

# The Washington Post

VIETNAM BUREAU  
ROOM 16, 203 TU DO STREET  
SAIGON

CABLE: WASHPOST  
SAIGON

OFFICE TEL. 90392

Mr. John Anderson  
Foreign Editor  
The Washington Post  
Washington D.C.

Jan. 3, 1971

Dear John,

It is six weeks today since I arrived here which I guess is a suitable interval for a first letter. Needless to say, I am thoroughly involved and completely puzzled. As we suspected and discussed, the story here seems increasingly subtle and difficult to cover because so little of it is happening on the surface. There is very little hard news (this is partly the result of the military information policy about which I wrote) but that does not mean very little is going on. For a newcomer, though, it makes things hard. I have no framework for appraising a situation with the way it was six months or year ago. Of course it has to be that way, but the result is that pieces tend to be impressionistic.

I am still very much casting about trying to see as much of the country and as many of the problems as possible. The morale story got me to US bases, the VNAF story got me involved with the Vietnamese armed forces and this weekend I am sticking a tentative toe into politics. As I was forewarned, it is best to spend as much time as possible outside of Saigon. Travelling is tiring and very time consuming but very rewarding as well.

Peter I know is planning to write you so I merely echo his solicitations of your thoughts on what we should be doing and where interest lies. We are all well aware here of how sated Americans are, but to succumb to this would be a dreadful mistake. Perhaps one of us should make a two or three week trip to Thailand soon to test waters there. We will be trying to hit Cambodia about once a month, which means I should be going there this week or next. Laos appears static at the moment, but we are poised.

As for living accommodations, as Peter may have written the apartment we had taken for me fell through because of an unpleasant contretemps with Time over who was there first. In any event, I have taken another place and plan to apply the money for the first apartment to the second. The rent on the new place is considerably less -- \$200 a month, but it is unfurnished so a good chunk of the money has gone to getting set up. Still we intend to stay within \$4800 instead of the \$5800 that the other place cost. And, when I leave, if we no longer have

# The Washington Post

VIETNAM BUREAU  
ROOM 16, 203 TU DO STREET  
SAIGON

CABLE: WASHPOST  
SAIGON

OFFICE TEL. 90392

(2)

a two-man bureau, we can sell the furniture. I think it is a good arrangement.

On other matters, I have a small suggestion about how we can be better informed as to what is in the paper. Reuter's Washington bureau supplies the Times and the Baltosun with a daily "frontings" ~~xxx~~ which is a listing of all the stories on page one plus the foreign stories inside. I can't imagine the cost is great or the Sun wouldn't do it. It seems a useful sarvice and perhaps someone could ~~xxxx~~ inquire about it for us.

I have no complaints, which should be a pleasant change. A paragraph was dropped between editions from my letter about the attitudes concerning the war. The missing graf was the kicker on the Saigon segment and without it the letter lost some sense. But in retrospect I'm afraid the piece was thin anyway, so the ~~xxx~~ paragraph was a small loss. We ought to standardize the layout on letters. Mine didn't carry a poster and my wife thought it was just a badly jumbled story. Didn't there used to be a "Letter from X" logo?

Can think of nothing else, but regards to all hands.

All Best,

  
Peter Osnos

P.S. Please forgive Sunday typing PO