

12/22/71

Dear Harold,

I hope that you, like me, have just finished watching the NBC special on JFK Vietnam policy. It had its faults, but in so many ways it was excellent, with some really important information--almost completely misunderstood by them. I've already requested a transcript. If you don't have the time to write for one, I'll mail another request in your name.

Most of what Hilsman said he had already written in his book, and I used it in my paper. Particularly important were Forrestal and Gilpatrick, as you must realize. Gilpatrick said that on Oct 2, JFK took him and Mac aside and told them in no uncertain terms to come up with a plan to get all of our people out of Vietnam by the end of 1965. This is an important addition to what we already know of the Oct 2 withdrawal announcement.

Forrestal (and perhaps Hilsman) said that by Sept., JFK devoted about 20% of his time to learning about VN, and added that he learned a great deal and began rethinking the whole business. What really got me was Forrestal's last quote, that on Nov. 21, JFK sent him to Saigon and Cambodia and told him to report to him as soon as he got back because he wanted to plan a complete revision of policy, reexamine the presumptions behind our presence there, etc. He said that with the election it would be hard to make any drastic changes, but that more things could be done afterwards.

The revelations of who killed Diem and Nhu, and how basically confirmed what I had suspected. Wasn't the CIA man something?

The way things look now, I'd like to come down around the first week in January, perhaps the second week. How's that for you and Lil? I'm feeling very peculiar at home, kind of agitated or uneasy--I don't know exactly what it is. But I think a little peaceful rest in the country would do me a world of good, and, of course, I greatly enjoy your company and Lil's, so I'm really looking forward to this visit.

Best wishes,

*Harold*