

Contents

Preface

Acknowledgments

1. Born German, Thoroughly American
2. The Power of Knowledge
3. Colonial Turns
4. Quagmire
5. War, Peace, Coup, Peace
6. From Shangri-La to Hell

Photo Gallery

7. The Crucible of Lebanon
8. Asian Tiger
9. Fatal Embraces

A Final Word

Index

Chapter 4

Quagmire

In the early days of 1967, as the United States increased its bombing raids over North Vietnam, opposition to the war

increased across America. But most people still supported President Lyndon Johnson's war efforts. Few questioned the domino theory, which held that the loss of one nation to communism would lead to a wave of losses across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even Europe. But despite the consensus on the general themes of the Cold War, Americans grew uneasy about the scale of death in Southeast Asia.

And 1968 was a presidential election year. One of the leading contenders for the presidency on the Democratic side was Robert F. Kennedy. Now a senator from New York, Kennedy had made a major U-turn since his days as a hawk in the administration of his brother, John F. Kennedy. The senator was still searching for a meaningful purpose in the years following President Kennedy's assassination. He had a visceral mistrust of President Lyndon B. Johnson, whom he considered something of a usurper, and Johnson returned the mistrust. Even more important, Bobby Kennedy believed that American politics had taken dangerous turns in recent years. The assassination was just one symptom. So were the riots in the cities, the murders of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, the growing racial tension that extended from the segregationist south to the northern cities and suburbs, the plight of migrant workers in the fields of California, and the scourge of drugs on campuses and on the streets.

And what seemed like an unwinnable war in Vietnam. In the previous year, Kennedy had made plans to tour the major capitals of Europe to size up the global issues facing America. One of his stops was Paris, where I would play a role.

Working with Bob Kennedy was a real education for me. He was smart, quick, and creative. On his own time, he acted like a playboy—but that was his business. What mattered for his work as a politician was that he had a 360-degree view of the world. He could see everything going on around him, even when just visiting a place for a few days.

When Kennedy arrived in Paris in late January 1967, France was mourning the death of Marshal Alphonse Juin, one of the great French military leaders of World War II. Kennedy did not know much about him, but instantly decided to make a public appearance at Les Invalides, the seventeenth-century building housing Napoleon's tomb, where Juin's body lay in state. Kennedy ordered a giant wreath to bring to Juin's bier, with a card reading "From the Kennedys." I accompanied him to Les Invalides, carrying the wreath. As we arrived at the casket, draped with the French flag, I gave Kennedy the wreath and he knelt in prayer, lightly crying. The act was political, dramatic, and compassionate, all at the same time. Television cameras captured the moment as Kennedy laid the wreath. The gesture not only elevated Kennedy in the eyes of the French, but also solidified his place as the keeper of the Kennedy name and strengthened the Kennedy family's mystical bond with people all over the world.

Kennedy arrived in Paris shortly after a leftist journalist in Australia had published an interview with North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh. That interview opened new possibilities for a negotiated solution just at the moment that the United States and South Vietnam were wearying of the war.

For years, the two warring sides had shown no inclination to end the fighting through negotiations. Ho Chi Minh's mission was to defeat South Vietnam and unite the two states into a single communist nation. And the United States, deep into the Cold War, was unwilling to concede the possibility that South Vietnam would be absorbed by communist North Vietnam. The United States continued to pound North Vietnam with bombs—before the war ended, it would drop more tonnage on Vietnam than did all combatants in World War II—but the North persevered and even gained ground through guerrilla warfare. The Ho Chi Minh Trail, which twisted and turned through 12,000 miles of jungle, provided a supply route into South Vietnam and a sanctuary from American bombs. As much as the United States wanted to see Vietnam as two distinct systems and cultures, the Viet Cong had thoroughly infiltrated the South—and the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia.

But Trinh said “if the bombings of the North cease completely, good and favorable conditions will be created for talks.”

Since arriving in Paris in 1965, I had developed a close working relationship with Etienne Manac'h, head of the Asia Division of the French Foreign Office, who knew Indochina intimately. Manac'h represented the best of postcolonial France. He cared about the people of former colonies of Asia and wanted to do something to end the war that was ravaging the cities and the countryside. We talked frequently about Vietnam's culture, its politics, and the war. Manac'h believed that the war had little to do with the spread of communism across the globe, but rather with the desire for self-rule. It was a nationalist movement. The

North Vietnamese were fighting for their own land, for their own way of life. The United States was an outsider without a tangible stake in Vietnam's well-being. The Vietnamese would fight forever. The United States, like France before it, had limits.

Manac'h read the interview with Trinh and thought it represented a major breakthrough. If the United States seized the opportunity early enough, it could broker an end to the war that was at that stage much less damaging than Dien Bien Phu had been for the French. He asked Mai Van Bo, North Vietnam's top diplomat in Paris, whether the interview was intended as a major overture to find a way to start negotiations with a view ending the war. Bo said it was.

Manac'h wanted to make sure the message got through to the United States as dramatically as possible. Thus when Kennedy arrived at the French Foreign Office in Paris, Manac'h was determined to convey the news to him. At their meeting, his friend William Van den Heuvel accompanied Kennedy, and I served as an interpreter and note-taker. Manac'h told Kennedy that the Trinh statement could create the opening for a negotiation to end the war. I was not sure Kennedy grasped what Manac'h was telling him, so I interrupted. Does this mean, I asked, that the North Vietnamese are willing to sit down and find a way to negotiate an end to the war? Yes, Manac'h said, absolutely.

I rushed back to the Embassy to write a top-secret cable to send to Washington on Kennedy's conversation with Manac'h. It was obvious that the war in Vietnam was not going well and could get worse, despite what the generals and the president and

the hawks were saying. And now here was a way out—an honorable way out.

What I did not know was that *Newsweek* would obtain a copy of one of the cables I sent and report the overture in its next issue, and that the *New York Times* would put the breakthrough on the front page. Douglas MacArthur II, the assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs, had leaked the documents in an effort to undercut any movement toward peace talks. By leaking the sensitive information, MacArthur drove the Johnson administration into retreat, if it was ever inclined to pursue peace talks in the first place. If Robert Kennedy was *for* something, Lyndon Johnson was going to be against it.

The *Times* article reflected the period's confusion about how to get meaningful negotiations going: "By now, all sides agree that what the New York Senator heard from a French official in Paris was not a 'peace signal' from Hanoi, as reported in *Newsweek* magazine a week ago, but rather a French official's appraisal of what Hanoi might be willing to do if the United States stopped bombing North Vietnam."

This dismissal of a real proposal—peace talks for a bombing halt—was mistaken. It was a genuine overture, something that could have worked. Peace only has a chance when two sides decide to give in a little to get something in return. Etienne Manac'h was not dreaming, or making anything up. He had direct confirmation that the North Vietnamese were willing to negotiate an end to the war. Who knows where those negotiations might have gone without such a strong denunciation? Perhaps, in the best of all possible worlds, it might have led to a reaffirmation of

the Geneva Accord of 1954, a united Vietnam, and a mandate for an open and fair election. Probably not, but you never know. But because of domestic politics—the bitter rivalry between LBJ and RFK—the possibilities were scotched before they had a chance to develop.

And Lyndon Johnson was furious at me. When he read the *Times* article—which reported that I accompanied Kennedy to the meeting with Manac’h—the president exploded. “Who is John Dean?” he bellowed. “Fire him!”

I learned a couple of valuable lessons from that episode. First, do not always trust people on your own side—in this case, the administration for which I was working. Because of presidential politics, a State Department official went public with a sensitive diplomatic initiative before the initiative was ready to be revealed.

Second, make sure you have evidence of your own role in complex issues. If people are willing to subvert constructive work, and they are, you need to make sure they cannot lie about it as well. At that point in my career, I decided to keep copies of all memos and cables that I produced. If I was going to take risks for peace, which is what being a diplomat is all about, I needed to make sure that people with a stake in the status quo could not subvert my efforts without my being able to respond effectively.

More than one year later, in May 1968, as the election drew near, the peace talks got under way in Paris.

Some of the best people in the American foreign policy establishment—Averell Harriman, Cyrus Vance, Philip Habib, and, among the younger people, John Negroponte and Richard Holbrooke—worked around the clock to find ways to slow down

and halt the war, and eventually find a formula by which North and South Vietnam could coexist. Because we had never had sustained negotiations, these talks were more exploratory than anything else. You might call them negotiations for negotiations. We did not feel we could formally offer to halt the bombing, because we had no assurances of how the North would respond—and we had not figured out how the South would participate in the talks as a separate party. At that stage, the South Vietnamese sat together with the Americans. Even when good things happened in the war, like the lull in fighting in July, we did not know what to make of it. We asked the North Vietnamese whether it was a signal of good intentions, but we never got a clear answer.

As is often the case with negotiations, we spent a lot of time shadow-boxing in Paris. We thought something important might be happening, but we did not know for sure.

In February 1968, Eugene McCarthy, an insurgent antiwar candidate, performed “better than expected” against President Johnson in the New Hampshire Democratic primary. Even though LBJ had won the primary—as a write-in candidate—the media interpreted McCarthy’s showing as decisive proof that the president was finished. In a dramatic televised speech, Johnson dropped out of the race, telling the nation that he could not run for reelection while conducting the war. He devoted the remainder of his term to seeking a way out of the war. From that point on, the peace talks had the support of the administration. Johnson himself was reluctant to halt American bombing of North Vietnam, and did so only in the waning days of the campaign,

when Vice President Hubert Humphrey was conducting a come-from-behind race for the White House.

But the Republican candidate for president, Richard Nixon, was maneuvering to subvert the peace talks. Behind the scenes, Nixon sent emissaries to South Vietnam with a simple message—Don't go too far in the Paris peace talks. You can get a better deal from a Nixon administration than from a Humphrey administration.

Nixon also told voters that he had a “secret plan” to get out of Vietnam with America's honor intact. The plan was really not a plan, just a scheme aimed at scaring the North Vietnamese into negotiating away everything they had fought for decades to achieve. The idea was to threaten to use such awesome force against the Viet Cong, not to mention neighboring countries like Cambodia and Laos, that the North Vietnamese would beg for peace. Henry Kissinger called it the “Madman” theory. Kissinger would pass the word, directly or through intermediaries, that Nixon was an irrational, trigger-happy leader, a madman with whom one could not reason. He-might-even-use-nuclear-weapons was the not-so-subtle subtext of the threat. Better to sue for peace now than face destruction later.

Nixon's aggressive approach and Ho's defiant response did not lend themselves to the kind of negotiations that had begun in Paris. Vietnam would be bogged down in a bloody war until 1975, when the Communists would take over almost all of Indochina and create some of the most repressive regimes anywhere.

When I left France in the autumn of 1969 after four years at the American Embassy, I nonetheless felt I had made a significant

contribution to getting a dialogue started between North Vietnam and the United States regarding the future of Vietnam. But my determination to get real negotiations going in Paris between all concerned parties also got me in hot water. One day toward the end of 1968, in one of my conversations with Monsieur Manac'h, I asked quite innocently "Monsieur le Directeur, why don't you help us to extricate ourselves from this situation in Vietnam?" I alluded to my years in Indochina and the fact that the French had been unable to cope with the Vietnamese drive for unification and independence. Now the United States was more and more involved in the quagmire.

After that meeting, Monsieur Manac'h went to see the French foreign minister, Michel Debré, who was close to President De Gaulle, and reported that I had suggested that the French help the United States extricate itself from the Vietnam imbroglio. Later that same evening, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance got a phone call from Debré requesting a meeting. When confronted by Debré with the remarks I had made to Manac'h, Secretary Vance made it very clear that I was not authorized to put forward any ideas to the French authorities and that I had been speaking on my own. I laugh about this incident sometimes, wondering whether the idea of a "brokered solution" would not have been better than what actually happened.

Was there a difference between the Democrats and the Republicans in their approach to the Paris talks with North Vietnam? It was my impression that the first delegation to the Vietnam talks, led by Ambassador Harriman and Secretary Vance, was truly interested in finding a modus vivendi with North

Vietnam. After the departure of the Harriman/Vance leadership following the Democrats' defeat at the polls, the Republican delegation to the Vietnam talks, led by Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, with the later involvement of Henry Kissinger, was less willing to negotiate with the North Vietnamese and more inclined toward unilateral action. The head of the North Vietnamese delegation, Le Duc Tho, rejected the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize on the grounds that peace was not yet established, but Dr. Kissinger accepted his half of the prize. Perhaps John Negroponte and Richard Holbrooke, who were both part of the American negotiating team for a longer period than I, can throw additional light on this important period of American diplomacy.

In 1970, with the prospects of an enduring peace growing doubtful, I was assigned to Central Vietnam as deputy to the American Commander of Military Region 1 for CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary¹ Development Support). We had responsibility for the five northernmost provinces of South Vietnam, where the most decisive battles for the independence of South Vietnam were taking place. My headquarters was in Danang. If South Vietnam could hold these regions, it might maintain its independence as a nation. But if the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were to gain control over the area, the South would have little chance to prevail. As it was, the Viet Cong had already moved into all parts of South Vietnam, as well as Laos and Cambodia.

In my work with CORDS, I had 1,100 civilian advisors and military officers under my command. I started out as the Number Two in the region and then moved up. My mission was to help

the South Vietnamese regime to govern and develop a society prosperous and secure enough to resist the North Vietnamese. We worked on a wide range of military, economic, and social issues, helping provide electricity, care of refugees, and security. And we confronted the Viet Cong.

I traveled by helicopter all over the five provinces under my jurisdiction, visiting and helping our advisors in the most remote villages and districts. My goal was to see the region as a whole, not as a series of individual battles. I sent my reports on what I saw, my conclusions on how the military, economic, and social situations evolved in Central Vietnam, to the Commander of U.S. forces in Saigon, which he would then incorporate into his overall assessment of how the war was going.

My service in Danang gave me an invaluable understanding of the American military, which in turn helped me to work with my military colleagues during the rest of my diplomatic career. Serving the U.S. military operation in Vietnam gave me insight and credibility that I could not have gotten any other way. I did not shirk when asked to go. That was my job. When I spoke up for peace later in my career, I could not be dismissed as a fuzzyheaded peacenik. I risked and almost lost my life on more than one occasion. More important, serving with the military gave me a deep, abiding respect for the military. You cannot serve your country without having that kind of understanding.

Soldiers and officers were trying to do a job under very difficult circumstances. Although they sometimes disagreed with orders they received from politicians, they always did their best. Nobody enjoys war—especially not the military. When you have to

write a letter—your husband died a heroic death under such and such circumstances—then you know what war is all about. I was responsible for 1,100 men and they were out in the boonies. My deputy, a full colonel, was killed, and writing a letter to his wife was a wrenching task.

The best way to win the respect of military people is to risk your life and survive to tell the tale. In 1970, I received reports that American tanks were surrounded in Quang Tri province in the northernmost section of South Vietnam. The tanks were returning to the province from Laos, where they had just completed a military operation. As soon as they crossed the border, they were taken by surprise when North Vietnamese troops began to pursue them. When tanks are surrounded and in danger of being wiped out, the instinct for survival impels soldiers to leave their vehicles and make a run for friendly lines, in hopes of saving their lives. And that is just what these soldiers did.

I happened to be in the safe area when the troops came running back. The American brigadier general there ordered the troops to return and bring back their tanks so that the enemy would not take them. The troops responded, in effect: “Up yours, general! You go get the tanks!” The general had failed a basic test of leadership. What he should have said was, “Go with me, men, and we’ll take back our tanks.” A good leader always shows the way into a dangerous mission. He doesn’t just push dangerous tasks onto his soldiers.

At one point in April 1972, Quang Tri Province was completely overrun by the North Vietnamese. In the process, they had surrounded the provincial capital, where American advisers

were hunkered down, awaiting rescue. To prevent our advisers being taken prisoner, I decided to fly with my assigned helicopter to Quang Tri City and retrieve as many Americans as I could. I was able to make three or four trips from Danang to Quang Tri City, and each time the helicopter would take seven or eight people out. On my last trip, as we were flying up with U.S. consul Fred Brown, we were shot down over Highway One, about 15 kilometers south of Quang Tri City. Fortunately the rifle shot hit the oil line of the helicopter and not the gas line, or I would not be here to tell the story, because the helicopter would then have exploded. Our helicopter dropped to the ground hard, like a sack of potatoes. Shaken up, we sent a "Mayday" distress call, which prompted another helicopter to fly in, under fire, to our rescue. It picked us up, lifted us out, and flew us to an installation near Hue.

I asked the U.S. military there whether the South Vietnamese could give us some tanks so that we could try to rescue the U.S. advisers for whom I was responsible, but this was no longer feasible. Roughly twenty-four hours later, U.S. Air Force General Hudson was flown to Danang, where he organized the extraction of the remaining fifty Americans, along with South Vietnamese who had been fighting the forces from the North, from the besieged Quang Tri City. After a certain amount of heavy bombing by U.S. planes to keep the enemy down, the helicopter pilots flew in. The entire operation was carried out at night while North Vietnamese tanks were attacking the installation. It was so hot that the pilots were flying in their underwear. The helicopters hovered over the extraction site just long enough for the people to

climb aboard. We got everybody out who was supposed to leave. My staff and I were at the airfield, greeting the lucky survivors.

Quang Tri province fell to North Vietnam in April 1972. Commanding General Frederick Weyand, told me: "John you're not going back until the South Vietnamese take back the province," which they eventually did.

The best way to describe my time in Vietnam is to say that I was a loyal dissenter. During my time in the field, I saw countless visitors from the States who were trying to understand the American role in the war. Senator Frank Church and Representative Pete McCloskey came in 1972 and asked me what I thought about the Phoenix program, a CIA plan developed in 1967 that empowered the United States to kidnap, interrogate, and possibly assassinate Viet Cong. I told Church and McCloskey what I thought, trying not to defame the military or intelligence people who were struggling with a damned difficult job. Nonetheless, I clearly stated that the program violated the rules of international law and would tarnish America's good name. I was not happy with the trumped-up legal procedures. I had no problem with trying to root out potential VC, but I did have a problem using a phony legal approach to get rid of them. It was not a military operation. The question concerns how you fight a war. Are there not some rules you have to live by? Or does merely having enemies give you carte blanche to eliminate them as you see fit? I don't think so. This is an issue that will not go away. In the post-9/11 struggle against terrorism, the U.S. military set up prisons at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba to "process" prisoners as it

saw fit. But if the United States is to promote the values of freedom and law, it needs to abide by the law. Not doing so reflects adversely on the country as a whole.

Most people I knew in Vietnam were not sycophants. Sometimes people just had different perspectives on what was happening. Some thought we were achieving our goals, while others thought the war was not going anywhere. Sure, some considered their own advancement more important than being truthful. But most people wanted to find the truth and express it, within the restraints of our operation. But it was hard to get a handle on the overall situation, and many were reluctant to extrapolate their own observations while contrary reports flowed in from other parts of the country.

One of the greatest horrors of war is that the burdens of death and suffering are shared so unequally. A few people in authority get to make the decisions, and then the vast majority of the people have to live with the consequences.

Every morning at 7 o'clock, I attended a briefing of generals at U.S. military headquarters in Danang. The commander would ask what was going on in the region and what we planned to do to improve the situation. To survive, to be useful, you have to know more than your superiors. So I had my colonel come to my residence at 6 o'clock to brief me on everything that had happened the previous day and night. He told me everything we'd learned, down to the names of the soldiers involved. The enemy overran this place, he would say. We lost that guy. This other guy was

wounded. At 6:30 I'd get in a car and go to our secure headquarters.

Part of my job was to analyze every troop movement and record every casualty of war in the region. I was always impressed and moved by the care the American military showed for its soldiers. If a kid from Arkansas had his legs shot off and a guy from New York was just killed, the military commanders cared. They saw it with their own eyes and received news of developments all over the country on a daily basis. They considered each soldier one of their own.

Sometimes, the Americans' concern for their own created a protective cocoon that distorted our view of the war. Americans got the best medical care and food. No costs were spared to feed and equip the American soldier or to care for him when injured or killed. Officers showed amazing compassion for the families of the war casualties. But the flip side of this extraordinary care for our own was, at times, the anonymity of the average Vietnamese soldier or family. In caring for our own, we too often lost sight of the horrors experienced by both North and South Vietnamese in their own land.

I remember walking past mountains of garbage in the predawn mist. As my car arrived at headquarters, its headlights revealed people atop garbage piled six feet high, searching for leftover scraps of hot dogs, hamburgers, buns, whatever they could find. The garbage came from the mess hall, and it was put there with the full understanding that scavengers would pick through it. That haunting image stays with me to this day—human beings picking over garbage to survive.

The American military cocoon also warped our understanding of events in the field. Officials at headquarters often interpreted what was going on differently from the guys on the ground. We told our soldiers that we were fighting for a great cause, that the Viet Cong were nasty and the South Vietnamese military were making progress. Often we knew that was not the case. What Clausewitz called the “fog of war”—the confusing madness that takes place on real battlefields, so different from the lines and arrows written on military maps—was often deliberately created by the rhetoric we had to use to keep our guys focused on their dangerous jobs.

But that was not the worst of it. There was an altogether different level of unreality in Washington. We plied Washington with masses of information about what was happening in the field, but Washington lacked the well-rounded understanding it needed to make smart decisions. Most politicians don’t usually get too concerned with the complexities of policy and sometimes approach war—and other kinds of public policy—like a football game. They decide who has the white jerseys and who the red, and then adjust the facts to fit their ideas about the two sides. When we left scraps of food in piles of garbage for people to scavenge, some humanitarian impulses were at work there. But those impulses got lost when the “strategists” went to work in Washington.

The numbing of the human spirit that occurred in those circumstances took extreme forms, especially at some distance from the field. The United States used Agent Orange to defoliate the Ho Chi Minh Trail. We did not think much about the long-

term consequences, which were severe. The chemicals seeped into the underground water supply and poisoned fish and food. New generations often arrived with birth defects. Napalm, too, had devastating effects. Who can ever forget the photo of the young Vietnamese girl as she ran screaming from the napalm bomb? The United States also laid mines all over Vietnam, and to this day, people get their legs blown off in the fields. This is particularly true in Cambodia.

In Vietnam I had a military adviser on my staff, a Marine captain who was involved in several cross-border operations into Laos. On one of these incursions he got caught on the Ho Chi Minh Trail when U.S. planes were dropping defoliants onto the jungle. He became ill in Danang. When three years later I was appointed U.S. ambassador to Denmark, he was named my Marine attaché, having reached the rank of major. In 1989, when I participated in the global war games in Newport, Rhode Island, I came across my friend again. By that time he was a full colonel on the staff of the Naval War College. Shortly thereafter, he died of Agent Orange poisoning.

One of the more satisfying moments in Vietnam arose when I was able to protect one of Vietnam's great cultural treasures. In late 1971 the State Department advised me that President Nixon had ordered the U.S. military to protect the Cham Museum in Danang. The museum was one of a kind. French archeologists had built it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries after discovering art objects in the ground in Central Vietnam and magnificent brick and stone monuments in the same area.

The objects the archeologists unearthed were in bronze, clay, silver, gold, and stone and dated from the fifth century to the fifteenth century when Cham kings ruled in Central Vietnam. Seafaring people who had come from the east by boat, probably from Polynesia, the Cham were carriers of Indian culture, both Hindu and Buddhist. They settled in the coastal plains of Central Vietnam and the Kingdom of Champa became a great rival to the Khmer Empire to the west. The great monument of Angkor Wat depicted in stone the wars between the Khmer and the Cham. They also depict in stone graceful, full-breasted Cham girls dancing before their king.

The French had approached the U.S. military in Vietnam in the late 1960s to help protect the Cham museum in Danang and the many temple ruins in Central Vietnam, but to no avail. In the early 1970s, the curator in Paris who had played a role in building up the Danang museum, Philippe Stern, wrote to President Nixon asking for U.S. protection of this priceless art heritage of Vietnam's past. President Nixon responded favorably and sent instructions to the American military in Saigon to protect the Cham museum. They, in turn, advised me of my new mission, that of protecting the Cham museum in Danang. I asked the South Vietnamese military to assign troops to live in the museum, and they occupied the building. When the United States withdrew from Vietnam in 1975, not a single piece of sculpture from the museum was missing. Unfortunately, soldiers and others ransacked temples in outlying districts. People saw ancient treasures and did not hesitate to steal pieces to sell to any willing

buyers. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the museum in Danang had become Vietnam's leading tourist attraction.

In October 2005, the first Cham exhibit ever held outside of Vietnam was organized in Paris. Ministers from Vietnam and France attended the opening, to which I was also invited. The catalogue to this prestigious exhibit included on page 22 the following paragraph:

Ambassador John Gunther Dean, who from 1970 to 1972 was deputy to the American commander of the 24th Corps based in Danang, remembers having received from the State Department the request sent directly by Philippe Stern to President Nixon to protect the museum in Danang and the Cham monuments in the region. Thanks to the instructions sent by the White House in response to this initiative, the Cham Museum benefited from military protection which avoided looting during these troubled times. One of the American advisors working with the Vietnamese mayor of Danang, Carl Heffley, became enamored with Cham art and published in 1972 a brochure devoted to the museum's collection. At a time when Vietnam celebrates the 30th anniversary of its liberation, it is timely to recall the effort of those who did their best attempting to preserve this exceptional cultural patrimony during the terrible war years which have marked the history of Vietnam during the 20th century.

The Cham museum's guidebook makes the same point in six different languages. It is comforting to know that thirty years after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the Vietnamese and French remember at least one positive aspect of the American presence in Indochina.

From the beginning of my service with CORDS, I had the sinking feeling that the war could not be won militarily by the United States and South Vietnam. The people of South Vietnam were overwhelmed with fatigue and disillusioned. They had seen their fathers, their brothers, and their friends killed in both the war against the French and the war involving the Americans. In the United States we only think back to our own engagement in Vietnam. For the Vietnamese the war goes back far more than thirty years. Were they fighting to maintain the government of South Vietnam, which besides being inept was also dependent on outsiders for military assistance? No, they were fighting to keep North Vietnam from taking over South Vietnam. But in most people's eyes, Vietnam was one country. And the Viet Cong were all over South Vietnam anyway, and they were there to stay. The people in the north were tired too, but they were fighting with nationalist vision and energy.

In the final analysis, the Vietnamese people are pretty much the same as Americans or French or Salvadorans. The average man has a wife and family and just wants to live his life, bring home food, and educate his children. Whatever dangers the North Vietnamese threatened, the average South Vietnamese felt caught in the middle.

No matter what Lyndon Johnson did, no matter what Richard Nixon did, the war was destined to go badly. The question that both presidents eventually had to ask was how to forge peace—and dignity—out of an unpopular and unwinnable war.

Before closing the chapter on Vietnam, I would like to dwell for a brief moment on how my service in Vietnam was perceived by my family. In the 1970s Vietnam had become an issue within American families. Often the younger generation held different views from their parents. When I went to Vietnam with the military in 1970, we were living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Whenever anti-Vietnam War demonstrations or vigils were held in Cambridge, my children and wife always stood by me. When I left for Vietnam, my children said, “If my dad is involved, it can not be all bad,” and they did not participate in demonstrations with their fellow students. I remain grateful to them for having had faith in me and allowing me to do the job asked of me by our country.

But service in Vietnam was not without risk. I corresponded with my wife, Martine, by sending her tapes. She replied by letter. In one tape that she has kept, I related what I had been doing for the previous few days when suddenly there came a loud bang on the tape. Somebody passing by my house, seeing the open window, had tried to throw a grenade into the bedroom where I was recording. Fortunately, the curtains had been drawn, and they stopped the grenade from reaching its target. Nothing personal, I believe, but it confirmed to me that some Vietnamese

perceived Americans, however well intentioned, as foreign intruders and opposed their presence.

I doubt that I informed Martine until well after completing my tour of duty in Vietnam that I had been shot down in the helicopter in April 1972 near Quang Tri City while trying to rescue American advisors serving under my command. She would have worried even more than she already did about my being in wartime Vietnam. And she in turn kept bad news from me. When she broke her leg skiing, she did not want me to worry so that I could concentrate on my job and take care of my own security. When I landed in Boston at Logan Airport in the summer of 1972, after more than two years in Vietnam, Martine was at the airport with our three children, still in a wheelchair, recovering from her broken leg. More than fifty years after our marriage, I am still grateful to my wife and children that they always supported me in my determination to serve our country, wherever it might be.