

Dear Jim,

12/20/72

Trying to make a fireplace fire of wood that two days ago was a tree on the stump, a living tree, gave me some thinking time tonight. I thought about what I'd not had time to really think about or read in the papers with any care, when at all, the present VN situation. I think it goes back to an earlier exchange between us, when you agreed that Nixon is an unoriginal man, a careful copier.

I presume nothing has changed since then, rather than nothing has changed your mind.

With this as a beginning point, how about explaining what has happened by Hanoi and both Geneva conferences and US policy subsequent to both?

I'd not be surprised at two things: his having gall enough to ask the Russians to serve their Geneva role (save the white man's face) and their doing it. This being the case, I'd expect NVN's indignation and fierce determination to be increased.

There is a story from radio that State apparently is spreading openly: that the NVN never expected to negotiate seriously, witness their moving of kids out of Hanoi about 12/2 or 3. Assuming this to be accurate, I think the only possible reading is of their reading of our intentions.

Bearing on this is a presumption that History's most massive air raids do require some preparation and that they were prepared at the time Der K was proclaiming how short the length of an arm is.

Another thought for you to play with: Der Lider and Der Kiss phhtt. This has been repeated often. You noted how uncomfortable K seemed in announcing how short the arm, as I did. No reason for it is it was an arm, whether or not short, was there? Time for joy, rather. This is a unique rumor in several ways. Repetition adds no detail. There never was any detail. It doesn't die, and there never is a hint of the source.

Now the most unthoughtful, least human President in history has dragged his K off to Amas in Key Biscayne (watch out for Bebe's sharks, Henry!). Tain't because he thinks there are no starlets around looking for a wireservice picture. Nor from the milk of human kindness. That bag always was barren. Why, then? Superficially to make a gesture of how close they are. Less superficially, to keep Henry from saying anything at this crucial time and to note, if there is rebellion of the story, that it has to come from one of the disaffected on Henry's personal staff.

A little more thought about the Whitehead bludgeon persuades me there really is no interest in alleged "rumor", oféte or otherwise, being aired as analysis. What these boys really want is control over what news is selected for the scarce time of a net newscast and how it is played, especially now. Just what stories are handled is enough, and the nets, despite some conspicuous sycophancy, have informed. They can't really add to what Agnew did, and reaction to that was not good. So they have switched, after the successful intimidation and sowing the seed among their own ideologues, to the nitty-gritty, as they must, with indirection. Truly Orwellian.

There seems to be some extra attention to the number of B52s lost, large by our own admissions. The mere number might account for this. However, I am now dealing with my own past with aviation, and something about the B52s came back to me. I don't recall whether, as I think, they were designed originally for high-level flight. I do know that there came a time when it was decided to see if a radar could be developed that would let them treetop at their great speed, as the Russian bombers did in WWII, and with the radar to prevent hitting an earth-attached object, like a tall building or a mountain, etc. The reason was to frustrate enemy radar by being below it until too late for reaction. So, until we know what has been happening, it is possible that the higher kill rate can in part be due to a lower flight path. Yesterday or day before I heard someone say on radio not only that they can't pinpoint but that when they unload, it covers 5/8 miles in width, 1 1/2 in length. That's not terror, that is hitting communication installations. You know, lips, ears, etc.

The Latines missed a good approach provided by Sirica. If I get time I'll go into it.

Best,