

# Washington's New Man in Saigon

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Graham Anderson Martin

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WASHINGTON, April 1—When President Nixon asked for the name of a shrewd, iron-willed and experienced diplomat to replace Ellsworth Bunker as Ambassador to South Vietnam, the State Department came up with Graham A. Martin, a both his numerous boosters and detractors say fulfills all those requirements. "For every officer who likes Martin, there is another one detests him," one of his admirers said candidly on Friday, the day the White House announced Mr. Martin's nomination. "But you won't find anyone who doesn't respect him or thinks he won't do the job out there."

"He is probably the most effective ambassador we have," another friend said. He is tall, slender, courtly, but tough as hell. "He'll be perfect in Saigon. He's the kind of man who commands respect. He's Byzantine in his own way, but he knows the core of an issue, and once he's taken a position, he won't let go."

It was this crustiness, another State Department official said, that led to one of the biggest bureaucratic battles during the Johnson Administration.

## Took Issue With McNamara

Mr. Martin, then Ambassador to Thailand, personally took on Robert S. McNamara, then Secretary of Defense, over the scope of the American military aid program to Thailand.

"The Pentagon wanted to cut back on Thailand and pour it all into Vietnam, but Martin would not buy it," the official said. "He argued without letup that the Thais were faced with their own Vietnam and had to have the means to defend themselves. He was several years ahead of 'Vietnamization'."

There are many ambassadors who come and go in the American Foreign Service. Many leave few impressions on Foggy Bottom. But Mr. Martin, a native of Mars Hill, N. C., is not one of the faceless sort.

"He has the most incredible eyes," one middle-level officer said. "They observe everything, and you feel their presence when you're talking with him."

Another official said: "Martin believes that there is something special about being an ambassador of the United States. He takes seriously the fact that he is the personal representative of the President, and he lets his staff, the State Department, and anyone else who might forget it, know it. You don't cross him and get away with it."

Mr. Martin, who is 60, began his work in the Foreign Service in 1947 as a senior administrative officer and quickly became known as a leading expert on how the bureaucracy functions.

Since so much effort in Washington is expended on getting policies and projects through the labyrinths of Government, Mr. Martin has been aided in his career by this ability to tame the bureaucracy, one official who has worked with him said.

## Record in Italy Credited

Mr. Martin has made no ripples on the society scene. His four years in Italy as Mr. Nixon's ambassador were given very high marks by State Department insiders, but he was hardly mentioned in any newspaper dispatches from Rome.

"That's the way he likes it," a friend says. "He doesn't care what people think about him, unless it has a direct bearing on the problem of the hour."

"He will do incredibly well in Saigon," former aide said, adding: "Not only does he have a great capacity to get things organized, but his aura of aloofness will be admired by the Vietnamese, just as it was in Thailand. They will know that when they give him a message it will be reported just the way they conveyed it."

Few people in the Foreign Service know much about his personal life. Not many even knew that his adopted son, a helicopter pilot, died in an air crash in South Vietnam in 1966, or that his eldest son, Gaye, died in a car accident at college.

Mr. Martin has been married to the former Dorothy Wallace since 1934 and they have two daughters, Janet Ann and Mrs. Nancy Lane; and a son, David.

Graham Anderson Martin was born on Sept. 22, 1912,

and graduated from Wake Forest in 1932. He worked briefly as a newspaperman in North Carolina, and then moved to Washington that same year as a correspondent for some southern newspapers.

In 1933, he joined the National Recovery Administration, where he served as an aide to then deputy administrator, W. Averell Harriman. He opened the first field office of the Social Security Board in North Carolina, in Asheville, in 1937.

After returning to Washington in 1941, he joined the Army and worked his way up from lieutenant to colonel. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947 and was appointed to Paris, where he served for eight years, organizing American administrative operations in postwar Europe, and receiving high ratings from a succession of ambassadors.

## Named Aide to Dillon

One of them, C. Douglas Dillon, appointed him as his special assistant when he became Under Secretary of State in the last years of the Eisenhower Administration. In 1960, Mr. Martin was named United States representative at the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, and served there until May, 1963, when he was named Ambassador to Thailand.

In Thailand, he was given the sensitive assignment of getting the Thais to agree to the use of their territory by American war planes.

For nearly two years, Mr. Martin had to avoid any com-

ment about the airfields because Thailand refused to acknowledge they existed.

Finally, a solution was reached—observed to this day—under which Thailand admits the American planes are using Thai air bases, but sharply restricts any publicity about the operations.

In December, 1967, after returning to Washington, he was awarded the State Department's distinguished honor award. He was in charge of refugee affairs until his Rome assignment in 1969.

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Courtly but tough