

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958
By WDP NARA Date 5/3/01

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONSECRET/NODISMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: August 4, 1969

Place: Ministry of Foreign
Affairs, Paris

SUBJECT: Vietnam

PARTICIPANTS: France

Foreign Minister Schumann
 Ambassador Charles Lucet, Ambassador to Washington
 Ambassador Herve Alphand, Secretary General of
 the Foreign Ministry
 M. Jacques de Beaumarchais, Political Director
 of the Foreign Ministry
 Ambassador Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet,
 French Ambassador to NATO
 M. Philippe Cuvillier, Acting Director of the
 Foreign Minister's Cabinet
 M. Albert Fequant, Director of American Affairs,
 Foreign Ministry

United States

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
 Mr. Robert O. Blake
 Mr. Helmut Sonnenfeldt
 Mr. William A. K. Lake

Foreign Minister Schumann asked whether there was increased Chinese influence in Vietnam at this time. Dr. Kissinger said we were not sure. The Soviet position was more interesting to us at this point. The Soviets must recognize that an unconditional Hanoi victory would not be in the Soviet interest. Such a victory would show others in the Soviet camp that a policy of intransigence, and even intransigence with the Soviets themselves, would pay off. This the Soviets would not want to see. Dr. Kissinger said that during President Nixon's current trip leaders of all the countries through which he passed in Asia with the possible exception of Pakistan seemed to be more worried about the

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958

By WDP NARA Date 5/3/01

SECRET/NODIS

- 2 -

US getting out of Vietnam too quickly than about the US leaving Vietnam too late. They certainly do not want a unilateral US withdrawal. Pakistan expressed no views but did not object to the American position as it was expressed and indicated that they understood it. Mr. de Beaumarchais asked whether China would accept a peaceful agreement in Vietnam. Dr. Kissinger said he did not know. He did not think that the Chinese were trying to stop the Paris talks but they were certainly not encouraging a peaceful result. He asked how the French interpreted the Chinese influence on the negotiations. Mr. de Beaumarchais said that the Chinese were following these negotiations closely but were not trying to help them succeed.

Dr. Kissinger asked about the mood of the North Vietnamese. The Foreign Minister said he had recently seen all the Vietnamese parties to the negotiations. He thought that the North Vietnamese were at this stage prepared to go on with the war rather than accept the present American proposals. He had tried to find out what conditions the North Vietnamese and the NLF would accept, but their answers had been vague. They had spoken of the replacement of the present Saigon government by a peace government, perhaps headed by someone like General Minh. They had spoken of neutrality, independence and separation. Dr. Kissinger said these words all expressed platitudes. The Foreign Minister said the first two were but not the word "separation". Dr. Kissinger agreed but asked what would be the result if after a year of separation the Communists decided to use force for the reunification of Vietnam. The Foreign Minister said that what might develop was a Romania in the north and a Yugoslavia in the southern part of Vietnam.

Dr. Kissinger said this problem was not at all trivial to the United States when we have five hundred thousand men fighting a war in Vietnam. Likewise, the future of Vietnam was very important to the other nations in Asia, With the possible exception of the Pakistanis, all of the leaders with whom the President talked in Asia had worried that we would leave Vietnam too quickly. There is no country in Southeast Asia which wants unilateral American withdrawal from South Vietnam. At this point the French at the table nodded their agreement.

Dr. Kissinger added that in the conduct of long range American policy throughout the world it was important that we not be confounded by a fifth rate agricultural power. He said he had personally supported negotiations before and during the present administration. However,

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958

By WDP NARA Date 5/3/01

SECRET/NODIS

it would be a great mistake to believe that there were no limits to the concessions which the US might make. It was unthinkable for a major power like the United States to allow itself to be destroyed politically by North Vietnam. The US has tabled reasonable proposals. There is a basis in these proposals for compromise, and if the North Vietnamese and the NLF wish to achieve a compromise they will find willing partners. However, if the Communists do not think that they need to compromise or if they think that they only need to go far enough to save American face and provide a political way for unilateral withdrawal, they are greatly mistaken. The US realizes that it cannot get at the conference table what it could not get on the battlefield, but the US will not allow itself to be tricked out of Vietnam by the negotiations in Paris. The North Vietnamese and the NLF should have no illusions about what is ahead. The US has no intention of imposing any government on the people of South Vietnam. The Americans are ready to let the South Vietnamese themselves decide about their future but we won't let outside military forces impose an otherwise unobjectionable political solution on South Vietnam. Nor will we allow them to impose a political solution which is contrary to our objective of self-determination. If outside forces withdraw and the political situation in South Vietnam can begin to work itself out, it will be possible for the Communist forces to find a place in the political life of South Vietnam. However, the Communists are now asking the US not only to withdraw unconditionally but also to destroy whatever organized non-communist forces presently exist in South Vietnam. This the US will not do.

Dr. Kissinger said he was not saying that all our proposals are sacrosanct. However, what is essential is a Communist willingness to compromise. It will then be possible to find formulas. The US does not want to humiliate the Communists, now will it allow itself to be humiliated.

The Communists tell us constantly at the Paris negotiations that the US must come up with new proposals. They should realize that if real negotiations do not start soon, the US will have to reconsider its present position. There is no need for North Vietnam to acknowledge the presence of their forces in the South. They can either quietly withdraw these forces or let them

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958

By WDP/NARA Date 5/3/01

SECRET/NODIS

- 4 -

diminish by attrition. However, somehow these outside forces must depart. So far there has been no withdrawal except across the Cambodian frontier to areas often within thirty to fifty miles of Saigon. This is not the kind of withdrawal of forces we have in mind. They must move to North Vietnam. The formal American position is that North Vietnamese forces must also withdraw from all of Laos but the major point is that they withdraw from those parts of Laos which are directly relevant to the security of South Vietnam.

Dr. Kissinger said that the President was absolutely determined to make no more unilateral concessions, and he is convinced on the basis of his recent trip that this is not desired by the leaders of free Asia. The United States has shown its good will. It has gone very far in making concessions, and anyone communicating with Hanoi should underline the fact that the President has reached his limits.

The Foreign Minister said it would be wrong for the other side to think otherwise.

Mr. de Beaumarchais asked what we expected the North Vietnamese to do. Dr. Kissinger said they should stop repeating that the only way to reach an agreement was through adoption of the Ten Points. They should also agree to participate in the political process in South Vietnam and let the regular political forces there begin to work themselves out.

Foreign Minister Schumann mentioned elections. He had spoken with all the parties to the negotiations except the United States and had asked if it were possible to accept a committee dominated by neither Saigon nor the Communist forces, which committee could conduct the elections. The answers had been neither entirely negative nor very encouraging. Dr. Kissinger noted that the US and South Vietnam had offered to allow the NLF to participate in the election commission and had also suggested the formation of an international supervisory body for the elections. However, the US had not yet studied the proposal which Mr. Schumann had put forward.

Foreign Minister Schumann said his was not a real proposal but merely a suggestion. He added that both sides would need considerable pressures before a solution could be reached. The more difficult the problem is, the more urgent it is that the process start.

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958By WDP NARA Date 5/3/01SECRET/NODIS

- 5 -

Dr. Kissinger said that the US had already gone a long way in influencing the Saigon Government. Who would have thought six months ago that this government would agree to negotiate directly with the NLF, or that they would agree to accept US withdrawal, or that they would accept NLF participation in the election machinery?

The Foreign Minister said some kind of contact with the Chinese might be useful at this point.

SECRET/NODIS