

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Ruben V. Austin, Coordinator

November 14, 1960

Lloyd D. Musolf, Chief Advisor

The Abortive Coup d'Etat

After the events of this last week end, all of the other memoranda in this letter seem rather inconsequential. However, they will perhaps soon resume their former importance, for the reason that the Government of Vietnam is striving hard to preserve a business-as-usual atmosphere. The consequence is that Americans are all back in their offices trying to do the same.

We are attaching several bulletins issued by the Government after the coup. This will give you the regime's version of events and the aftermath. Perhaps in the next mail we will be able to send you a log that was kept while the events beginning early Friday morning were occurring.

It is still too early to tell much about the real reasons for the coup, or the attitude of the Government now that the coup has been put down. What is not mentioned by the Government in its post-coup communiques is that the revolutionists apparently could have been much more severe than they were. If they had not paused to negotiate with the President they could have killed him and his entire family, according to present information. The negotiations that were undertaken resulted in a pronouncement by Diem that he would agree to dismiss his present government and place military representatives in the cabinet. He also agreed to follow the suggestions of the revolutionary committee. Meanwhile, he was calling up troops, and when sufficient numbers of these had arrived they attacked the paratroopers and killed them or forced them to surrender.

Harsh measures against the rebels are being announced. During the coup various opposition leaders announced their sympathy with the military group in revolt. The President is now cracking down hard on these leaders and may even be grateful that the coup furnished him an opportunity to do what it is believed he has long wanted to do, namely, place these men under lock and key. Many of these leaders were arrested yesterday.

As to MEUC, the fighting that occurred forced four of our staff members to evacuate their homes. In two cases, those of the Finkles and Turners, the evacuation could occur only with the cooperation of the troops fighting immediately around their houses. These staff members have now returned to their

homes and have found everything intact. This afternoon we will hold a meeting of all staff members to evaluate the way in which communication was maintained and try to devise improvements for any future situation. One problem that will have to be thrashed out is that several staff members--despite all pleas to remain off the streets--could not resist roaming around the edges of the battle area. The only thing we could do is to appeal for greater cooperation in the future.

As to relations with our counterparts, I do not anticipate any changes in personnel at the NLA. As the police and security services came under the control of the revolutionaries for a time, there is a question of whether present leaders of the police and security services cooperated with the revolutionaries. If so, we may have new counterparts to work with. At any rate, all of these matters will have to be determined cautiously within the next few days.

It is always risky to judge how the populace reacts to a rebellion. The impression of all those I have talked to at MSUG about this matter is that the populace seemed to be highly relieved when it appeared that Diem was overthrown. Contrariwise, the people seemed not to be at all anxious to welcome him back. These, of course, are only impressions, but they are impressions coming from many Vietnamese sources.

Events of this last week end naturally make one think of some of the memoranda sent to you earlier on the security situation and on evacuation problems. As yet there is no word from American officials at Saigon as to any intention to evacuate dependents. My guess is that no such evacuation will be ordered for the moment. Several questions may certainly now legitimately be raised with the Embassy--for example, the question of sending home certain household goods may now have a greater urgency at the Embassy. The recent crisis also showed up the fact that the official agencies had very inefficient ways of keeping in touch with staff members. A number of employees of official agencies remarked on the way in which MSU people were able to keep in touch with each other and exchange information. Some employees of official agencies never heard from their agencies throughout the entire crisis.

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PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Ruben V. Austin, Coordinator

November 15, 1960

L. D. Musolf, Chief Advisor

The Recent Coup d'Etat

The attached memorandum, written for inclusion in last Monday's letter, was delayed in order to obtain more recent information on the post-coup situation. As a result, the reference to attaching several bulletins is no longer valid, as these bulletins were sent in Monday's letter.

Let me suggest caution in the distribution of this memorandum and the one attached. Realizing that there are Vietnamese on Campus and that word might get back to Vietnam, I am hopeful that the contents of this memorandum will be discussed with discretion on Campus.

Since the attached memorandum was written not a great deal has transpired. The only clear indication is that the government is trying to play down the significance of the coup and is embarking on a policy of retribution against its leaders. I am attaching a copy of a translation of a poster that has appeared all over Saigon, by way of illustrating the latter point. Casualties in the fighting were much greater than the government has admitted, and the degree of support for the rebels was also much greater. The government is now taking the line that "colonialists" were behind the coup. This may portend an anti-foreigner campaign by the government.

There is concern in American circles that the government will not have learned its lesson from the coup.

Turning to MSUG, we are still cautiously feeling our way with the Vietnamese counterparts. The NIA seems undisturbed. As to the police, General La has indicated that he was in hiding from the rebels and later contacted the Presidency; it would seem, therefore, that he is in the clear as far as the Diem government is concerned.

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COMMUNIQUE

TO THE PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY:

The uprising led by Nguyen-Chanh-Thi and Vuong-Van-Dong is completely wiped out immediately thanks to the loyalty of the whole population and all echelons of the army - including paratroopers - toward the personalistic Republican Regime under the leadership of Patriot Ngo Dinh Diem.

But in addition to Thi and Dong who are undisciplined army officers, there are a number of the so-called intellectuals who have either pulled the strings or given a helping hand to the rebels. Their attitude of betrayal is very clear in the past events.

THE PEOPLE ASK FOR THEIR PUNISHMENT - Therefore, from this hour on:

1. Any Vietnamese citizen, any foreigner or any agency harboring them must immediately take them to the people's anti(rebel and communist (Phien-Cong) committee. If they let other people discover and denounce them to the committee, then the household head will be considered a traitor and will receive the punishment reserved for them by the angry people.
2. People of every walk of life must collaborate with the committee in order to search for the political opportunists and rebels - to denounce them, to catch them in this moment is the patriotic and anti-communist action. Whoever has taken part in this action will be greatly rewarded.

Saigon, Nov. 13, 1960

The People's Anti-Rebel and Communist Committee.