

11 October 1965

Saigon

Dear Rufe:

That was terrific letter from you -- a tremendous boost to us all! I circulated it to the team, minus one sensitive part about money, which a couple of us are looking into. Also, will pass on the gist of it to Lodge, so that he will feel that you are his man in Washington. Relations with him continue as cordial as when you left, and your fine actions surely will help keep them so (minus your jetstar flight).

We are just starting to make some dents into hard-rock problems. I wired Bundy/Unger to call you in as a consultant to read our messages, for the background you can add, and to keep you up to date for the time when you can join us again. Sure hope this happens. You'll know more than anyone else just what some of it means.

On the 100 day speech, which made such a noisy Sunday out of the day you left -- Ky used most of it, for about the second half of his speech. Embassy Political Section estimated 15 paragraphs were used. We figure about 10 paragraphs, but potent ones. So, the exercise was well worth doing, if we can get the follow-up we are now attempting. Also, we have done another speech for Ky, to open an Administrative Meeting today. I attended the meeting -- over which Gen Co presided rather than Ky, and my campy understanding of Vietnamese left me wondering at the end of it if any of our stuff was used. I thought I recognized some words of Bernie's at the end, but maybe Co said "Yankee go home" instead. Anyhow, I clapped along with everyone else. We'll soon know if we had any input.

The Administrative Meeting is a two-day session with all the Province Chiefs and with one member each from the elected Provincial Councils. Subjects to be discussed are: Refugees, Rural Construction, and Administrative problems. First time elected folks have met in a body since the old Assembly. I start, anyhow.

Incidentally, on the 100 day speech. The Vietnamese talked about "3 months" instead of "100 days". Reason, Buddhists mourn officially for 100 days, and then the departed is really gone. Yet, Ky used "1,000 days", so my entire 100 was a bit. I, of course, got the folks ruffling about how long

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the military was figuring on staying in power. On the other hand, a good talk with Chief of State Thieu developed the idea of an elected Council to deliberate on writing a Constitution a bit further. Thieu is now talking about doing this in December.

I took Luigi in for a courtesy call on Thieu, and we had a two hour session of the friendliest sort imaginable. Think we laid a bugaboo to rest, and also had an unusual political exchange of views. Very worth while. Thieu wants more such meetings.

I brought the Mission Liaison Group in for a 5-hour working session and lunch with Ky and Bui Dien on pacification. Changed a lot of the attitude on the MLG for the better. Have similar follow-up sessions planned with Co, who is overall Rural Construction head as Deputy M under Ky (Ky was going to name him "Minister of War and Peace", but chickened out to naming him Minister of War and Rural Construction at the last moment) and with Gen Thang, who has taken Ung's place. Thang was former J-3 out at the JGS of ARVN or RVNAF. I've had private talks with him. So far, so good, although he's tackling the problems a bit in West Point fashion, he talks much of it our style. I hope he doesn't get set in the old Hop Tac concrete. I've started moving Val in as our liaison with him, and will see if Val's soldierly stance clicks with him. We've jarred up the thinking in the MLG considerably, and have held a series of brain-storming sessions which have questioned the meanings of all words and operations in a really healthy way. I just hope we get this on track.

We are having dinner with Labor head Bui tonight. Tomorrow, with a group of Veterans leaders. Next night, Bui Dien takes a lesson in economics from Professor Deutch, with Sung and Luigi present; I've suggested that Mike then be brought by Dien into an informal session with Ky and Ton. Friday night, we're having an informal session with Lodge, to develop a team song -- with such team members as Phan Day, Pernie, and Sam Wilson bringing their guitars. There should be a tape by Hank, which we'll use to let you attend second-hand.

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Roy Wehrle is heading for Washington tomorrow, to stick his head in the lion's mouth up on the Hill -- with the USOM budget. It has the concept of getting the Prov Reps back into the old money-passing act of your era in Rural Affairs, but with more money added. Suggest you get a session with Roy, Stoney, and others, for what you can do to help. Mike has been coaching Roy, who spends his time in Mission Council meetings scribbling notes to me about what a fine guy Mike is. Mike has been going great guns on the Economic Warfare Committee, which Roy heads.

Bert is close to quitting, and we're working on getting him into the act more usefully. Yesterday, found out that he doesn't even have an office, that O'Neill hardly gives him a glimpse of refugee planning. So, we're going to give a hard shove when the new Refugee Chief arrives this week. If it doesn't work, then we'll grab Bert back from Mann. Until then, I don't really feel like answering Poats letter. If you see Rud, tell him I've given his letter much thought and that while you don't know it's contents, you know that it concerned me deeply. Meanwhile, if the refugee thing turns into a monstrous bureaucratic exercise, we've had it as far as trying to save this country -- and can't let that happen. Edward Marks is the new refugee guy coming out. We've invited him to lunch the first day.

Charlie Choate is off on a four-day visit with the MACV IG to all sub-sector advisers, after being indoctrinated by Bernie. Hank is getting intimate with all the GVN psywar and infor folks. He has been goosing the MIG on pacification doctrine. Luigi renewing old contacts, so maybe we'll find out a bit about the basis for rumors of a power struggle. Joe Baker came up with a potent idea on following up LBJ's ploy with the Cubans by getting doctors, nurses, agricultural types out here -- but Bundy threw cold water on same. Joe Redick now has some of the old lines in. Val runs a second Phil. Ebbusy out of his apartment, while Po still is King of ESCOW camp. Sam Warwick is branching out into cultural fields (somebody found out about all his degrees, and also is acty of ILG. I've made Luigi big brother to Sam Ellsherg and shortly will have them off to the pacification campaigns in I and II CTZs.

Give the gods in our Washington Chapter our love -- and please let me hear from you!

Ed