

Saigon  
April 10, 1962

Louisa Messolonghites  
The Reporter  
660 Madison Avenue  
New York 21, New York

Dear Madam:

Your letter of March 2nd arrived while I was traveling extensively in the southern delta and northern plateau regions of Viet Nam.

I propose to write a 4000-word article, which might be entitled, "Viet Nam--Country in a Crossfire." It would explain the problems of the populace in supporting either the government or the Communist Viet Cong; the problems of the Vietnamese military in combatting the enemy and the problems of the U. S. military in their delicate position of advising, but not leading troops.

The article would be illustrated by my visit to Cao Lanh, the capital of Kien Phong province, an area almost completely under Viet Cong control near the Cambodian border.

Until three months ago Major John K. Munson, of Groton, Mass., was the only American advisor in the province. He lived with the Vietnamese, ate their food and taught them English with a Boston Accent. Two Midwesterners and two Southerners then arrived not only to complicate his linguistic accomplishments, but also to expedite the training of local militia units. Within two months a 30-man barracks will be built for more Americans--an indication of the build-up of American personnel even in the most remote areas.

One of the first large-scale operations Major Munson advised was the sending of two battalions to encircle a known Viet Cong encampment. Government forces captured only three Viet Cong and ninety suspects, who had thrown their weapons into a canal so they could not be held as prisoners. "It's their ability to change from fighter to farmer status that throws me," the Major emphasized.

With heavy military escort, I visited a small hamlet near Cao Lanh. "We are caught in the crossfire," said an old man in white blouse and baggy pants. "We are afraid to go out at night; the soldiers think we are V. C." The most serious complaint in the village was not the Viet Cong, but the rice shortage--an illustration of the need for economic improvement in the rural areas to undercut the Communist arguments.

To expand the Cao Lanh story to the whole country, I talked with Vietnamese military division or corps commanders and American military advisors. I have been assured of having an interview with either President Ngo Dinh Diem or his powerful brother and political advisor, Ngo Dinh Nhu, sometime in April. My article will be ready for airmailing a week after receipt of your reply unless you specify my waiting longer for either interview.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely yours,

(Miss) Beverly Deepe  
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