

Kensington, Md

9 February, 65

Hon. John I. Murphy

Dear Sir:

At the close of our stimulating and encouraging conversation yesterday afternoon, I suggested a history of Vietnam which seems as useful and generally reliable as is available. This was: "The Smaller Dragon" by Joseph Buttinger, published by Praeger, NYC. At the same time I promised to send you some articles and "think-pieces" on the problems there. These are enclosed, numbered in suggested order of reading, with comments which follow keyed to those numbers.

1. "Vietnam: A test of American Understanding of Revolution" was written by the gentleman whom many of us believe to be America's outstanding thinker on the subject of countering "wars of national liberation", and certainly our most successful practitioner of the art. He was the man primarily responsible for Diem's success in establishing free Vietnam in 1954-55, when all the "experts", especially those of the press, were sure that it could not be done. He is also, without question, the American most respected and trusted by the Vietnamese, even today, although our government has seen fit to deny him any active role in Vietnamese matters for several years.

2. "A Way Out of Vietnam" by Joseph Kraft, is of value for the challenge, roughly equivalent to a slap in the face with a wet fish, which it poses to the bureaucrats. In effect he says that we are too organized, too conventional, to be able to fight this kind of war effectively. He may well be right -- at least, the actions of the last two or three years lend credibility to his proposition. Needless to say, I do not believe we should get out of Vietnam until that country is able to proceed on its own as a free, anti-Communist nation -- but I do not think we can achieve that goal unless we manage to break the shackles of the "system".

3. "U S Policy Options in Vietnam" is a private paper which has had limited top-echelon circulation. It represents the consensus of the informal group of thinkers and practitioners. The signer, Rufus Phillips, was the originator and first director of the "USOM/Rural Affairs", and is unquestionably the most promising member of the younger generation in this field.

4. & 5. Two rather personalized criticisms of Americans and their approaches to the problems in Vietnam. Dr Fishel is one of the best-known authorities on Vietnam, and a former close personal friend of President Ngo dinh Diem. The author of the other -- the Christmas Greetings bit -- is a "tiger" with long experience in Asia, who has just returned -- an exile -- after

6. "Dilemmas in Vietnam", written by a distinguished Vietnamese patriot, revolutionary, newspaper editor, and statesman, is rather difficult reading, but well worthwhile as an analysis of some of the problems facing his country, and especially for its penetrating comments on the actual influence, and concomitant responsibilities, of U S actions.

7. A very elementary and simplified, hopefully not too controversial, outline of some counter-insurgency principles, and of some techniques and concepts employed in Vietnam today. It may be of some value in refreshing your familiarity with these. The written comments are my personal evaluations.

8. "Notes on Strategic Hamlets" deals with this program on which so much emphasis was placed two years ago, and which still has a crucial influence on the success or failure of the effort there. It was prepared by some of us in an effort to make salient points of the program clear to the officials, Vietnamese and American, who were concerned with it, and is still, I feel, the best basic paper on the subject.

The enclosed papers are admittedly general in nature, and perhaps present little new data. They do, however, furnish a background on the country and on the principles which many of us believe must be followed if the effort is to succeed in Vietnam -- or, indeed, in any similarly situated and threatened nation. Should you desire more specific information or recommendations on any topic covered, I would be very glad to seek to make it available.

Sincerely,

Charles T R Bohannon