

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

5 October 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Private Meeting with The President - 5 October
following NSC Meeting re South Viet Nam

Following the meeting I had an intimate discussion with the President and told him:

(1) We had reason to believe from Lodge's performance at the United Nations in the Eisenhower Administration that he was inclined to make policy rather than follow instructions; to be reckless in his criticism of Washington in his discussions with representatives of other foreign countries. Therefore I felt that it would serve the President's interests best to have a station in Saigon operating under the general policy guidance of the Ambassador but independent of the Ambassador with regard to methods, contacts, etc. Moreover, experience with Lodge at the United Nations indicated an amazing desire for ^{near} closeness and closeness to the press and this was continuing in Saigon and because of this and Lodge's complete lack of consciousness of security, I was led to advise strongly against any form of covert planning or action in which Lodge would be witting of details.

(2) I then explained the background of the Mechlin situation and his relationships with Philby and the fact that we knew that Mrs. Philby came to the United States for the purpose of contacting Mechlin. I said we had deep concern but not sufficient evidence to make a final judgment, and went on to say that the attack on CIA in Saigon was so harsh and so persistent that it might very well be directed by the KGB; furthermore I was very disturbed by the unexplained Voice of America broadcast of August 26th or 27th and in my mind felt that this also might have been part of a directed operation to embarrass the United States' effort in South Viet Nam.

(3) I then pointed out the fact that Rufus Phillips, second man in the AID mission, had called a press conference prior to leaving Saigon on TDY and this was just one more bit of evidence of the interrelationship of the Embassy and the press in Saigon, and that I urged the President to send a personal message to Lodge to put a stop forthwith to these relationships and press contacts.

JAM/mfb

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