

Behind The Bylines:

State Department Teaches Press How To Lie At D.C. Conference

"They brought us 2000 miles to tell us they don't know anything," reported a veteran Texas newsman and editor from last week's "Broadcasters and Editors Conference" conducted by the U.S. State Department.

Held in Washington on June 28 and 29, the conference was billed as featuring "in-depth discussion and frank answers" to all foreign policy questions. What the assembled pressmen got, however, was a study in yellow journalism. State Department spokesmen, many of them members of Rockefeller's Trilateral Commission and Council on Foreign Relations, lied, misrepresented facts and pulled "bait and switch" tactics throughout the conference whenever confronted with serious policy questions.

"State Department brainwashing sessions," one journalist dubbed the meeting.

The tone was set at the first day's session by State Department Politico-Military Affairs Bureau chief Leslie Gelb (late of Cyrus Vance's *New York Times*) who simply lied outright, giving a flat denial to the question: "Isn't the U.S. asking the Soviets to give up more than the U.S. (at the SALT talks —ed.)?" Gelb was backed up by Deputy Undersecretary of State for Security Assistance Joseph Nye who declared that West Germany is "in complete agreement" with the Carter Administration's proposed ban on exports of nuclear technology. This despite the fact that most American press have already published numerous articles detailing the Schmidt government's open defiance of Carter on this question.

Nye, in fact, habitually lied through his discussion. In response to a question on the massive domestic resistance to the Administration's attempts to shut down fission breeder development, Nye claimed the Administration fully supports the breeder...the highly inefficient thorium breeder, not the Clinch River breeder that Administration critics are demanding.

Another speaker on this panel, Lucy Wilson Benson, State Department Undersecretary for Security Assistance, denied technical expertise on any matters and simply referred questions to Leslie Gelb. "She never even talks to the Defense Department to find out about these things, and yet she's a power unto herself," said one journalist of this appalling display. At one point, Benson referred a questioner to the "Today" TV talk show to "find out the answer to your question tomorrow."

Another panel featured Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and

editor of *Foreign Policy* magazine, to field questions on Administration Asian policy. At the first question on South Korean troop withdrawal, however, Holbrooke suddenly received an "urgent phone call from Cyrus Vance" and hastily exited. He was replaced by a somewhat non-plussed Mr. Oakley, formerly of the National Security Council, who pleaded ignorance on all Asian matters because "I've only been in Asia for a few months...my area is Europe really."

Once science, technology and defense matters had been thus disposed of, Trilateral Commission member Richard Cooper, the State Department's Undersecretary for Economic Affairs, took the podium. "I notice in your biography that you are a member of the Trilateral Commission," queried one midwest reporter. "I have read all their policy papers and what you say sounds just like them. Could it be that David Rockefeller, in order to bail out his banks, is pushing his policies through our State Department?"

"Well I wrote many of those papers when I was on the Trilateral Commission, so wouldn't it be strange if I didn't sound like them?" Cooper parried.

His questioner continued, however, with discussion on that morning's Marquis Childs column advocating the International Monetary Fund bail-out of Rockefeller's banks proposed by Senator Jake Javits. While Cooper expressed vague "disagreement" with Javits, he went on to lie that the Third World debt situation was "not that serious."

The next questioner began by asking Cooper about the half-dozen or so Third World countries already in default on their debt and solicited a response from Cooper to the Soviet's proposed "transferable-ruble" replacement for the IMF. Cooper then admitted that the problems are "very serious" and said: "I'm glad you raised the convertible ruble; we would like to see the Soviets come out with a convertible ruble."

"No, I asked about the transfer-ruble," interrupted his questioner.

"Yes, I think it would be great to have the convertible ruble," Cooper went on ignoring the difference between the Rockefeller banks' proposed convertible ruble scheme for linking sound Soviet currency to the inflated and sinking U.S. dollar, versus the Soviet's specifically proposed transferable ruble plan for international trade and development. With this cheap trick, the panel adjourned.

While much was left unsaid in the official presentations of the State Department's Trilateral Commission

speakers, an informal reception held after the second day's end was more informative in many respects. In this setting, an aide to Richard Cooper approached the midwest journalist who had raised an embarrassing question for Mr. Cooper concerning his Trilateral Commission allegiance in order to make one State Department policy clear: "Let me strongly advise you to stay away from the U.S. Labor Party."

A senior editor gave his appraisal of the "briefing" to the U.S. Labor Party afterwards: "They were all incompetent whiz kids, not one career diplomat among them. They don't know what they're doing. With people like this running the country, we're in big trouble."

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Network Profile

ABC's new News Director, former sports spectacular broadcaster **Roone Arledge**, seems to be trying to change that station's Nixonesque image with the addition of some celebrated old Kennedy hands. Arledge has named former Kennedy press secretary **Pierre Salinger** as network Paris correspondent and former Kennedy aide **Sander Vanocur** to his team of network news anchormen.

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NBC is trying to keep up with the competition. News from NBC headquarters has it that the network's money-men — **Lehman Bros. bankers, Lazard Freres, etc.** — have given the go-ahead to spend whatever necessary to "be competitive" — i.e., bring network programming up in the ratings. According to NBC spokesmen, that means "more situation comedy...and programs of that genre than (NBC) has ever offered in one season," and lots more flashy one-hour "specials."

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Press Comings And Goings:

Following in the footsteps of his father, **Thomas B. Reston** — son of **Nelson Rockefeller's World War II Office of War Information** veteran and *New York Times* vice-president **James Reston** — will shortly be sworn in as **Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs**. Reston Jr.'s previous public affairs experience was gained on the **Policy Planning Committee of the Carter-Mondale campaign team**. He also served on the transition team of the *New York Times'* favorite Administration. The *Times* itself donated a couple of its "best and brightest" to the Carter government early this year — **Eileen Shanahan** to **HEW** and **Leslie Gelb** to **Department of Defense**.

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