

World Press Overwhelmingly Supports

Editorials in the press here and abroad have overwhelmingly supported the publication by The New York Times of a series of secret documents dealing with origins of the United States' involvement in the Indochina war.

In comments appearing yesterday and the day before, the newspapers with few exceptions also expressed shock at the substance of the reports, particularly that section describing the Johnson Administration's escalation of the fighting in Vietnam.

Following are excerpts from the editorials, as compiled from wire service reports and dispatches from Times correspondents:

NATIONAL

WASHINGTON POST —

Those of us who believe that the reader, which is to say the public, always gains from the maximum possible comprehension of what the Government is doing and how it it all works (particularly when it works badly) can only applaud The Times's enterprise; it is hard for us to think of an argument for withholding such material once it was in hand Why the Government moved on Tuesday instead of, let us say, late Saturday night when the first edition became available, is, well, puzzling The story that unfolds is not new in its essence We had bits and pieces of all that before. But not in such incredibly damning form, not with such irrefutable documentation. That is what brings you up breathless We say that the Federal Government does not have a constitutional leg to stand on in its effort to censor the contents of a newspaper It is evident, then, that unless the courts are now prepared to throw some 200 years of history and precedent out the window, the Government will lose its case and The Times will be free, come Sunday, to resume publication of these documents. That is as it should be.

WASHINGTON EVENING STAR—The Pentagon study . . . unquestionably will provide much grist for Communist propaganda mills and intelligence services. But it should not, in view of its built-in limitations and distortions, be seized upon by Congress, the Administration, or the public as a cause for panic. It must not be allowed to disturb, retard or accelerate the delicate process of disengagement, now so well under way.

BOSTON GLOBE—There

are some things which no government should or will confide to anyone outside of its own inner circle. This is not because all things are not indeed the citizen's business. They are and must be if government is to be the servant, not the master of the people. It is because the business of surviving as a nation may be at stake. . . . But certainly The New York Times's disclosures on the machinations and deceptions connected with American participation in the Indochinese war do not fit the description of a national security. However strained the rationale may appear to be, what the government is saying, nevertheless, is that official conniving and duplicity or, perhaps, simple stupidity, are none of the American people's business even when the cost is 55,000 American lives and a frightening torn country. The Times, in our

view, has performed a singular public service, and should be rewarded rather than denigrated by the Nixon Administration.

NEW YORK POST—In pledging to resist the Justice Department's threat to seek an injunction, The Times has upheld the worthiest traditions of a free press. . . . There have been far too many news blackouts in this disastrous war; there could be no more incongruous and intolerable a climax than a successful official effort to deny Americans access to the truth about the circumstances that led us into this wasteland.

NEWSDAY—The critical issue . . . is: Does the Nixon administration fear the effect of the extraordinary "Vietnam papers" on the enemy or on the American people? . . .

What the documents jeopardize, of course, is the familiar governmental assur-

ance that it is telling the truth, keeping the people informed and acting in their best interests. . . .

The present controversy also emphasizes the role of the press in public affairs. Although the Nixon Administration frequently has criticized the media for its negative attitude toward government, the Vietnam papers underline the necessity for skepticism. The current revelations surely would not have created such an impact had the American press pursued its mission more vigorously when the Johnson Administration was selling the war to the American people. The Times has done a distinct public service in publishing this heretofore secret history.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH—The thrust of the papers is toward military victory and against a negotiated peace. The planners seemed to think negotiations would not pro-

Publication by Times of Series on Vietnam

duce the desired result. . . . It would be naive to think that behind the scenes activities depicted in the study are not continuing. In the public manifestation of the Nixon Administration policies may be seen the same reluctance to negotiate, the same reliance on military power, the same temptations to broaden the war.

MIAMI HERALD—We trust . . . that the public now will better understand what the press has been talking about when it writes of "the credibility gap." What are those Government officials saying today who in the past have accused the press of inventing the gap?

SAN DIEGO UNION—There is no justifying the action of The New York Times in publishing massive excerpts of a top-secret report which traced our involvement in the Indochina war—particularly when the newspaper

was told categorically by the Administration that its action would damage the United States of America. However the real issue goes deeper than misbehavior on the part of a newspaper * * * The greater fact is, highly sensitive documents have been stolen; documents that appraise candidly the long road of our involvement in Indochina. They talk of our most private national plans, our secret strategies and decisions; they disclose what we knew and believed about our enemies. They shine a bright light on the innermost thinking processes of five Administrations. In short, they are documents for which our enemies would pay a King's ransom—and they are getting them for nothing * * *

ABROAD

THE TIMES (London)—The injunction restraining The New York Times from

publishing any more details from the secret memorandum on American involvement in the Vietnam war has stirred public feeling in America about the war itself and about the perennial argument between the claims of the freedom of the press and of national security. . . . The importance of the Vietnam war to American society has already been so great that the disclosures in this case do seem to be in the national interest * * * The fact that the revelations show deception makes them just as important to the credibility of the American Government as the Calley case is to the reputation of the American forces. . . . All governments find that they have to be less than frank and all governments are divided by their own hopes, but to go to war on a lie is a different matter.

THE GUARDIAN (London)—The Vietnam war has regularly turned up incidents reflecting badly on the American involvement. But none has been as disturbing as the contents of the report commissioned by Robert McNamara when he was Secretary of Defense. . . . What the reports reveal will shake the faith of those who believed and hoped that the Government of the United States was acting sincerely and in accordance with its announced motives. . . . The executive powers in Government were largely successful in disregarding the legislature and public opinion, and in concealing the extent to which these moves were deliberately planned expansions of the war. . . .

The implications for the much-vaunted open society in the United States are the ones which will affect President Nixon's Administration. . . . The McNamara papers show that super-powers take decisions much the same way the world over—with scant concern for the opinions or the feelings of those they represent. President Nixon's task will be to prove that his method of government is in any way different.

DIE WELT (West Germany)—The secret documents are still too little known to have a shocking effect. What is shocking for the United States is the certainty that there exist highest ranking "servants of the nation" in Washington who are, whatever their motives, peddling secret material. . . . Was The New York Times well advised to publish these secret documents at such a

rate, Hanoi has no reason to be shocked.

AL NAHAR (Lebanon)—America has, with her own hands, put a big fat zero on a quarter of a century of her policy in Vietnam and Indochina. . . . Not even the most prolific imagination of America's enemies could dream anything of the magnitude that is mentioned in the [McNamara] report by way of policy decisions. . . . One cannot but say that the madness and shortsightedness which characterized United States policy in Indochina under four Presidents—Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson—must have also characterized their policy in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East.

DAILY MIRROR (Australia)—Suddenly, the controversy over Australia's part in the Vietnam war moves into a new dimension. . . . For the secret Pentagon papers published by The New York Times reveal that the Australian Government had a blindly uncritical—even willing—role in President Johnson's hypocrisy. They show that while President Johnson was winning friends with his apparent sincerity and humanity he was, at the same time, provoking North Vietnam into an escalated war. And they show that the Australian Government was well aware of this. . . . This makes sickening nonsense of the repeated assertion that Australians are fighting in Vietnam only because the South Vietnam Government called for help. It makes clear the people of Australia have been fooled.

VIETNAM DAILY MIRROR (An English-language paper in Saigon)—According to the public service recently performed by The New York Times, the U.S. Government recognized in middle 1964 that something would have to be done in Vietnam. Hanoi was then more than doubling the main forces the V.C. had in the south, which presented the U.S. with an unavoidable, emergency decision. They took the decision, in the middle of 1964, to enter the war directly. This raises several questions about the mentality of the men involved. The U.S. citizenry is raised in school on the textbook phrase, "The Congress shall declare war." National support was vital to the war. Hence, a Congressional O.K. was vital to the war. Instead, Johnson lied hugely, constantly, at every major turn in the entry into the war. The results were predictable