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March 27, 1968

The Honorable George Bush
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear George:

Some time has passed since I called you to ask you of your thoughts about the United States and the Vietnam war. Since our conversation, I have tried to understand how our philosophies differed and why? Perhaps now I've decided to put the "why" first and the "how" later.

Two reasons seem to be fairly clear to me now, here in far away Carmel, where I have a little more time to think. The first reason is that I actually have a very basic philosophy or set of standards which I know is the essence of America, or if you prefer, the reason it is. Let me explain, I believe America became what it is because of the peoples faith in America. In other words, the "idea" or ideal of America is what makes Americans, and gives them their will to create and work, gives them their pride, their Americanism. If this idea, this faith of the people is destroyed, if they can no longer believe, then America will merely cease to exist. Whatever America does to kill the trust and hope of the people will in its total perpetuation bring on the death of the great nation. The great idea, the beautiful faith called "America" will be gone!

Because this is the basis of my philosophy, it is quite simple for me to make my choice about the Vietnam War. I need no other proofs. I am not impressed with statistics, I am not frightened by Admirals, Generals, Nuclear Physicists, or beguiled by ambitious politicians! The faith, the "American" faith, of American people is most obviously being completely destroyed by the Vietnamese War, the faith in themselves, thus their government, their America. I need nothing else, for this reason alone we must cease this filthy battle!

Do you know, George, that as a member of our governing body, the youth of our nation don't trust you, don't believe in you, and perhaps even worse, don't even give a damn about you! Do you know of any nation that can be strong without the support of its children? How long do you think a nation can survive without trust and inspiration of its youth?

This is no longer a nation of isolated frontiersmen and farmers. (Though I sometimes can't help thinking that all the country boys are now in Washington.) We've educated everybody, even our youth. We're no longer fooled by the big city boys, were not even impressed with Presidents or Senators. Even though many of us can't explain

why, we've learned just enough to mistrust, and we just won't buy. But perhaps I've drifted too far afield, I think not.

The second reason, George, that I can say the U.S. must get out of Vietnam without a moments hesitation, is that I, Mr. American Citizen, am not scared. I am not scared of Communism and therefore am not on the defensive about it. I do not like it, want it for myself or believe in it. But I also do not believe in forcing Americanism or even Democracy on other nations or peoples! In fact if you believe in the essence of Americanism, how in the world can you justify crusading, forcing our way on the Vietnamese people? Who the hell is morally right, the Communists for killing one, 500,000 or 1,000,000 non-communistic catholic Viets or the Americans who kill one, 500,000 or a 1,000,000 undemocratic, "unpacified" Vietnamese. Do you see any similarity between the Hitler-Stalin indoctrination camps and the U.S. Pacification villages? Don't you believe that Democracy must be wanted and cherished by a peoples own free will, it is not bought by force, or as you call it, pacification, or dollars!

But again, why am I not scared of Communism despite the warnings of our expert military minds in Washington or in command? For the very reason that these "experts", with all the enormous fire power that America can throw, are unable to win the war in Vietnam. Even my poor, untrained military mind can reason that the same would hold true in the U.S. in the event of Communist invasion. Can you imagine how the American people would fight! (Unless, of course, their faith in Americanism was destroyed.) Think of the suicidal charges, men, women, children, the door to door fighting, the "Indian raids" on the Commies who occupied our homeland, for 500 years to come, until we finally won or the last American was killed. We would fight just as the Vietnamese whose homeland we have invaded!

You boys in D.C. say "where then will we draw the line"? I say we don't have to, the lines are already very clearly drawn. There are the Free World nations and the Communist nations (these latter are somewhat fuzzy, just like some of our Free nations). And then there are the "underdeveloped" nations or shall we call them the grab bag nations.

What is so difficult about it? If the Free World nations are attacked, we fight for our lives and country. However, if the underdeveloped countries are attacked, are we then to suddenly stop being Americans? We will "lose" some then, but by no means all. And if we have faith in our system, and stand as examples, our "Family-of-Freedom" will grow. Instead of dissipating our blood, wealth and vitality on false ideals in unfriendly lands, we could, with the same effort, continue to grow to unlimited heights and dazzling stature at home. Our youth would toil and build with joy for what their fathers promised them was America!

Isn't it funny how our newspapers and State Department have always made fun of the strange oriental custom of going to any extreme to "save face" - even Hari Kiri. And now the great United States is, according to the men in Washington, in danger of losing its "Face-of-World-Prestige", if we were to admit our "error" and pull out of Vietnam. Would it not be more accurate to say that the politico's and militarist who pushed us into the conflict are the ones to lose face! However, unlike our strange oriental cousins, these political face savers haven't the guts to slit their own disgraced bellies, but are quite willing to sacrifice the lives of our sons on the alter of their egos and dungheap, paper morality.

The last words you said to me, George, were "well, Dick, as Dean Rusk said, one can't question the morality of our fight in Vietnam".

The hell I can't, George! I question the morality of this war for all the reasons I've just discussed, and because it makes me ashamed as an American; because of the Military who are hawks because they have tripled their grade and rank; because of the businessmen who are hawks from the reaping of enormous war industry profits; because of the hawk lobbyists that industry pays; because of the production workers who are hawks for fear of losing their good defense-contract jobs; because of the politicians who are hawks for fear of facing adjustment to a peacetime economy; and of the U.S. citizens who are hawks because they have the hearts of sparrows! You call them "Hawks" I call them "Camp Followers"!

I question the morality of a "Democratic" government that perpetuates war without the majority consent of the people. Without any question this war is the sole responsibility and choice of the U.S. Government; our House, Senate, Supreme Court, President and his Cabinet.

Finally, George, if these, our Statesmen, acted to only put us in this war with the very best of intentions, then, Lord help us, I question the morality of ignorance!

There is nothing in the conclusion I have drawn above that makes it necessary for me to use any specialized knowledge I may have acquired during my 18 months tour of duty with the State Department behind the lines in Vietnam. The choice is simple, depending on what kind of America you believe in.

I believe I know you well enough, George, and therefore some of your ideals. I thus understand sadly that there are only a few like you in Washington, whose only "special interest" is the welfare of the American people. We look to you, George, and your

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sparse militia of Statesmen as our only hope. We the people don't want you to be like us, we want you to be human yet Godlike. We have chosen you our Congressional representatives to do what we cannot do ourselves. We will continue to ask the impossible and give little thanks and many rebukes. We will not tolerate naivete or super sophistication. We the selfish ask that you be selfless.

As ever,

Richard G. Mack
President

RGM:mg

May 21, 1968

The Honorable George Bush
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Poppy:

A belated but very warm thanks for the time taken by yourself in answering my long and involved letter to you. You mention that you misplaced the letter, so I am sending you another copy. Actually you have a darn good memory and were able to, in your response to me, cover most of the points. Naturally there are still a number of things to discuss, but one of the main things that came out of your letter, which I had guessed but now have written proof, is that you are even more idealistic than me, and this despite being a Texas oilman. You seem to be most disturbed by the Vietcong, or perhaps before that the Japanese, or actually maybe in general "The enemy" because they don't fight a war according to your rules, that is, the fair American way.

I guess war is the only thing that I am not idealistic about. I can't see anything ideal or fair in war, it is all dirty. War should be fought to win anyway one can win, if they must be fought at all. I feel at times that they must. Whether you kill one person at a time with bullets, or kill the same number all at once with bombs, what difference does it make? Or one might look at it as whether it is fair to kill soldiers or civilians. What I have seen of wars, and read of them throughout history, is that everybody gets killed if they happen to get in the way. Except of course, in the days of King Arthur, and right now those days look pretty good to me. But then again we are talking about war, not war games.

But George, what you said in your last closing lines actually hit a soft spot. I think you are absolutely right, the people who feel strongly about their country should make an effort to jump in the swim and do something about it. If you will give me your support and advice, I would like to try, seriously.

As ever,

Richard G. Mack

RGM:mg

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Easter Sunday

GEORGE BUSH
TEXAS-7TH DISTRICT

Dear Dick,

I am writing this at home- self typed I'll have you know- and at a great big loss because I regret to say I have lost your magnificent letter, and thus cannot give you the detailed reply that a concerned letter like that deserves. I put the letter in my brief case to answer on the plane, but it has been lost - probably amongst the literally hundreds of letters I have gotten on the Civil Rights Bill. I voted for the bill and the roof is falling in- boy does the hatred surface. I have had more mail on this subject than on Viet Nam and Taxes and sex all put together. Most of the mail has been highly critical of my vote- emotional and mean- but a little has been reassuring..... Anyway your letter on War and Peace is buried somewhere and this makes me sad for I wanted to send you a respectable reply.

Let me make a few points.. I think you're wrong on the immorality aspect of it all. I just don't buy that this is an immoral war on our part. If you want to argue that all war is immoral-fine; but this selectivity and this blind willingness to emphasize the weaknesses of the South Viet Nam government while totally overlooking the terror of the VC and the past slaughters by Ho and the boys I can't buy.

I think it is becoming clearer and clearer that the Tet offensive wasn't a big defeat for us. It was in Yale



Chapel and it was on the campus and it was in Gailbraith's mind when at the outbreak he picked up the line of the NVN people and said the government in the south will fall and the Arvin forces will defect..... But time is a great leveller and now the cool and objective light reveals that this weak (and I would readily admit in the past too corrupt government structure) government did not crater.. The Arvi force did not turn and run, the pacification program though seriously disrupted is now 90% back on stream... and out of the "defeat" comes some other points. The VC infrastructure surfaced- really surfaced not in toto but in large numbers- for the first time... thus giving the government a chance to finger them. The enemy killed was tremendous.. Khe San was not overrun, much to the apparent disappointment of some of our people in this country who were painting it as another Dien Bien Phu..... You well remember these predictions Dick... So what I am saying in summary is that though I agree Tet was a psychological victory of sorts at the time for the Communists, it has not proved to be a victory at all- rather a defeat.

If I felt we were seeking permanent ground in this country I might buy the immorality theory- but I don't feel that. From a military standpoint I think we are fighting the wrong war.. I think in retrospect that we should have learned from the history books; but this is not a comment on the war's

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morality or lack thereof.....

I think the peace talks might well lead to peace- these efforts are deep and there is private evidence that Ho wants to stop the level of fighting- so let us hope the problem is further on its way to solution than when your letter was written. I am convinced that the military pressure has compelled Ho to take a look at least at peace talks-- it wasn't the fact that the country is divided. It wasn't the fact that their were voices here for unilaterally turning this country over to the North Vietnamese- rather it was the cruel and hard fact that Ho was getting hurt.

In my speeches I have been emphasizing the reunification of all Viet Nam.. This was in the Geneva Accords, it is one of our points- one of 14 I believe, and it is a supposed goal today of the North Vietnamese.. I urge free and supervised elections in both North and South, but David Schoenbrun (?) says this is unreasonable- why says he should Ho submit to free supervised elections--- I reply Why Not.

I am hopeful that the Geneva Accords can provide a basis of understanding which will move the talks along faster than they moved in Korea. The situation is so tight though that the whole talk thing could blow sky high- I of course hope it doesn't.

Your letter does not touch on the Geneva Accords of '62 re: Laos... It is this that concerns me, not these talks alone but the total defiance of signed accords. The Communists in NVN agreed to remove their troops from Laos... Yet after the signing there was no move to do this- no reason given,,, just plain old fashioned bad faith because this part of the agreement didn't suit the plan of the N. V Nam govt... they made no pretence offered no quid pro quo- simply left the troops there and the great plan for a coalition government under Souvannah Phouma went up in smoke..He started off as you no neutral, but neutral in their favor, and now as a result of the overt breaches of the agreement and as a result of continuing aggression on the part of the Communists Souvannah is determined that they will not prevail.

In summary all I ask is an objective look. I can recognize the lack of viability of the government in the south but I recognize its improvement. Booby Kennedy, knowing damn well they start drafting 18 year olds in May- talks about their failure to draft 18 year olds.... He doesn't mention the percentage of

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their youth in the military, he doesn't talk about the vast improvement in the Arvin Forces. He ~~says~~ as much as says they are lousy fighter and cowards and yet everyone I talked to over there- not the big brass- but the little American seargent who is risking getting his ass shot off side by side with these toops, say they are good fighters- who have improved considerably and who will continue to improve....

I think the biased reporting on this work stinks. I wish you could have a drink with GB Barry Zorthian and get his view on this. He's been there - or was there a long time- and I know you'd enjoy his opinion on this subject which is taboo for any politician.

In this regard all I call for is balance- fairness- but no the emphasis is on our round that falls short- or the brutality of the south Vietnamese- or the civilians killed by our napalm.. When I went to V.Nma I thought every hamlet had been devastated by our napalm-- how grossly unfair this turned out to be. I thought the Arvin were all corrupt and cowards- how grossly unfair this was. When I came home I read about the shelling of Danang- front page big deal- and yet I was there that night- slept thru the whole thing- the airfield was shut down on one runway maybe for an hour- noone was killed- and yet reading the paper I thought I might have been in the Bataan siege for heaven sakes. And then Tet, I read about Danang again, thought it and its environs were under complete harassment. This interested me cause I had been to the hamlets AROUND Danang and had seen our pacification efforts there. I felt from reading the press -this is all shot.... But now the smoke has settled and I have had alter from two men there and a phone call from another- a USAid guy- no big brass trying to snow the Congressman Richard, and he tells me- they had one company of North Vietnamese surface at Danang- they were promptly done in. The pacification effort was disrupted but in three weeks the people were out in the hamlets and things were going well- and lastly the resolve of the people had been strengthened because they saw first hand the VC in operation.....

And so when we want the war over, we can want it over for different reasons. We can want it over because we don't want to fight ourselves- or because we think it is immoral (these can or can't be the same), or because we think it is diverting funds from other purposes, or because this country shouldn't involve ourselves in this type of massive effort in a country not suited to resisting guerilla and terror tactics. The thing that amazes me often is the arrogance

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and the total lack of compassion on the part of some doves-- who suggest that those who don't want to turn tail and quit really don't ~~th~~ want the war to end..... Hey hey LBJ how many kids did you kill today.... how brutal can a critic be.... This onesided assis gnment of motives... I detest this suggestion that the President really doesn't care about human lives. Look, I don't go LBJ, I vote against him all thevtime, but I'm not going to take that mean step which strips the man of any feeling and assigns to him unthinkable motives- and all the time these smart critics are immune to the repeated abuses, the shree terror andtorture of the VC. Goog god Dick there must be some fair play somewhere ~~xxx~~ in all this.

Lastly you get all over the Congress- all I can tell you, and you can believe it or not, is that there is deep concern. Not many congressmen want to haul ass- to quit- some few did but very few.. but I don't know any who want to see these peace talks fail and I know a hell of a lot who feel that only by keeping the pressure up as long as we have could we get any kind of reasonable chance for tlaks- most felt and I think rightly so, that to pull back or retreat would only further ~~th~~ strengthen the resolve of Hanoi. The protests at home (and I'm not saying here they sohuldn't be) have definitely strangthened Hanoi's will, but the pressure remained on and it hurt and now maybe that will try for a peace- not that they'll go away for they may try to gain at the table which they couldn't gain in the field, but at least we can stop the slaughter and the spending' and hoepfully we'll learn from the past.

I have concluded there is no easy answer. and that is where we differ- you think there is.. I am not a 'Communism is monolithis' man; but nor am I one who feel the Communists have renounced their clearly stated goals for world revolution or world takeover. I am hopeful over the split between Russia and China and I'd like to see it widen; but I am not about to believe that either suddenly thinks we're OK and that they will give up their own struggles for world domination. There is no evidence to support this.... The next struggle will be in the Middle East.... Let us then hear from those on the campuses who say war is immoral or perhaps their selectivity will apply--- time will tell.

I've gone on too long... I have no carbon so I have not bored Weaver with all this- As I close I know I am leving unanswered many of the

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excellent points you raised in your letter, and this depresses me.

Let me give you a word of unsolicited advice- if you think the Congress is so screwed up- why don't you get in there and do something about it- run I mean- I'll send the first campaign contribution and I'll come out to your district and wage an aggressive campaign against you, which should guarantee your election. I am serious, though- get involved... The water's great... Your faithful Rex is grateful for the time you took to send along that thought provoking letter...

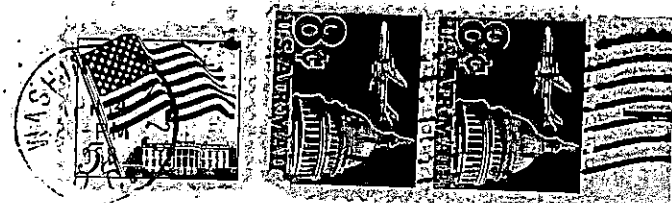
My concluding statement-- in spite of the riots and the dissent and the fiscal problems and the worries- POGO put it very well when he said "We are faced by insurmountable opportunity".... The opportunity is here that is for sure.....

Best Ever

Rex

Now I solicit your views on the riots.. If you were Pres. what would you do..... Please sit down and write..... GB

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20515



Mr. Richard G. Mack
Himalayan Pack Company
Cannery Row
Monterey, California.

Air Mail

GEORGE BUSH

CHRISTINE MACK

RECEIVED
JUN 22 1955
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Don't know
for

~~George Bush~~