

24 March 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Ideas For Your Foreign Service Association Speech

1. In between Laos, Cambodia and other matters of recent concern, I have been musing about ideas that might profitably be incorporated in your forthcoming informal session with the State Department officers in the Foreign Service Association. It seems to me there are four themes that it would be helpful to get across and that would lend themselves to treatment in precisely this sort of context.

2. The first is the obvious one of demonstrating that the Agency -- along with the Foreign Service Officer corps -- works for the US Government and that none of our officers have horns, a tail, or cloven hooves. In the Vietnam field, I have developed very close associations over the years with a wide number of FSO's of practically all grades; but I still get brought up short from time to time on encountering the notion that the Agency and its officers are suspect as agents of dark and sinister powers who operate outside the framework or control of the rest of the US Government establishment.

3. Secondly, it might be useful to make sure your audience is aware of the fact that our activities and operations in any given country are always known to the Ambassador and either approved by him, or commented on to Washington by him, before the fact. This is true worldwide, even though individual Ambassadors differ in the extent to which they take their Political Counsellors, or their Political Sections, into their confidence. Again, this is a very old chestnut but it is, nonetheless, a point worth making with a light but emphatic touch to this particular audience.

4. The third point is a little trickier. I have a lot of admiration for many FSO's I have known and worked with in various incarnations. Almost all of them, however, either display or at least are susceptible to one basic flaw of judgment or perspective, namely, that FSO's -- particularly Political Counsellors, DCM's and Ambassadors -- seem inherently inclined to think of themselves as the advocates of the government to which they are accredited rather than the USG's dispassionate, objective representatives to it or interpreters of it and its actions. To cite but one example, over the years -- particularly in the late '50's and early '60's -- correspondence between our Embassies in Saigon and Phnom Penh read as if it could have been easily drafted by, respectively, the Foreign Offices of the GVN and the RKG. In Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, the Philippines and Saigon I have almost uniformly found most of my FSO acquaintances or colleagues strongly inclined to take the host government's leadership and its policies -- and, for that matter, its overt administrative structure -- more or less at face value. I do not think I have ever read a State Department cable or despatch bluntly saying, in effect, that "the President/Prime Minister/Foreign Minister told me such-and-such yesterday but, of course, the gentleman in question is very careless with the truth and was obviously grinding an axe in this particular case."

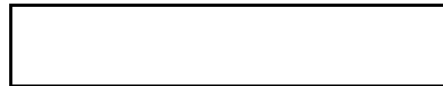
5. I will not belabor this point but I think a skillfully contrived plea for detachment, objectivity and even a little skeptical cynicism in Foreign Service analysis and reporting might be a most useful thing to slip into your remarks.

6. Finally, there is a related point of considerable importance. Many of our Foreign Service colleagues -- particularly at the DCM and Ambassadorial level -- seem incorrigibly prone to confuse the concept properly labelled "influence" with another concept properly labelled "cordiality" or "good fellowship," but for which "influence" is a misnomer. If an Ambassador has, or thinks he has, warm personal rapport with the local Numero Uno  that is fine, but such rapport -- even if it actually exists outside the mind of the reporting officer -- is not necessarily "influence." Nor is the existence of "influence" really demonstrated by the tendering of private invitations to the Ambassador and his wife, a uniform ability to reach Numero Uno on the phone or even the ability to arrange appointments with him on short notice. The defining or distinguishing characteristic of true "influence" is the ability to get someone to do (not just promise) something he had not thought of doing or is himself

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disinclined to do. "Influence" so gossamer as to be jeopardized by an attempt to exercise it is a myth or fiction. From an epistemological point of view, statements such as "I cannot ask the President of Thaibodia to do such-and-such because levying such a request would jeopardize/damage/diminish/reduce our influence over him" are logically meaningless nonsense. (What such a statement often really means is "I don't want to put this pitch to the President because he might be offended and not greet me/my wife so warmly at the next diplomatic reception/invite my wife and me to the next private shadow play at Bogor, etc.") This is a rather delicate notion, but if you could weave it into your remarks I think it would be useful to do so.



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