

American Embassy
Saigon, Viet Nam
April 5, 1967

Mr. Rufus C. Phillips
1310 Ridge Road
McLean, Virginia

Dear Rufe and Sam:

Or, dear Sam and Rufe. Please forgive me for writing you a joint letter. It's easier for me at this moment, since each of you has kept me well-informed about the Washington scene -- and each has advised roughly the same thing: to ease off on the worrying.

When I first talked to Sam by 'phone, the only person I had any word from on the subject of future plans was from HCL. He had invited me to resubmit my letter of resignation and to return to the U.S. with him, a personally attractive offer as you know. It was a development subsequent to my talk with Rufe in Hong Kong. Yet, there was actually something ephemeral about the way this was put to me that made me wonder about the real substance. It put me in a real quandary that only one or two people in Washington could help out on, one of them being Bundy with Bunker. Once that was done, and a message back, I had all I needed at the moment to start rational planning and to answer Vietnamese pressures, which had become somewhat emotional in tone.

I agree that enough has been done for now. Either I can get some things done with Bunker here or I cannot. If I cannot, then it's the right time to come home. Yet, from what I hear from Oggie Williams and others who have served with Bunker, I suspect that we may well click. If Bunker gets too much selling about me from too many quarters, I can understand that he might well resent it. It's one of the reasons that I get concerned over the eager-beaver actions of Rose, Bernie, and others who want to help; it's far from what I'd ever ask them to do. The Vietnamese are a different problem. Thang, Ky, Tran van Do, and a lot of others are bound to ease up when they

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see HCL depart and me waving goodbye from the crowd on the ground. Incidentally, General Vien is one of these, thanks to Fritz.

Now, with so many other things having been done, I suspect I was in error to send one of the SLO tape reports to Bunker, suggesting that it might be a useful addition to his briefings. I did it on the spur of the moment, after a remark in the Mission Council that the tape was "the best briefing on Viet Nam yet," and noted this in the transmittal letter to Bunker. Ah well, I'm in a mood of not giving much of a damn.

Incidentally, Rufe, the SLO tape went to both George Tanham and Wes Fishel, to make certain that the American Friends were served. I haven't heard from either, so maybe they didn't receive it. One of these days, they could copy yours. Also, you both will be receiving short tapes of an SLO song written and sung by Hershel Gober in Wisconsin recently. While it is notable that this is our third song, I doubt that any are destined to go down in history or ever make a hit parade.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the first step of the village elections went off remarkably successfully -- even getting a few of the press interested, after some pushing by Hank, so maybe you've read about them. Nine more Sundays of local elections to go, though, and Hanoi Radio noisier than ever about this scheme of the imperialists' puppets. Thang even had a hand-grenade delivered at his house. But, nobody hurt and Thang shrugged it off.

Rufe: June would be a much more meaningful time than April, to help out here. Local elections will be pretty much under the belt, at least for Phase I, reactions to them in the body politic will be fermenting (villagers in word to their relatives among the VC, developmental work a la Ted Owens, etc.), and the realities of grouping together will have dawned on the politicos as they start working in earnest on the Presidential bid. Although it might be an awkward time to try to bring together various factions and groups (the period right after the Presidential campaign being more fruitful, probably), I suspect that we can encourage some campaigning methods that could grow into customs and good institutions in themselves (stumping in the provinces, selection of poll-watchers, fund-raising by popular subscription, determining of issues at stake, etc.).

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After I started writing this, Charlie Bond called Joe to tell him about an item in the CS Monitor for 31 March, mentioning me. And, Frank McCullough has just informed me that he quoted me in a Life editorial, after a meeting in New York a couple of days ago. All this time I've been ducking the press thoroughly, just not to rock the boat. What gives?

If anybody would like some nuoc mam, I think I'll hide out at the spot Sam looked over on Phu Quoc, before any more prison camps are built there to spoil such a hidey-hole.

Just remember Bert's saying: every man a tiger.

Warm regards,

Edward G. Lansdale
Assistant to the Ambassador

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