

February 14, 1970

Rufus:

If the Government were to invite the Democratic and Republican Committees to send a representative (hopefully Neil Staebler as the Democrat) to Saigon to confer on the series of things in the attached, I believe they would have the diplomacy to pull together a quorum of political leaders to sign an invitation for the suggested political meetings in Vietnam.

You may want to discuss this with the Ambassador.

  
Dana Reynolds

February 13, 1970

Hon. Tran Van Lam  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Saigon, Vietnam

Dear Mr. Lam:

When Neil Staebler and I discussed the enclosed proposals in some detail with Ambassador Bui Diem, he seemed interested; and said he would communicate them to his Government.

I recognize the complexities you face in developing greater political unity. If, however, you can get a few political leaders to join in an invitation to the Chairmen of our Democratic and Republican National Committees, and to chairmen of Congressional committees, to participate in such a series of across-the-table discussions of problems, you will give Mr. Staebler and others of us immensely greater leverage to involve constructively a much broader base of our party-Congressional hierarchies. The more representative your original group joining in such an invitation, of course, the more weight it will carry in our policy sectors. As you move into such a series of discussion, I assume that automatically both you and we could interest a broader representation to join around the table. It would seem to me that such a series might help to unify your various political factions. With this broader involvement both on the Vietnamese and U.S. sides, we will have a much firmer foundation to deal with the complex problems in the months ahead--both in Vietnam and in the U.S.

I also see in this series the possibility of working out the kind of relationships between the National Assembly and our Congress that you proposed to Senator McGee at our breakfast in the Senate dining room.

Both Mr. Staebler and I recognize that it is important that you also try to involve party-legislative leadership from other Asian countries, and Europe.

I don't know just where they stand at the moment in the scheme of things in Saigon. But my most recent contacts with visitors from Vietnam have been with Mr. Vu Hong Khanh and Mr. Pham Thai of the Nationalist People's Party. They expressed strong interest in relationships with parties in other countries.

As a first step, it might be useful to invite the Democratic and Republican National Committees to send a representative to Saigon to explore with Vietnamese leadership specific approaches to such a series of meetings; and to decide upon a more general invitation as discussed above. This also might help bring in more of your party leadership on a general invitation.

I'm sending a copy of this letter to Ray Johnson of Asia Foundation. I worked closely with him in Afghanistan, and think that you and he have an imaginative grasp of how to begin to reconcile the realities of Vietnamese, and American, political life in such a project.

Sincerely

Copy: Ambassador Bui Diem

Dana D. Reynolds