

1/27/71

Dear Harold,

Enclosed are some pages from Arthur Krock's book which should interest you. The stuff re CIA and Vietnam confuses me, however.

From the research I've done this far, this is the picture I get:

CIA backed the Diem regime. Diem, a fascist, began getting out of hand when the Buddhists began their uprising in '63. Around Sept. '63, JFK started voicing his dissatisfaction with Diem.

On Oct. 2, it became public knowledge from high official sources that the CIA had been frustrating Lodge's plans and carrying on its own operations in S. Vietnam. This would doubtlessly have been through Richardson who was pro-Diem and in charge of the CIA Vietnam desk. It was also on this date that the same high officials expressed their fear of the CIA and spoke of the coup.

On this same date, the White House announced that it saw an end to ~~the~~ "The major part" of our military role there, and announced the withdrawal of 1,000 troops by the end of 1963.

On Oct. 4, Richardson was recalled to Washington, which apparently removed Diem's source of support with the US.

On Oct. 9 JFK denied the Oct. 2 reports of CIA action, although I do not believe this and feel he had to make a denial whether the reports were true or not. Did it matter though? For now with Richardson gone, he could have the situation under control.

Of course, Nov. 1 was the coup in the government, Diem out-military in. We deny any involvement. This is one point of confusion. Wise in INVISIBLE GOV'T implies we did have a part in the coup. What do you think?

Then there was the meeting in Honolulu to assess "how we can bring Americans out of there." Lodge was on his way from this to speak with JFK when JFK was murdered. Instead Lodge met Monday with LBJ, Rusk, etc. I know that on Dec. 3, 220 men returned from Vietnam, part of the 1,000 to be withdrawn. I have not yet seen that any others were taken out.

I forgot to mention that toward the end of Oct, funds for Special Forces in Vietnam were cut off.

On Dec. 21, McNamara announced review of military plans in light of stepped up Vietcong activity.

I'll be doing more research, of course. But the US involvement in the Diem overthrow seems important to establish. Would the CIA have wanted this? I would think not, but cannot be sure. Was it the removal of Richardson and cutting off funds that allowed the coup? Perhaps you could set me straight.

Incidentally, if there is any related research you want done for your own work, please call on me for I'll be going through a lot of things and may be able to help.

Best

cc Dick

*Howard*



January 27, 1971

Dear Dr. Viles,

I'm sorry I haven't written you sooner providing more details on my research contract project. Although I've begun working, I haven't had a chance to write and have not yet heard from other researchers who may be of assistance.

Thus far, the project is still as described in my original note to you. I will be working on the political aspects of President Kennedy's assassination. The time period involved is thus far not certain to me. I am sure it will concentrate on the last few months of Kennedy's life, although I am currently going over the entire administration and know that certain previous events must be considered. Likewise, I cannot say how long a time after the assassination will be considered, although I do not anticipate considering more than six months.

I certainly have not yet compiled all my sources. What I have now will probably be the basic sources, however. These are as follows:

KENNEDY, Ted Sorenson  
WITH KENNEDY, Pierre Salinger  
A THOUSAND DAYS, Arthur Schlesinger

(These are accounts of the Kennedy administration by people intimately connected with the President)

THE KENNEDY LEGACY, Ted Sorenson (subtitled "Peaceful Revolution for the 1970's")  
THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT, David Wise (deals with the CIA--a very good documentary)  
THE MAKING OF THE PRESIDENT 1964, Ted White

A compilation from the Gov't printing office called "American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1963" will also be of value. I intend to go through each issue of the New York Times from August through December 1963, plus selected issues of other papers as I pick up references (I've already been through some). I've been to and plan to go further with other related books too numerous to list now. After consulting with other researchers, my plans will probably have much more focus.

Will be in touch with you again soon.

Best,

Howard Roffman



1/29/71

Dear Howard,

Hasty comment on your 1/27 before I get back to pressing work.

My recollection of my 1965 research for TIGER is not as clear as it could be. From your letter you have duplicated the essence, but without some of the detail. And without what preceeded it on the inside. I do not recall whether the three Ss provide this. I got it at least in part from private sources.

I seem to recall 223 rather than 220 men, very minor and account able to either faulty remory or contradictory or different source.

There is a suggestion that you misread the CIA as what would be called "illiberal". They recruit liberals, those popularly considered liberals often reach high positions. The point with the Diem regime is that it had become so excessive, so barbarous, so totally unpopular, that it was the greatest single liability (aside from the unpopularity of the entire venture). Diem had to be gotten rid of or the whole thing had to be abandoned. There was no possibility of saving the country for an anti-Communist foothold in SE Asia and for influencing adjacent lands with Diem in power, he was that hated. His brother-chief goon was CIA and of him the same also was true. So, unless the CIA was prepared to abandon the entire thing, and there is reason to believe that they were responsible for all of it, hence not anxious to abandon it, they had to make changes.

I suppose there was also some liability in a Catholic leader in a Buddhist country. He was handpicked for Dulles by Dpellman and placed in power.

Unless you restrict yourself as you have you'll have to do a long book to cover it.

Wise will give you a good idea of how the CIA worked there. Lodge was not a liberal force, or a democratic one.

My recollection is that the first recall was of 10% or 1,700 men. Your source says 1,000. The distinction is unimportant. The fact is the singular importance, and the abrupt change after the assassination, Conditions there didn't change that fast.

Suggest slight change in formulation in your Viles letter, from "political aspects of" the assassination to "context of".

Thanks for Krock. I'll read when I have relax with it.

Hastily,