

JUSPAO Mission Press Center
APO San Francisco 96243
June 30, 1968

Senator Paul H. Douglas
Citizens Committee for Peace With Freedom in Vietnam
1028 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear Senator Douglas:

I am writing to urgently solicit your (and the Committee's) cooperation in a project which promises to pay considerable dividends from the standpoint of its objectives.

There are currently here in Saigon several high-ranking officers of the North Vietnamese Army who were either captured or defected to the Government in Saigon. It has been proposed -- and I support the proposal wholeheartedly -- that four or five of these men be sent at a very early date by the Vietnamese Government to the United States, Japan, and possibly to Paris, to tell the truth about their presence in South Vietnam. As one of these colonels put it: "President Ho told us we are heroes because we liberate the South; why now when they talk at Paris do they make us not to exist?" The fact is that they are thoroughly disillusioned with the regime in the North, say that they were lied to, that they have been astonished by what they find in the South, and are willing to tell their stories to anyone who will listen. One of these men is a Senior Colonel, another is a Colonel, and others are Lieutenant Colonels and Majors. One brought 150 men of his regiment in with him when he surrendered.

The Vietnamese Government wishes to send the group to the U. S., accompanied by competent interpreters (only one speaks French; none can handle English), to speak before and be interviewed or questioned by any groups that would like to meet with them. It has been suggested, for example, that the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs might be interested in talking with them at length. Again, if interest shown by media representatives here is any indication, the TV networks, radio, and press (e.g. the National Press Club, the Overseas Press Club) would have a major interest in these men. Having talked with two of them myself, I can assure you that although they speak in Vietnamese and must be interpreted, what they have to say is fascinating and impressive. They manage to come across as candid and honest, even through interpretation.

Would it be possible for the Committee to sponsor their tour within the United States, and to make arrangements for their appearance at appropriate places (e.g. Councils on World Affairs or Foreign Relations, several major university campuses) across the country? Foreign

Minister Tran Chanh Thanh and Information Minister Ton That Thien are currently handling the project for the GVN, and have asked that I write to secure your cooperation. (I might add that I discussed this with Carl Rowan when he was here last week, and he was enthusiastic about the project.) A schedule of possible appearances has been worked out by them after discussions with Americans, and I would expect that the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington will be getting in touch with you to secure such suggestions and aid as you and the Committee can offer in getting this promptly under way. And you might wish to talk it over with someone knowledgeable about Vietnamese affairs such as Dolf Droege, in the White House.

For my own part, I might add that I find the new government in Saigon the first promising administration South Vietnam has had in several years and look forward to discussing it with you upon my return late next month. Two points occur immediately to me as of possible interest to you. Minister Thien abolished all press censorship as his first act upon taking office, and has authorized the reopening of seven newspapers which the military regime had closed for political reasons. And the National Assembly, for all that it is an infant organism, is surprisingly sturdy and its debates are marked by as much criticism as praise of the President and his cabinet. The debates are reported with relish in the press, it should be added. Such commentary is not the purpose of this letter, however, and I will forego further remarks until I have an opportunity to speak with you.

Sincerely yours,

Wesley R. Fishel

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cc: Hon. Gale McGee
United States Senate