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To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy, by Roger Hilsman. New York: Doubleday & Co. \$6.95.

By Arnold Beichman

To state it simply, Roger Hilsman's book is indispensable to an understanding of American foreign policy, as it was, as it is, and as it will be. It is a work of solid scholarship. So as not to put off any potential readers, the book is fascinating reading and superb reporting of events we have lived through this past decade.

As a high-ranking State Department executive during the Kennedy and for part of the Johnson administration, Mr. Hilsman describes in extraordinary and vivid I-was-there detail seven foreign policy crises — the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis, Laos, Congo, Indonesia and Malaysia, China and, of course, South Vietnam. Each of these recitals could easily stand up as a book in itself. The actors in his foreign policy sub-system comprise two heroes, President Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy. His "villains" are, first and foremost, Secretary of State Rusk and, second, Defense Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It is difficult to fault Mr. Hilsman who, far more than most critics of foreign policy, has highly authoritative credentials as a West Pointer, a combat officer in World War II, and leader of an OSS guerrilla team operating behind enemy lines in Burma. Onetime scholar at Princeton's Center of International Studies, he became director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in 1961, and in 1963 succeeded Averell Harriman as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. He has written widely on foreign policy. Following his resignation from the State Department, he became a professor at Columbia University's School of International Affairs. Such is his overtelescoped curriculum vitae.

'Neither hawk nor dawg'

The author's world view emphasizes the urgency of supporting Third World nationalist and anticolonial movements regardless of their politically distasteful paths and even at the risk of estrangement from our European allies. From such a view arises the need for policymaking officials who can grasp the political significance of Communist-directed guerrilla movements, and make the appropriate political response, the better to overcome them.

Mr. Hilsman is neither hawk nor dawg, neither dove nor hove. He wants to win, to stanch the Communist tide in Southeast Asia, but such victory is unachievable with a De-

fense Department approach which sees the Vietnam war as overridingly military. To meet the guerrilla threat in South Vietnam are needed "reformers to reorganize mass parties and social and political programs that could become the basis of modernization." But Mr. Hilsman lost his argument to Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff even though President Kennedy personally supported counterinsurgency training and planning. Thus far the Pentagon policy of bombing the north and enemy bases in the south seems to have cost the lives of American pilots and planes without bringing "victory" nearer. Anyone who wants further documentation of Mr. Hilsman's thesis ought to read Robert Shaplen's valuable book, "The Lost Revolution."

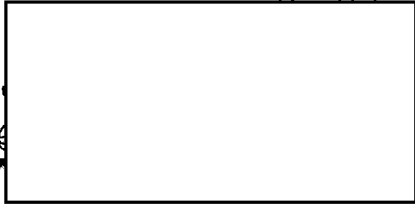
Mr. Hilsman is at his best in his conspectus of "secret intelligence in a free society," the title of one of his chapters. He quickly disposes of several popular arguments against intelligence and its operating arm, the CIA, with this statement: "So long as the Communists themselves are openly antagonistic to the rest of the world, as they openly and avowedly are, and so long as they use the techniques of subversion to bring down governments, which they do and which they openly and avowedly advocate doing, then the countries to which they are so hostile have both a right and a duty to use the methods of secret intelligence to protect and defend themselves — where those methods are effective and appropriate and for which there is no effective and appropriate alternative."

The qualification is in the clause beginning after the dash, for, as Mr. Hilsman says, "in the past we have too often used secret intelligence methods when they were not effective and appropriate or when there were effective and appropriate alternatives." The result, he states, of overreliance on these covert methods "so corroded one of our major political assets, the belief in American intentions and integrity, as to nullify much of the gain."

The China problem

I have avoided listing the now-it-can-be-told episodes which are strewn in profusion throughout the book because to tell them badly would risk distortion of their meaning.

One story, however, is worth recounting since it tells a good deal about Secretary Rusk, with whom Mr. Hilsman disagrees strongly on almost every substantive issue of foreign policy as well as management of the State Department. Mr. Rusk was once asked if he wanted to go down in history as the Secretary of State who had solved the Berlin crisis. He replied: "No, I'm not that vain. But I do want to go down in history as one of those Secretaries of State who succeeded in passing the Berlin crisis on to his successor."



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