

EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM

14 August 1968

To: Bill Connell
From: Rufus Phillips
Subject: Comments on Draft IX of the Vietnam Speech

1. My comments are based on providing you with something useful to cut down on the number of pitfalls in this speech. It is still full of them. In general, as a comprehensive statement, I believe it is too optimistic in tone and tends to create the impression that making peace is going to be easier than making war, that we have it largely within our power to do it and that somehow this is going to solve the problems of Asia. Also, by failing to reassert the moral nature of our commitment, the speech omits the strongest possible argument in favor of the American people sticking with this situation long enough to get an honorable and lasting peace. Come next January I suspect the Vice President may wish he had never delivered it, but I realize that it is probably too late now to tone down its optimistic air or to give it more balance. My comments are, therefore, confined to avoiding certain specific pitfalls which could later trap the Vice President into facing a choice of either violating our national security or losing the confidence of the American people.
2. On page 6, first paragraph, second line, I urge the insertion of the word "effective" before the words: "international presence". "Effective" covers such essential qualities as adequate numbers, decisions on violations by a majority vote and self-contained transportation. We must not get trapped into supporting another ICC.
3. On page 7, last paragraph, last line, I strongly recommend that the last phrase, "including the Viet Cong", be eliminated or be conditioned by the additional phrase: "provided they demonstrate a willingness to do so", to be added after the word "Viet Cong". This adds an essential qualifying note. Otherwise, all they have to do is declare their willingness to abide by elections and we will have to go through with phoney "free" elections, or go back on our word. Moreover, this phrase seems to equate the Viet Cong with the free Vietnamese, of whom some 2000 were murdered in Hue during Tet as part of the Viet Cong political process.

4. Concerning the long-term view of Asia set forth on page 12, first paragraph, I recommend mention of ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations as a regional step in the right direction. This is something the South East Asian Nations are fostering on their own, and to which they attach considerable importance. The World Bank, by the way, is an anathema to most Asians.

5. The presentation of the China problem as stemming mainly from China's neuroses which are in turn due to isolation, which presumably we are going to unilaterally overcome, is such a naive point of view, and so far removed from reality that I'm sure it will backfire later on. There ought to be some indication that improved relations with China depend on a change in its behaviour.

6. Finally, I think the last page promises too much. In addition to pointing out the need for patience and sacrifice, I think the Vice President ought to first say that achieving these objectives will be difficult.

7. I realize how busy you are, Bill, but I hope you will find time to take a second look at this most important speech before it gets delivered.