

Clash Over Diem

WASHINGTON — (CDN) — Although the Pentagon opposed it, the United States "participated in and encouraged" the 1963 overthrow of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, who was subsequently murdered, according to Rep. Paul McCloskey Jr. (R-San Mateo).

A leading congressional war critic, McCloskey, said the plotting against Diem became a tug of war between the State and Defense Departments.

Documents in his possession, said McCloskey, show that American ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was counseling Diem, while at the same time lesser functionaries were meeting with

the organizers of the conspiracy against him.

Fuel for Controversy

The allegations were certain to further fuel the controversy that has been raging for more than a week, since the "Pentagon papers" first came to light with publication by the New York Times.

The State Department wanted Diem's overthrow, while the Defense Department opposed it, asserted McCloskey. He said he came by his information from secret Pentagon studies on decision-making which had been left in his possession.

The late Robert Kennedy, Attorney General at the time of Diem's overthrow, on Nov.

1, 1963 — 21 days before President Kennedy was assassinated — was the sole member of the Administration to question U.S. involvement in Vietnam at that time, said McCloskey.

Opposing Views

The papers left with him, said McCloskey who last week disclosed he had received them from Daniel Ellsberg, the man accused of "leaking" them to the Times — "had the State Department saying we can't win with Diem and the Defense Department saying we can't win without him."

Kennedy, according to McCloskey's interpretation, then pointed to a third course:

Coup Told by McCloskey

"If we can't win with him (Diem) and we can't win without him, why don't we get out?"

The argument between Lodge and the military went on for two months, said McCloskey, and the Defense officials "finally decided to go along."

Encouraged Coup

"The report shows very clearly that the ambassador encouraged and authorized the coup itself at the same time as the ambassador continued to talk with Diem as if he (Lodge) was on the other side," said McCloskey.

"It was an incredible case of duplicity," he said, calling it also "double dealing" and

adding, "we were in it up to our eyeballs."

McCloskey said the 500 to 600 pages that he has read and intends to paraphrase for the record when he testifies tomorrow before the House Government Operations Committee, is a "tough, careful analysis."

Asked for Go-Ahead

But, he said, "any naive reader could understand we aided and abetted the coup — because these guys (the Vietnamese military junta that overthrew Diem) were asking us whether they should go ahead."

The regime of Diem, the first president of South Vietnam, had been backed by the

United States when he was elected in 1955.

But by 1963 it was subject to criticism by this country when rioting broke out in Saigon and Hue, Buddhist nuns and monks were immolating themselves in protest against Diem's rule, and the secret police of Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem's brother, were charged with brutal repression of political opponents.

Shields Identity

McCloskey said he does not want to submit the original papers left with him to the committee because "I don't want take the chance that the man who gave them to me could be identified by reason of the documents themselves."

Reminded that he already had named Ellsberg as the donor of the papers, McCloskey declined to further explain his refusal to hand over the papers instead of paraphrasing them.

"They were given to me as a member of Congress and I'm asking the Secretary of Defense to provide a full set of documents" to Congress, he said.

The papers in his possession, he added, cover the period from 1961 to "at least" through 1965. The 47 volumes of papers, consisting of 7000 pages, formed the basis for the Times series, covering the period 1945-1967, McCloskey said.