

9 Dec 63

Dear Rufe:

Sorry for the long delay between reports, but we have, as you might suspect, been whirling rather madly, and not too profitably. There are, no doubt, hopeful aspects to the situation, which we cannot see for the trees, but the trees are getting awfully damn thick. No doubt by the time you read this Stoney will have given you a full briefing on matters from his point of view (which, incidentally, I have never succeeded in ascertaining to my satisfaction) The enclosed will help fill you in on some of the other matters and views.

In general, it would appear appropriate to say that the MRC is seeking to govern by committee, and do not know how to make a committee achieve even the limited effectiveness of which it is capable. In addition, it, or its members, seem to be indulging in a good deal of vindictiveness and self-justification, and apparently, efforts at self-protection through many transfers of officers, and, allegedly, numerous arrests. Buu and Thao are still in the jug, and Emily reports force strength now ca. 700.

There is some good news. Len is doing an excellent job, but sends following message: "When?" Took a ride with him yesterday (Sunday) to Nha Trang to see John (who has been in hospital for a check-up, supposedly coming out today) to Pleiku to see the Sp Fces "B" Team which crying because can never find Dwight, left 'em happy; on to Quang Ngai where Len did magnificent job of interrogating Byrne (see memo). Cabbage had session Sunday with Earl Y and Geo M re Long An, promised full personal backing, told Mike to work on it as priority project. Sanders, of Newsweek, smells rising tide of appeasement in Washington, wants to write stories that we can win here, am trying to help him. Shaplan very discouraged, also anxious to get home for Christmas, so probably will not get him into provinces very much. His first story, on the political situation, -coup, will probably be a bit of a stinker.

Miscellany: Corsican hemorrhoidectomized on 4th, unhappy. Being systematically cut out by little fat boy, from whom I still have heard nothing. Varouis counterplots afoot on him. = Ted S read Long An, said agreed perfectly with his resent visit's observations, I Corps in much the same shape. = Oai supposedly on the skids. = No decision yet on Chieu Hoi. = OB girls left, safe and happy, on the 4th. Promised to sned Barbara, to whom my love, a report. = Jack (aka Ronando Millad) wishes to be remembered. = Dinner with Xuan other night, very friendly, promised to work on Poling matter, agreed to cover story that he to be advisor to Chef d'Etat security, but very pointed to effect that to have such an advisor would be grave reflection on VN security personnel, particularly in view death Kennedy. = Still no contact with Kim, who well aware I want to see him on urgent matter for you, but I do not want to press on this -- just doesnt "feel" right, somehow. * Bui van Luong moved upstairs into Tho's office, unspecified duties. = Cao taking hold well, showing much interest and enthusiasm - see copy of report by Len which will send as soon as he finishes - but my hunch is he doesnt have clear charter yet. Geo spent week in Delta with him, much impressed also found Cao easy to feed ideas to. = Father Hoa's position still uncertain, Dave worried, but inadequate data as yet. = One Col Ta Xuan Thuan, deputy to Dinh, called us over this afternoon for preliminary discussions on hamlet militia, says not taking over but interested, reinforcing my hunch that nothing settled yet. = Oggy busy being Oggy, currently upset over increase proposed in fertilizer, requiring at least 50,000 truckloads, etc. = Ask Stoney how close he came to being blown up in Tay Ninh. = MDA closing out, definitely. = Adler gone as part of RIF. = Halberstam leaves tomorrow to cover US elections.

How goes it all by you and the family, not forgetting that big new one? Interesting the number of people who do not know you have left -- about the same as the number who know you are never coming back, quit or fired. Do, at least, let us hear from you once in a while, even though you have no firm info, or don't want to commit yourself. We are continuing the march in our own stumbling fashion, and, as I say, Len is doing hell of a fine job. Received a letter from Ed, not too informative. Suggest he be interested in this collection.

Best of luck, and remember the "illegitimus non carborundum" motto.

R
Roe