

Agnew, in Singapore, Says U.S. Media Unintentionally Aid North Vietnamese

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Special to The New York Times

SINGAPORE, July 5—Vice President Agnew renewed his criticism of the United States news media today, charging them with unintentionally assisting the North Vietnamese by some aspects of their coverage of the war in Indochina.

He also suggested that the media had been arrogant in their publication of top-secret Government documents and inadequate in their presentation of the true aims of American foreign policy to American and foreign audiences.

Mr. Agnew's sharp words, delivered in his customary low-key fashion, came in the midst of a conversation here with a group of newsmen whom he had invited to his suite to explain the essential purposes of his current 10-nation worldwide trip.

Apparently responding to some newspaper and magazine articles that had questioned the diplomatic value of his trip, Mr. Agnew described it as more than a routine goodwill mission and an effort to reassure

friendly nations, especially in Asia and the Mediterranean, that the United States intended to remain a world power despite some "isolationist" voices in Washington.

Americans' Patience an Issue

Turning to Vietnam, Mr. Agnew said he thought the prospects for the survival of the Government in Saigon were "very good," but he said that one major variable was the patience of the American people, which he considered might be eroded by narrow or incomplete reporting of Communist successes on the battlefield during the next few crucial months.

The North Vietnamese, he said, might easily launch a "high-risk, high-casualty effort" that "will unquestionably—if it's successful regardless of the North Vietnamese casualties—be played heavily as a failure of the Vietnamization program."

Mr. Agnew said he thought allied forces in Vietnam could prevent a successful enemy attack "in a military sense" but warned that the enemy might

achieve a "public - relations coup" just the same because "so many of our people in the national media are too ready to assist the North Vietnamese by their overemphasis on what's taking place."

"I don't think they mean to assist them," he went on, "but we've gone through this terrible introspective, almost masochistic twinge of conscience in our country regarding the Vietnam war where we look with favor on anything good that happens to the enemy."

An 'Introspective Period'

The propriety of publishing government documents was raised by Mr. Agnew himself while answering a question on what he thought of recent actions of the Singapore Government, which has closed two papers and jailed the editors of a third for criticizing the Government of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

Obliquely criticizing a Government that only yesterday he had commended for its commitment to democratic principles, Mr. Agnew said that criticism of government was "healthy" and that he believed "very firmly in a free press."

However, he said, the "blatant publication" of confidential material was another matter entirely.

Without directly mentioning the publication of the Pentagon papers on the Vietnam war by The New York Times and other newspapers, Mr. Agnew said: "I don't think it's up to any newspaper principal or any private citizen who is really totally unbriefed on many of the matters under consideration to take it upon himself to decide that to publish that information would not harm the national interests."

"I don't see how he's in a position to make that judgment, and I think, moreover, that he

would be tempted to find in favor of publication because he is in fact involved as a commercial enterprise which would benefit from the publication of that information in a commercial sense."

In reviewing the objectives of his tour, Mr. Agnew conceded that there were no serious bilateral issues outstanding with any nation on the itinerary but that many of them were nervous about the implications of the Nixon Doctrine and about the "isolationist attitude" represented by some voices in Congress.

Part of the misunderstanding among foreign leaders about Mr. Nixon's true objectives arose, Mr. Agnew suggested, from the prominence given

"isolationist" voices in the news media, which he also accused of reporting incompletely Mr. Nixon's foreign policy as outlined in the State of World Message. This policy, he insisted, included a firm commitment to maintain all of the United States' present treaty relationships.

He planned to reassure them, he said, that the Nixon Administration had no intention of leaving a vacuum in Asia or the Middle East to permit "subtle expansions - and some not so subtle - of the Communist doctrine."

Mr. Agnew leaves tomorrow for visits to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and three African nations before arriving in Spain on July 17.