

14 Jan 64

Dear Rufe:

Just a quick (quickie to acknowledge receipt this AM of yours of 16 Jan. Read the official version yesterday, so you can see what quick time your commo makes. Had lunch with ED today, passing on your info and suggestions, and picking up the enclosed, which was delivered open, and apparently answers your previous commo to him. On the matter of the moustache being asked for, he promised to transmit that soonest, and felt quite sanguine that the appropriate action would be taken. Hitherto, it appears from what he said, that he has been primarily engaged in insuring that you were asked to return by the generals.

He assured me repeatedly that to the best of his knowledge and belief you, Lou, the moustache, and even I were very much persona gratissima to all of them, especially you and Lou. It appears that the problem has been simply what we feared, that the poor little brown brothers feel bashful about standing up and making requests in a forceful way to these big overwhelming white brothers.

Don't know how we can ever overcome that, but tried to give ED some armshots which he could pass on, citing to him some examples of how this had been done successfully in the past, and some of the arriere-pensees indulged in by Americans who had declined such requests. Can only hope that it did some good. Will be seeing him again soon, I hope, and may be able to pound on this theme some more. Have not yet succeeded in getting him in touch with Nguyen Tai, thanks to a series of coincidences almost as fantastic as those described in the enclosed memos re Van Hoa; but now have it tentatively set up again (that is, the ED-NT rencontre) for Sunday night. The papers which ED sends will try to have pouched.

Bert back in office yesterday AM, again this; still very weak, but may be able to get back on the job soon. Have not had a chance to talk to him about it. Will try also to enclose copy of memo on Val, FYI. Things in general their usual miserable aggravating selves; absolutely no progress on the bureaucratic front anywhere, except perhaps in the Dir PsyWar where everybody is so new that it seems almost as though something might get itself done sometime in the barely foreseeable future. Our new secretary, a Cambodia refugee, just came back for lunch and is eying my her typewriter hungrily, so perhaps had better saw this from off and turn the machine over to her before she goofs off somewhere. Excuse the miserable typing, but have been trying to rattle this off too damn fast so as to finish the letter before running out of ink, or something.

Take it easy, give that damn liver of yours a break, so it will swell up enough to be found, give my regards to Barbara and all, and let us hear from you.

As ever,