

September 14, 1962

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Dear John:

I received your letter of July 5--both copies--on my return here last week, I am sorry that I missed you when you were here, since there is much I would like to pass on to you and Ann. Perhaps you got some of my reactions from Ralph in Washington last week or in East Lansing when you were here. In essence, however, perhaps all I need say is that the situation I found on three visits to Saigon between January and June of this year was inexpressibly discouraging. Diem's Saigon support has diminished sharply since 1959 and even though military developments during the past six months have encouraged many of the faint-hearted, his political support among the intelligentsia, fonctionnaires, military, and business communities remains very spotty and apathetic. Vo Van Hai still supports Diem, but his bitterness vis-a-vis the Nhus and the sycophants is so deep that it has prejudiced his usefulness and damaged his previously admirable balanced perspective. Fortunately, he is, as of today, still invaluable to Diem, and the Nhus and others how would like him out of the way have been unable to move him. For your information--The Madame gave orders through Dr. Tuyen for the assassination of Hai and his father-in-law after the November 1960 coup. However, the officer who had been charged with the job turned up at the father-in-law's house and told him that he had been assigned this mission but could not carry it out!

Doan Them was the epitomy of desperation when I left Saigon the end of January, but by mid-June when I last saw him, he had recovered some of the grit which has always characterized his approach to political issues and was trying to buoy me up because my discouragement was so evident.

If I can get it out of my system before classes begin, I will have a short manuscript to send you for reaction and comment, and it should give you a more detailed idea of my thinking at the moment.

Did you receive Doan Them's letter which I sent you from Tokyo at his request? Did you receive my letter of last February from Rangoon in which I sent you regards from Cung and Dang as well as Them?