

Revised & sent 11/15/61

Dear Ralph-

I was very pleased to receive your letter of October 20. It would have been answered earlier had I not come down with what the doctor called "acute bronchitis" (and Jane insisted was pneumonia) and lost a couple of working weeks.

As for Vietnam, which takes up a good part of your letter, I have had many of the same reports you've seen and heard (apart from the Huntley-Brinkley report, which we don't get here, of course), and my perennial cautious optimism has slipped seriously in the past five months. Somehow ~~with~~ or other, the Vietnamese in Saigon learned we're here, and I've been the object of literally dozens of visits, phone calls, and letters from friends, former students, and so on. Nguyen Thai stopped through, with Mai and kids, en route to Harvard for his Niemann fellowship (only he's a year early!), with gloomy prognostications. I wasn't sure whether he pulled out of Saigon at this point because he feared the Viet Cong, or the Madame, or simply because after nearly a year of finagling he induced Diem to let him go and took advantage of the permission and left before the boss could change his mind again. A bunch of people from the Presidency were here with Guy and Jack Donahue (spelling?) and were quite candid in their comments (though Ton That Trach tried to shut them up a couple of times). We've gone full circle and are now back in the summer of 1954 in many respects. Ng. Thanh Cung, for instance, asked me if I couldn't come to Vietnam now and get NDD to at least sign routine pieces of paper for the staff to act on! He reminded me of the fact that this was the first thing I had worked on in August of 1954 and that Diem had thereafter been rather good about such things until last year when he had "a relapse" and now, says Cung, everything is "tomorrow" except for security and political problems, which take about 90% of his time, reportedly.

Vo Van Hai wrote me the other day asking if I wouldn't come to Saigon for the dedication of the new INA early in December -- and to help save the MSU program, which he says is in danger of being scuttled ~~over the issues~~ as a result of the failure of the Vietnamese to accept the concept of our people's academic freedom, and our guys' corresponding failure, at times, to draw the line between legitimate research and constructive criticism on the one hand, and sensation-mongering on the other. Guy also spoke of this to me at some length when he was with us here during the EROPA meetings (which I attended in part). Hai says Thuan is in complete charge of MSU affairs at this point (though ~~his authority~~ ~~apparently~~ ~~doesn't~~ ~~permit~~ ~~him~~ ~~to~~ ~~dismiss~~ ~~VQ~~ ~~as~~ ~~he~~ ~~would~~ ~~like~~ ~~to~~ ~~do~~), and only the President can overrule him. ~~I~~ ~~told~~ ~~Hai~~ ~~in~~ ~~reply~~ ~~that~~ ~~I~~ ~~plan~~ ~~to~~ ~~come~~ ~~on~~ ~~December~~ ~~30~~, and that my travel plans were made months ago with economy in mind, since doubling back would cost me too much. And so it goes. In anycase, from information reaching me here, it would appear that a major internal shift would not be a surprise within six months. (Although Hai, for one, is sufficiently torn between his annoyance at certain things that take place and his zest for an active fight against the Viet Cong, that he does not go along with this view.)

Incidentally, when is Al Seelye coming out this way? And will Kathryn be with him? Jane will be expecting to see them when they come through Japan, and if there is any one in particular they'd like to meet, she'll be happy to arrange it for them. (I'm assuming that I'll be traveling at that point, whenever exactly it may be.)

Apart from Vietnam, there is much else to mention. I had a letter from Wolf asking to arrange a meeting between us in SEA this winter. I sent him my itinerary and we'll probably get together in Bangkok or Saigon. And coincidentally, I learned that he was one of the major topics of conversation at a meeting here between Chester Bowles and a prominent Japanese political figure we both know. His new job sounds ideal. And if he needs an assistant, I'm sufficiently dejected to want the job.

~~Sixteen~~ My research has been going very very slowly, I'm sorry to say. The first month (and more) were spent getting us set up in housekeeping, furnishing the house from top to bottom, and so on. Then I finally found myself two Japanese language teachers (one isn't enough for!), and I've been spending twelve hours per week on Nihongo_x since that time (although I missed a couple of weeks when I was ill). This is of course an essential prerequisite ~~for~~ to the rest of the task, for without the language fluency I cannot carry out my interviews of the political and academic figures who have been involved in the reparations picture. They would not, as I have analyzed it, respond as freely to questions put through an interpreter as to those put by me personally and in private conversation. And believe me, it's tough getting them to ~~unwind~~ ease up enough to talk candidly. One must move slowly and gingerly because of the ~~various~~ many ramifications of the topic: diplomatic negotiations, political considerations, economic costs and gains, and ~~especially~~ the everpresent rumors of graft and corruption (of which the Burmese and Vietnamese pictures seem thus far to be free) which many mention knowingly, but about which details are of course missing. Take Yamasaki, who is writing his M. A. thesis on one aspect of the Vietnamese reparations problem (the Socialist opposition to it in the Diet) is hip-deep in Japanese newspaper clippings which he has secured from the Diet library by virtue of the fact that his father is a Diet member. He reports that even his single facet of the study is enormously complicated -- discouragingly ~~so~~, in fact. Fortunately, I have been able to make friends with the Director of the Reparations Division of the Foreign Office and have now been given permission to use the Foreign Office files. Other contacts come slowly and caution must be exercised in making initial approaches. For example, there are two ~~very important~~ political figures who played major roles in the reparations~~x~~ deliberations a few years ago and whom I therefore wanted very much to meet. I couldn't just phone them, or even write them letters. ~~Because of this~~ I had to find some third person who knows them and would introduce me. This took me until yesterday, believe it or not. Then I was fortunate enough to learn, during a conversation with another Japanese (who was overjoyed to learn that I am friendly with ~~both~~ Wolf, and John Everton, and Allan Cole), that this man is a friend of both men I wanted to meet. From then on it was easy. But it took two months till I arrived by chance at this happy point. And ~~so it goes~~. I can tell you right now that I will not be able to finish up all my field research here by next July unless a miracle occurs. Alternatively, I can hire a second Japanese assistant to plow through the reams of clippings on this topic, or I can limit the subject. The latter I am loathe to do because it is already a "package." Your advice would be appreciated, Dean.

I have declined 3 invitations for articles on VN - well one for Univ of Sydney.

1/2/50

I was happy to read in your letter that Bill Ross is moving ahead on the Asian Studies Center or Program. I might say quite candidly that the lack of movement in this direction was a major reason for my depression. I have gotten rather tired of fighting that battle by myself, while watching other schools move ahead of us in the Asian field. You know my thoughts on this subject very well, I am sure. In all of the dozens of discussions we have had (that's an impersonal "we") on the subject of Asian Studies I have ~~felt~~ ~~again and again~~ been reminded time and again of Hughes' famous statement of the obvious at the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference of 1921: "Gentlemen: to disarm, one must disarm." Okay, chum, let's "disarm," shall we?

Incidentally, I shall try to remember to include with this letter an extract from the yearbook of the Japanese electronics industry which quotes Jack Ryder ("University of Michigan"!) approvingly. Please pass it along to him, since he may not have seen it yet. And you may find the enclosed example of the kind of technical assistance programs Indiana University is offering the underdeveloped peoples of Asia worthy of some reflection, since it is obvious that this kind of competition must be met with equal vigor and imagination. What will be MSU's response???

And equally incidentally, would you be good enough to ask Lil whether, next time she writes to Jane, she'll tell her how Beverly Killingsworth is? And also any other info of note would be appreciated. In the next day or so I expect to write to Sid Ulmer, and hope for an answer, since he's been very good about forwarding mail to me and sending departmental notices. But Joe has never even answered a letter I wrote him from Honolulu last August And did you hear about Jay Aronson? If not, ask Al Spitz for the details.

Best wishes to Glen, ~~Harvey~~ Homer, Horace, Marge, wives, and all. And please be good enough to call Dick Chapin and ask him to call off his dogs: I do not have a book by Savory called "Art of Translation." It was returned to the library nearly a year ago, if I recall correctly, by either Charles Wrigley or another member of the Mechanical Translation committee, on whose behalf I had drawn it. And oh yes, what did Debenko want with me here?

MSU lit on an East tree now.

Thanks. And write when you can. We are starved for news.

Cordially,