

MEMORANDUM

DECLASSIFIED

Reproduced at the National Archives

Authority EO 12958

By RAO NARA Date 3/3/03

THE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

August 6, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Meeting in Paris with North Vietnamese

Attached is the full account of my conversation at Paris with Xuan Thuy and Mai Van Bo.

The following points seem to me to be of particular significance:

-- Xuan Thuy did not hit back hard at my statements about the necessity for us to take actions of gravest consequence if there is not major progress by November 1. He did say that if we do not agree to a solution on the basis of the NLF ten points, they will have no choice but to continue to fight. But he did not press this point strongly.

-- Although he "explained" the ten points to me, he did not do so very aggressively. He stated that he did not regard them as the "ten commandments" after I said that we did not so regard them.

-- Xuan Thuy indicated a desire to see me again, "if we can make progress."

-- The meeting was business-like and serious, but conducted in a fairly easy atmosphere.

-- Xuan Thuy emphasized the question of troop withdrawals and political settlement, calling for unconditional U.S. withdrawal and on the removal of Thieu, Ky and Huong. He also expressed particular interest in our views on neutralization. He said that they wanted the North to be socialist, among other things, and the South to be democratic. This distinction may not mean anything but is nonetheless noteworthy.

-- Xuan Thuy for the first time hinted at some linkage between the withdrawal of our forces and theirs (points two and three of their ten points). While he was vague on specifics, the message was clear and significant.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

Authority EO 12958  
By RRQ NARA Date 3/3/03

-- He emphasized their desire for good relations -- including technical, economic and cultural relations -- between us once peace is achieved and reconstruction began.

-- He preferred General Walters over Sainteny as a contact point.

Attachment

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

Authority

ED 12958

By

RRO

NARA Date 3/3/03

August 4, 1969

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger  
Major General Vernon Walters  
Mr. William A. K. Lake

Xuan Thuy  
Mai Van Bo  
Vietnamese Notetaker  
Vietnamese Interpreter

Dr. Kissinger opened the conversation by saying that he appreciated the opportunity of seeing Mr. Xuan Thuy and to be able to have direct discussions. He had known Mai Van Bo since 1967. He had always found him to show great diplomatic skill and subtlety. Dr. Kissinger said he would like to say a personal word before getting into the matter which had brought him there. He had been concerned with peace in Vietnam since 1965. Anyone who has followed Vietnamese history, particularly the events of the last five years, must be aware of the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He was fully aware that after all that had happened, there was a great amount of distrust between our two peoples. But any discussions will be conducted on our side with respect for the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He wondered whether there had been any answer to the letter from our President which had been delivered in Paris two weeks before. Xuan Thuy said that President Nixon's letter had been forwarded to Hanoi. It was not dated. Dr. Kissinger said the letter had actually been written three days before it had been delivered. Perhaps he should say a few things which President Nixon had asked him personally to convey.

Dr. Kissinger said that Washington had read with great care the statements that had been made at the plenary sessions and in the private meetings. Hanoi had often questioned our good will and our sincerity. It was hard for us to judge whether they did this for psychological effect or to what degree they really believed this. Dr. Kissinger said that he was there to tell them that we sincerely wanted peace and were approaching it with an attitude of good will, but he was also there to tell them how the situation appeared to us.

On November 1, 1969, the negotiations which led to the end of the bombing would be one year old. During this period, the U.S. had made what we consider to be significant moves. We had ended reinforcements, we had a partial bombing halt, then a total bombing halt, and the withdrawal of

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

Authority EO 12958  
By PRD NARA Date 3/3/03TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

25,000 combat forces. We had offered to accept the result of free elections. To us it looks as if there had been no significant response. It is in the long term intolerable for us to be treated at every discussion like school boys who are taking an examination in the ten points of the NLF. We were willing to discuss their ten points but we also wanted a discussion of the proposals our side had made. Therefore, he was here to suggest to them from the highest possible level and in all sincerity that we attempt to make another effort to settle this conflict by the time the bombing halt is one year old -- that is to say, by the 1st of November. As part of this effort, we would like to answer some of the questions which had been put to us by their side on various occasions. (Dr. Kissinger commented here that he was reading from notes which had been approved personally by the President):

-- The United States is willing to withdraw all of its forces without exception from Vietnam as part of a program for the removal of all outside forces from Vietnam.

-- The United States is prepared to accept any outcome of a free political process. In defining the political process, he would like to set forth a few propositions:

a. We realize that neither side can be expected to give up at the conference table what had not been conceded on the battlefield.

b. We believe that a fair political process must register the existing relationship of political forces.

c. We realize that we will differ with them on how to achieve this but neither side should be asked to accept the proposition that it can be defeated without noticing it. We are not asking them to disband the organized Communist forces and they should not ask us to disband the organized non-Communist forces.

-- We remain prepared, as we had said, to discuss the ten points together with our own points. In order to show our good will in the period between now and November 1, we will withdraw somewhat larger forces than we have already withdrawn and reduce our B-52 and tactical air operations by 10%.

In order to expedite negotiations, the President is ready to open another channel of contact with them. He is prepared to appoint a high-level emissary who would be authorized to negotiate a conclusion. This special contact makes sense only if negotiations are serious. If this contact takes

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Reproduced at the National Archives

Authority EO 12958  
By RRQ NARA Date 3/3/03

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODI

place, the President is prepared to adjust military operations in order to facilitate the negotiations. If the objective was sufficiently serious and the conclusion sufficiently imminent, the President is prepared to ask Dr. Kissinger to conduct the discussions.

At the same time, Dr. Kissinger had been asked to tell them in all solemnity that if by November 1, no major progress has been made toward a solution, we will be compelled -- with great reluctance -- to take measures of the greatest consequences.

We had noticed that in their propaganda and in the Paris discussions, they were attempting to make this "Mr. Nixon's War." We did not believe that this was in their interest. If it is Mr. Nixon's War, he cannot afford not to win it. Dr. Kissinger then said, "you are a courageous, indeed a heroic people," and no one knows what the final result would be of such a sequence of events. We believe that such a tragic conflict to test each other can be avoided.

He wished to conclude with the same statement with which he began. If there are serious discussions we will make every effort to treat Hanoi with the respect and courtesy to which their sacrifices entitle them. In fairness and respect he must tell them that we cannot continue to accept the procedures that have characterized our contacts in the last 15 months after November 1. He also hoped that when we looked back on this conversation, we would consider it a turning point toward peace and reconciliation between our two peoples.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether Dr. Kissinger had finished, as he would like to ask a few questions for clarification. Dr. Kissinger said, "Please do," and noted that he had read Xuan Thuy's questions at the negotiations and they were always acute.

Xuan Thuy then said, "you say that between now and November 1, all problems will be settled, but at the same time, you say that from now to November 1, U.S. will withdraw troops in greater numbers than the 25,000 already withdrawn. What is the meaning of these two propositions?"

Dr. Kissinger replied that this was a sign of our good will and sincerity. But we would make no further concessions. Xuan Thuy said that he did not clearly understand. Dr. Kissinger then said that he had not said that all troops must be out by November 1 but that there must be an understanding by which it is clear when all troops will be out.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether he understood rightly that between now and November 1 the U.S. would withdraw more troops in a greater number than the 25,000. That is one question. Another is whether from now on there are meetings and discussions for settling these matters.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

Authority EO 12958  
By RLO NARA Date 3/3/03

Dr. Kissinger said that we proposed between now and November 1 that we agree to make a serious major effort to agree on all essential matters. (We then propose that on issues of great consequence or issues of principle he would be prepared to come to Paris or any other place on weekends to discuss outstanding problems. This would not happen unless the issues were serious. (As Xuan Thuy did not appear to have clearly understood, Dr. Kissinger repeated the statement)) He then continued that we were proposing this so that before history and our conscience we could say that we had done everything possible to avoid what we must otherwise do. (Xuan Thuy smiled without mirth, and consulted Mai Van Bo).

Xuan Thuy then asked if he might ask another question. "Do you mean that the Four Party Conference should go on as now and that besides this there be other discussions between the DRV and the US only?"

Dr. Kissinger replied that we now have the plenary discussions on Ave. Kleber in which the speeches made are not distinguished by their novelty. (Xuan Thuy smiled.) We have private discussions on the Ambassadorial level and we have started technical discussions between Habib and Ha Van Lau. If any one of these prove useful, they should be continued. If they believed that the existing forums lend themselves to a solution, we have no interest in complicating the situation. If it should prove possible to avoid repetition of some of the speeches released by both sides, we would be prepared to open another forum provided this promised to achieve a rapid solution on issues of great importance. As for his own participation, his other duties did not permit him to spend considerable time on negotiations in which issues were not clearly defined. The technical execution could be carried out in existing forums. His participation would have to remain secret and on some occasions, because of his other responsibilities, he would be replaced by someone who would have the full confidence of the President himself.

Xuan Thuy said that Dr. Kissinger had referred to the neutralization of Vietnam and he would like to understand further what was meant.

Dr. Kissinger said that Xuan Thuy had raised this question with Sainteny when they had met previously. He simply wanted to say that we agreed with it in principle, and were prepared to discuss it. But we did not think that this was the occasion for negotiations on it. In any event, he could tell them that we do not intend to maintain bases in Vietnam.

Xuan Thuy said that Dr. Kissinger had referred to negotiations "at the highest level". Dr. Kissinger reiterated that he was speaking on behalf of the highest U.S. level. He could also say that we would be prepared to send an emissary to meet for example with their Foreign Minister, or Prime Minister, provided that there was some assurance that this would lead to a rapid conclusion. At this point it would probably be best to narrow the issues

Authority EO 12958  
By PRQ NARA Date 3/3/03

of disagreement on major issues he had outlined.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether he might express his views. He said that he had up to now listened very attentively to Dr. Kissinger. He would like to have an exchange of views in a very straightforward and realistic way so that they could better understand each other's views, so as to contribute to a correct and rapid settlement of the Vietnamese problem. Vietnam is far from the U. S. , more than 10,000 miles away. Vietnam had done no harm to the U.S. The U.S. Government in the past had intervened in the Vietnamese problem and had set up the administration of Ngo Dinh Diem and successive administrations in South Vietnam. Then the U.S. had brought in its advisers, military personnel and war-making units of U.S. combat troops. There was a half million U.S. troops in South Vietnam. In the meantime, the U.S. had launched a war of destruction against the DRV with its air and naval forces, thus creating a great deal of suffering for people in both South and North Vietnam. The Vietnamese people had been forced to fight against this intervention and aggression to defend their existence and the sacred rights of their fatherland. Dr. Kissinger had studied the history of their people and knew that the Vietnamese people had an age old history and that their history was characterized by struggles against foreign aggression. The Vietnamese people in this fight for the defense of their independence, freedom and peace had been united in rising against foreign aggression. They had never been subdued by any power or deception. Over the past 25 years the people had been continuously fighting for their just cause. What did they want? Nothing but their independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. These were recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Now in view of the special circumstances in Vietnam, they wanted the North to be independent, to live in peace and to be socialist. For South Vietnam, they wanted an independent, democratic, neutral, peaceful life. They understood a neutral South Vietnam to be a SVN without foreign troops, without military bases, without being involved in any way in any military alliance, without being under the protection of any military bloc. The reunification of Vietnam would be carried out step by step, by peaceful means and by mutual agreement between the two zones.

With regard to Laos, Xuan Thuy said they recognize the peaceful, independent sovereignty of Laos and the Geneva Agreements of 1962 on Laos. On Cambodia they recognize the peaceful sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia in its present boundaries. They want to live in friendship and peace with all nations over the whole world. They wanted broad relations --economic, cultural, technical -- with all nations. In a word, they want peace, not war. They had been actually compelled to fight by the American authorities and they want peace -- but not peace at any price, peace with independence and freedom. He had several times told Ambassador Cabot Lodge that the NLF had presented its 10 points and that they approved them for an overall solution as they were logical and reasonable. If the 10 points

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODISAuthority EO 12958  
By RLO NARA Date 3/3/03

were now taken as a basis, the war could come to a prompt and rapid solution.

If the war goes on, or is expanded, they would be forced to continue fighting in order to reach their objectives. They had sufficient determination to do so but they were also rich in goodwill.

Now, asked Xuan Thuy, how can the Vietnam problem be settled? There are two basic questions. The first question is the total withdrawal of all US forces and of the forces of their camp from South Vietnam. They agreed to the proposals set down -- the 10 points -- that is, all US troops must withdraw from South Vietnam without conditions.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he might interrupt on this point. He would comment on Xuan Thuy's expose after he finished. If he might make a specific point and he would like Walters to repeat it in French, it was this: we were willing to discuss the 10 points, but we do not regard the 10 points as the Ten Commandments. On the matter of unconditional withdrawal he must tell them that he would not quarrel about the word unconditional. But they knew and we knew that there must be a quid pro quo for American withdrawal, a unilateral pull-out was out of the question. He was not there to argue phrases, but since we are speaking here in private, there must be a clear relationship between our withdrawals and theirs. They must understand this and not have any illusions.

Xuan Thuy replied that each side understands this matter in its own way. He did not understand that the 10 points were the Ten Commandments or the Bible but that the 10 points in view of the situation in Vietnam were logical and realistic. Therefore, he felt it necessary to explain that in the 10 points there were points 2 and 3. This Dr. Kissinger knew. (Dr. Kissinger said that he knew the 10 points but not as well as Xuan Thuy, who smiled.) Point 2 dealt with the armed forces of the US and other foreign countries in South Vietnam. These are the only foreign forces in South Vietnam. As for Point 3, it deals with Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam. This question will be settled by the Vietnamese parties among themselves. Points 2 and 3 belonged together. In the eight points of President Nixon, in the points dealing with the withdrawal of U.S. and allied troops, it is pointed out that some troops withdraw in twelve months; on the remaining troops, one doesn't know when. If the U.S. sets a time limit of twelve months for some and the remainder without time limit, then it looks as if the U.S. doesn't want to withdraw its troops completely.

Xuan Thuy referred to Dr. Kissinger's statement that the U.S. is prepared to withdraw all troops in South Vietnam and intends to maintain no bases. He took note of this statement. But now he must ask about President Nixon's speech -- why could the U.S. bring its troops in so quickly, but need so long to withdraw them. Why not do so in say five or six months?

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS



Authority ED 12958  
By PRG NARA Date 3/3/03

Dr. Kissinger asked if he could interrupt. Xuan Thuy said he preferred to finish.

Now, Xuan Thuy continued, Mr. Advisor Kissinger says the U. S. has withdrawn 25,000 troops. Thuy had repeatedly commented that this 25,000 number is insignificant in comparison with the 540,000 U. S. troops in Vietnam. Even if another 25,000 or more were now withdrawn, it would still be insignificant. Therefore, Xuan Thuy had often said that the U. S. wants to carry out troop withdrawal in driblets, and wants to prolong its military occupation of South Vietnam. It has created doubt in their minds about the intentions of the U. S.

The second fundamental problem, Xuan Thuy continued, is the political regime in South Vietnam, the elections in South Vietnam. In the eight points of President Nixon this question is dealt with only superficially; they just say it will be settled by the Vietnamese themselves. They also say the U. S. is prepared to accept any result of elections. But the important question is: who will organize the elections? President Nixon said that the present Saigon administration is legal and constitutional, and that the present administration therefore has the right to organize elections. That is why President Nixon has agreed to the propositions of Nguyen van Thieu. Xuan Thuy said he thought that if they were really having a straightforward, real, frank discussion, one should not express himself in such a way. How can one say that the Saigon administration is legal and constitutional? It is well known to all the peoples of the world that the present Thieu-Ky-Huong administration, he said, is a warlike, dictatorial administration which oppressed anyone who speaks of coalition, neutrality or democratic liberties. If the Thieu-Ky-Huong administration remains as now, it would be difficult to settle the Vietnam problem.

Xuan Thuy added that he thought that Thieu-Ky-Huong must be changed (i. e. removed - trans.); they would consider the remaining administration as a reality, but this administration should change its policy and stand for peace, independence and neutrality. In their view -- as mentioned in the 10 points -- it is logical and reasonable to form a provisional government to hold elections. This is because the realities show on the one hand the PRG, on the other hand the Saigon administration. In addition there are other political forces. If the Saigon administration organizes the elections, then the PRG will not agree. If the PRG organizes the elections, then the Saigon administration does not agree. Therefore a provisional coalition government, composed of the PRG and the remainder of the Saigon government which is for peace, independence and neutrality, should organize the elections. -- then this is reasonable.

Xuan Thuy believed that if now these two key questions are settled, then peace will be rapidly restored. After the restoration of peace, Vietnam -- both South and North -- will begin the rebuilding of a new life. Xuan Thuy was sure that in this reconstruction they would establish relations -- technical,

Authority EO 12958  
By PRG NARA Date 3/3/03

commercial, economic, cultural -- with all countries, and that they would establish good relations and friendship with the US.

Xuan Thuy then said he was prepared to exchange views with Dr. Kissinger.

Dr. Kissinger replied that he appreciated what Xuan Thuy had said. He would like first to ask two clarifying questions.

Was Xuan Thuy saying that Thieu, Ky and Huong must be replaced before any new political construction, i. e. new political solution?

Xuan Thuy responded that the U.S. now says the PRG should hold talks with the Saigon administration. But the PRG says that the Thieu-Ky-Huong administration is warlike. They oppress anyone who speaks of coalition; therefore, if they were to talk to the Saigon administration, no settlement could be achieved. President Nixon had recently visited Saigon, he continued, to quiet this administration because it is torn by internal strife. This proves it has no popular support. This will create more problems for the U.S., including problems in Paris. That, he said, is why the PRG demands that Thieu-Ky-Huong be removed and the remaining administration change its policies to peace, independence and neutrality. The remaining administration could talk to the PRG.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he could put a second question to Xuan Thuy, one which was not perhaps polite but was asked in the spirit of frankness of this talk.

Xuan Thuy, he said, who had spent a long time in these negotiations, knew all the nuances. He did not. He therefore wondered whether in this meeting Xuan Thuy had said anything which was not already said at Avenue Kleber or in the private talks? If so, what was it?

Xuan Thuy said that the difference was that he had expanded for Dr. Kissinger's better comprehension on how U.S. troops must be withdrawn and how a provisional coalition government should be organized. It is not the PRG which must organize it. This is the proposition of the PRG -- and this proposition is logical and reasonable.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he were to understand that in this provisional coalition government, the PRG is to be represented together with what is left of the Saigon government.

Xuan Thuy said he would clarify: on the one hand, it is the PRG; on the other, the remainder of the Saigon administration which would have changed its policies and would stand for peace, neutrality and independence. These two would form the provisional coalition government.

Dr. Kissinger said he understood. He thought he should sum up a few things.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODISAuthority EO 12958  
By RRQ NARA Date 3/3/03

First, with respect to troop withdrawals -- We have stated that we will withdraw our troops after a settlement. It is useless to discuss whether we are serious. If they wish to know this, they should discuss it seriously. They could regulate our withdrawals by the speed of their own. If they did not wish to have U.S. and DRV troops treated as comparable, we could negotiate some correspondence. But there would be no withdrawal of U.S. forces without the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. We do not insist on keeping U.S. forces in Vietnam after others are withdrawn. He could say on the highest authority that we seek no U.S. bases in Vietnam.

Secondly, Dr. Kissinger said he must tell Xuan Thuy, so he would not be misled or confused by people who visited him, that we will not replace Thieu, Ky or Huong any more than we ask them to replace any individuals in the PRG.

At the same time, he wanted to repeat what he had said earlier: any settlement must reflect the existing balance of political forces. We have no intention of humiliating anyone.

As he had understood Xuan Thuy's exposition, and as he had expounded also, there are two problems. One has to do with the withdrawal of forces, the other with a political solution. Xuan Thuy believes we have not been sufficiently precise on the issue of withdrawal. We believe they have been too precise on the question of a political solution. (Xuan Thuy laughed.) If we are to complete the major part of our work by November 1, we should stop talking about points and start talking about the problems. He believed they understood what we have in mind with respect to the withdrawal of forces. It remains therefore a question of finding some formula for establishing a relation between their forces and our forces.

The problem is of course much more complicated, Dr. Kissinger added, and this meeting is not the occasion to solve it. It must be done on the basis of recognition of the realities in South Vietnam -- of the government in Saigon and of other political forces. With this accepted, we will work to find a solution reflecting the true wishes of the people of South Vietnam. We have too much respect for Xuan Thuy to believe that we could trick him into a solution which does not respect their dignity. But they cannot impose a dishonorable solution on us.

Dr. Kissinger suggested that they think over this conversation in this spirit. There are many ways of approaching a solution. They can speed up the work that goes on in existing forums, and they can be assured that it will be noticed in Washington. The President and he - Kissinger -- read very carefully all that is said in Paris. If a very important issue is reached or there is something they wished to convey to the President but don't wish to say in a forum where

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

Authority EO 12958  
By PRO NARA Date 3/3/03

too many people would know, he could arrange to be informed through Mr. Sainteny or General Walters, who remains in Paris. But it must be an important matter capable of being brought to a conclusion.

Xuan Thuy asked whether General Walters was present at the meeting. Dr. Kissinger said that he is our Defense Attaché at Paris. He was General Eisenhower's interpreter and is an acquaintance of President Nixon. He cannot discuss, but can take information, Dr. Kissinger said.

Xuan Thuy asked for his address. Dr. Kissinger promised it to him later. (At the end of the meeting, General Walters gave Mai Van Bo his telephone numbers at home and at the office.)

Dr. Kissinger wished to say one other thing. When he was a professor, he had started out with problems of philosophy and art. He recognized that the most difficult problems are not where good people meet evil people, but are where two strong people with strong convictions confront each other. (Xuan Thuy smiled.) We would prefer to have the Vietnamese as friends rather than as enemies, Dr. Kissinger continued. He was talking to Xuan Thuy so that at the end of the year -- that is, after November 1 -- our two peoples who have no fundamental disagreement with each other, should not once again need to test each other's resolution. He believed that we must make an effort to find a solution between now and November 1.

Dr. Kissinger then said he had one practical problem to raise. Did they prefer Sainteny or General Walters as a means to communicate with him (Kissinger)? Or maybe not at all? Xuan Thuy said if he had anything to convey, he would say it to General Walters. Dr. Kissinger reiterated that General Walters cannot discuss; he can only take messages for Dr. Kissinger.

Xuan Thuy asked if Dr. Kissinger were finished. When told yes, Xuan Thuy said Dr. Kissinger had stated that the U.S. had just partially, then totally stopped the bombing, and had then withdrawn 25,000 troops. Dr. Kissinger had said this showed goodwill. But he had added that he had found no goodwill by the DRV. This was not true. The DRV rather had responded with great goodwill. Originally they demanded that the bombing be totally stopped before talks. But the U.S. only partially stopped it, and they had talked. Then, when the U.S. had stopped the bombing, we had said we would talk on November 6. But we didn't, and the conference only started two months later.

At the conference, Xuan Thuy continued, they have put forward their four points, the NLF five points, and now there are the overall ten points. The U.S. has its eight points and Saigon has proposed a number of things. But one must say that our plans of settlement -- the eight points and Saigon's proposals -- are not comprehensive at all.

Authority EO 12958  
By RRQ NARA Date 3/3/03

The reason why the DRV agrees to the ten points of the NLF is that this overall solution is logical, reasonable and fair. It points out how military, political and other problems can be settled.

Dr. Kissinger noted that it has only one defect -- we don't agree with it. Xuan Thuy smiled.

Xuan Thuy said there is a contradiction in our ideas. On the one hand, there is the rapid withdrawal of US and other countries' troops from Vietnam and an end to the war. (Dr. Kissinger interjected "and DRV" after "troops" in the preceding sentence.) On the other hand, Xuan Thuy said, we wish to consolidate the puppet government. How?

Dr. Kissinger said that this is our problem. We are not saying that we insist on any particular government being maintained after a settlement. But we will not -- because it is beyond our power and for other reasons -- replace Thieu and Ky and Huong. We want the people of South Vietnam to choose their own government after a settlement.

Xuan Thuy said that this is what Ambassador Lodge had told him many times. And he had told Lodge many times what he had said.

Dr. Kissinger said yes, that if this were to be the discussion, there would not be a solution by November 1.

Xuan Thuy said he would like to state that last June he had gone to Hanoi to meet with his government. His government was aware of all the details of the Paris conference and was fully in agreement with the views he had expressed in this meeting. His government had reaffirmed that all the negotiations in Paris on the Vietnam problem are entrusted to him and Le Duc Tho as the men responsible. Therefore he had today listened to Dr. Kissinger's views. He will, he said, report Dr. Kissinger's remarks to his government in Hanoi. He said he was prepared to study Dr. Kissinger's views and at the same time wanted Dr. Kissinger to study his. What he had been saying at the meeting, he felt he had said straightforwardly and frankly.

Xuan Thuy suggested that they thank Mr. Sainteny, their host, who had provided an opportunity for the meeting.

He said that he did wish to meet with Dr. Kissinger again if we can make progress.

Dr. Kissinger then asked Xuan Thuy to keep this discussion in absolute confidence and not to refer to it in other discussions which were taking place or to speak of it to anyone else.

Authority EO 12958  
By RAO NARA Date 3/3/03TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

- 12 -

Xuan Thuy agreed and added that when the private discussions became known it was not through them and if there were a leak it was in Washington. Dr. Kissinger said that they were right and this was the first agreement they had reached (humorously). He could assure him that this discussion would not leak from Washington.

Dr. Kissinger said that now that they had finished the formal discussion he would like to say something as a former professor who had studied diplomatic history. He could appreciate a good negotiator. If he understood what Xuan Thuy had said it was to ask for the impossible and finally to agree to the barely conceivable as a major concession. Xuan Thuy smiled briefly.

Xuan Thuy said that he wanted to explain this to Dr. Kissinger so that he could have a better understanding of the 10 points of the NLF, of which they approved. As he had told Dr. Kissinger at the beginning there were two possibilities. It would be good if both sides could reach agreement on the basis of the 10 points, then a real agreement could be rapidly reached. If this were not possible, then the war could go on but they want the first possibility as peace is much better. If they could discuss and agree on military and political problems a settlement would be prompt. He had once told Ambassador Cabot Lodge that for questions regarding South Vietnam the U.S. should enter talks with the Provisional Revolutionary Government but they had accepted talks between the DRVN and the U.S. because the U.S. wanted them.

Dr. Kissinger said that we appreciated the meeting and he thought that they understood one another. He saw no further progress possible at this meeting. He understood that this was a serious problem for which their people had fought with great courage and on our side, too, we had suffered a great deal. He believed that the essential positions are clear and we would have to see in the next three months whether they were reconcilable. We have indicated a possible way by which this could happen. He wanted to tell Xuan Thuy of the President's sincerity but equally of his determination. He would also like to tell him personally of his respect for him and his people. This will continue whether they found a way to be friends or whether fate forces us into an expanded confrontation.

Xuan Thuy said that their aspirations were for independence and peace, and Dr. Kissinger had said that neither side should humiliate the other side. Ambassador Cabot Lodge had once said to him that they were trying to force the U.S. to surrender. He had told him that he had no such idea. On the contrary, they were continuing to create favorable conditions for the U.S. to withdraw its troops. They had experienced 25 years of war, and therefore their aspirations for peace are real.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODISAuthority EO 12958  
By RLQ NARA Date 3/3/03

Dr. Kissinger then said that he suggested that they think about their discussion and we would watch what goes on at the meetings with great care. If Xuan Thuy thought another such discussion would be helpful he could call General Walters and we would arrange a visit and a meeting place, either there or at some other place. This discussion should be on matters beyond what is being discussed in the normal meetings. If they made a step significantly different from the usual steps they would find that we would meet them with a spirit of good will.

Xuan Thuy said that the same was true for them. But on our side we had only talked about methods for taking a step forward but had not offered any concrete step.

Dr. Kissinger said that President Nixon had made a proposal; we had said that we would recognize a free political process. We had stated propositions. He could not accept that we had made no propositions. We must now see where we must go. He did not want to get into detailed negotiations at this meeting. Dr. Kissinger repeated that if they showed willingness to achieve a reasonable compromise, we would not try to take advantage of them or to humiliate them.

After parting amenities the Vietnamese expressed the desire to leave first without taking leave of Mr. Sainteny as they would thank him when they saw him again.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS