

Dear Wes,

Just a short note to give you some idea of just how screwed up things are here right now. I'm enclosing an article which appeared in the Jan. 1 issue of the Saigon Post and I like most of the Vietnamese here are rather upset about it. I had a closer interest in the case than most because I knew most of the people involved and also knew the friction between Thien and Linh and between Ky and Huong. The firing of the employees who had been sent to Paris with the approval of Thieu, Ky and Linh were most unfortunately caught between the petty differences of those I just mentioned. I say petty because at a time when Hanoi and the NLF are making Saigon look like a bunch of fools, I really half expected the south Vietnamese to act a little more brotherly. As you can see from the article, some very good and nonpolitical people at VP got a royal screwing. Thien fired them three days before he officially left office. Buu Nghi, one of your proteges I think, is not really responsible for the mess. There was a group of people in Vietnam Press who wanted more power and they made their move through Buu Nghi. I can get the whole story for you if you want because I think it typifies one of the crucial elements which we are simply unable to deal with in Vietnam, and it also shows the power of the Southern Restoration Bloc ~~which~~ with which the key figure involved in the dismissal case was aligned. Hanoi of course has made great hay over the whole affair calling for civil servants to leave their jobs since they have no security and are subject to political jealousies etc. etc. Quite a blow in the eye for our foundling democracy, huh? Anyhow I'm mad as a hatter over the whole affair and is why I waited a week to write you.

Rumors around town right now seem to show the political scene as moving from bad to worse. I think there will be a ~~new~~ cabinet re-shuffle in a short time. My comment to this was that I couldn't think of anyone else to put in a new cabinet--like they're running out of people! And the ones who have the ability and command the respect just don't seem to want to join the sinking ship. There are also more and more rumors of a ceasefire in the near future since as one man told me, "the Americans are tired of the stupidity of the Vietnamese delegation in Paris." The Vietnamese are of course biding their time until Nixon takes office but they still forget that Johnson has a few days left in the White House and that the old man is not likely to leave his administration

quietly. Of course, Ky, Khoi and Linh were mistakes from the beginning. I don't know how Ky ~~xxx~~ can be removed now without threatening the breakdown of the government since his dismissal would be tantamount to being completely stripped of power. One person has suggested that the only way to move things in a somewhat progressive direction is for Thieu to suspend the constitution and the National Assembly. There's another story to that too..but it can wait until later.

Do you have any plans for making the scene at Paris or Saigon in the near future? How is the American Friends doing? Is Vietnam Perspectives still being published? I'm still accredited to it and you never did answer my letter concerning articles, interviews etc. which I might do to earn my accreditation. I await patiently your response.....

Happy New Year and greet the family for us. Do write and stay away from the Hong Kong flu.

As ever and fully recovered from a New Year's hangover

Jalynne