin has been on leave of absence to be a full-time consultant to the defense team of Ellsberg and Russo.

His testimony was as important as that of McGeorge Bundy, former special assistant to President Kennedy, and Leslie Whiting, the former director of the Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research for the Far East. Bundy and Whiting devastated the espionage charges by explicitly denying that any of the documents named in the indictment against Ellsberg and Russo could have caused injury to the U.S. or been of use, value or advantage to a foreign nation, if released in 1969. Halperin testified that the documents were private papers; were prepared with "volunteer" researchers; did not involve any contractual agreement with departments of the government, or Rand Corporation; and most importantly, were rather arbitrarily classified "top secret" by Leslie Gelb (the man he assigned staff responsibility for the Papers) and himself.

The government has based its case on the testimony of Generals DePuy and Gorman to the effect that the classification "top secret" on these documents assured their relationship to national defense. Several prosecution witnesses from Rand Corporation described the extensive security system there in relation to the Pentagon Papers. Their testimony was foundation for the government to prove that Ellsberg violated the security system at Rand.

Halperin testified that the Pentagon Papers were never intended to be included in the Rand Security system. Coming witnesses for the defense, including Lawrence Henderson,

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former vice president of Rand Corporation, are expected to resolve conclusively Rand's role in storing the Pentagon Papers.

But Halperin also testified that he and Gelb classified the Papers "Top Secret" because some of the source documents were stamped "Top Secret." He added, "the additional marking of 'sensitive' was used on documents that were considered to be bureaucratically or politically sensitive. It was used to keep information from everybody not involved in writing or supplying information." Everybody included, "Congress, the Military Command in Vietnam, the general public and the Department of Defense." Halperin also testified that he had never read any of the regulations defining proper classification of government documents before assigning "Top Secret" to the study.

In an exclusive interview with this reporter, Morton Halperin revealed additional insights about the Vietnam War and his own projects for future American involvement in the Third World.

Morton Halperin is in many ways a classic example of what David Halberstam calls the "best and the brightest." Only 34 years old, he has worked for the government in various positions of second-level management since 1966. Before resigning from the National Security Council in 1969, he developed the plan for reactivation of the Council, at the request of Henry Kissinger. The final plan, now operative, was approved by President Nixon. Prior to working for Kissinger, he was deputy assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs, until his leaving government in 1969.

Halperin's work for the Ellsberg-Russo defense has ensured that he will not work for the Nixon government in the future. But, like so many other witnesses more famous than he Halperin is very much a member c

the government-in-exile. This government is the liberal establishment ousted by the conservatism and repression of Mitchell and Nixon.

The liberal establishment includes men used to being in positions of power. They like "getting things done." Although all agree that we failed in Vietnam, that we were wrong in assuming we could stop Communism there, none, including Halperin, see our involvement as more than a mistake, a mistake arising from a blind adherence to the rhetoric of anti-Communism. None see that involvement as having roots in American domestic policy; none see it as part of American capitalism, as a natural consequence of the development of the American Empire.

According to Halperin, "Nixon is committed to preventing a Communist take-over in Vietnam." He said, "The war is not over. I expect the bombing to start again. You have to see Vietnam as a film on the wall—a film that can never get off." As he explained it, "the film goes forward for awhile and then runs backward." For example, "the troops are now back to where we were in 1965. The film is running backward." He added, "the gradual stopping of the bombing is back to where we were in 1964 before the Gulf of Tonkin incident." But, he said, "the film will soon go forward again."

"We will start gradually. There will be an incident, like the Tonkin incident" (that one was manufactured by the American government, as was revealed in the Pentagon Papers). "Maybe," he said, "the North Viet-

namese will build a military base in South Vietnam and we will have to bomb it."

When I asked how we could stop it, he said, "If Congress had any toughness, any seriousness, they would pass the resolution by Church and Case that the President cannot use military forces in or over Vietnam



MORTON H. HALPERIN

without permission of Congress." But, he added, he didn't think that the chances were very high that Congress would do this.

Halperin stated, "At one level, Nixon is totally undercutting anti-Communism. Only a few people in government still believe in anti-Communism. But the notion that Communism is evil," he said, "is still being fought in Vietnam." When I asked him what the rationale behind

the rhetoric is, he replied, "I think it's a mystery." He added that anti-Communism arose from a commitment to reconstruction of Europe, and said, "The rhetoric got out of hand."

Halperin believes that our efforts throughout the Third World have involved trying to do much more ambitious things than our national foreign policy interest would or should dictate. Halperin said these ambitious efforts have led the U.S. to "corrupting our own society." He explained that our involvement in the developing world has "forced us into covert affairs, has led to the Watergate case, and the corruption of labor unions in so far as they have been in league with the CIA in other countries."

Halperin is optimistic about the long range future American involvement in the Third World. "I think there will be a fundamental change coming," he said, "arising from the fact that American students are learning far different things than when we went to school."

Like Daniel Ellsberg, Morton Halperin believed that the U.S. was basically good. He said that he was shocked to learn about our blatant sabotage of the Geneva Accords of 1954. He believed that we were in Vietnam because the Vietnamese had invited us there. The lesson of the Pentagon Papers is a lesson for those who were the architects of the war.

The value, in fact, of the Papers may, in the end, not be for the American public at large, long accustomed to lying and manipulation by their government, but it may be for

the manipulators themselves.

Halperin said that the teachers and writers of today are educating "new men who will be in positions of leadership." He said "this will lead to a substantial reduction of the military budget. It will lead to a fundamental difference about the way we perceive the world."

As if to illustrate that fundamental difference, Halperin has his own recommendations. "The U.S. should cease all covert activities, with the possible exception of spies in Russia and China. There should be no CIA agents in the developing world. The entire intelligence network in Western Europe should be totally dismantled.

"But," he said, "for the immediate future, the prospects are not too good. Congress will be corrupted by the President." And the war will continue.

Halperin's participation in the defense of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo has ensured his lack of participation in the Nixon government. Nixon, last week, asked Congress to pass a bill making it a crime to release classified information.

Although the Justice Department is charging the defendants with committing just such a crime, Nixon's attempt to make it law, demonstrates most clearly that no laws, in fact, have been broken. However, the jury as yet does not know this. The defense anticipates another three to four weeks for the presentation of its case including testimony by Tony Russo and Dan Ellsberg. The prosecution plans to present a rebuttal. No one knows how long that will take.