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December 21, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Letter from Mrs. Anna Lord Strauss

*Pres file  
snaps*

Mrs. Anna Lord Strauss was one of the three VIP ladies (the other two -- Mrs. Eugenia Anderson and Mrs. Norman Chandler) who visited Saigon recently. She has written expressing her deep appreciation to you for the opportunity to go to Saigon, and some concern about the situation there. She intends to do her very best to share with her fellow citizens her own conviction that the USA must continue to work with the Vietnamese, but on a de-escalating scale.

A suggested reply is attached for your approval.

W. W. Rostow

Att.

MWright:wpt

Dec. 28, 1967

Dear Mrs. Strauss:

Thank you for your letter of December 12. I am very glad that you were able to go to Vietnam. I think it is of the highest importance that people like yourself be in a position to speak to their friends with the authority of first-hand information about what we are doing in Vietnam, and why it is necessary.

There is no question but that the hopes of the Viet Cong and of Hanoi is that they can win, in this country, the struggle they cannot win in the field in South Vietnam. They believe that they can sap and wear down the will of the American people. I believe they are wrong, but I do not believe that real peace will come in South Vietnam until they know that they are wrong. The issue, then, goes to the heart of the relationship between the American citizen and his government.

Because I believe the above to be true I am much encouraged by your pledge to share with your fellow citizens your own convictions about the situation in Vietnam.

I noted with interest your belief that we must continue to work with the Vietnamese but on a gradually de-escalating scale, and your concern that unless we are careful our own efforts may serve to sap Vietnamese initiatives and lead to resentment. I am sure that Ambassador Bunker and his staff made it plain to you that we share that hope and that concern. There is a delicate line between leaving essential things undone and taking too much upon ourselves. Ambassador Bunker, in particular, is aware of this problem and I believe he is the ideal man to strike the golden mean.

If we can be of any assistance in providing you with information you need in presenting your views to your fellow citizens, please let us know.

Sincerely,

*Lyndon B. Johnson*

Mrs. Anna Lord Strauss  
27 East 69th Street  
New York, New York

*Mailed from  
Johnson City, Texas*