

TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs
(C)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Vietnam

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RETAIN OR DESTROY

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

SUBJECT VIEWS OF BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, H.A.F. HOHLER, ON A NEUTRALIST SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

DATE DISTR. 14 AUGUST 1962

PRECEDENCE ROUTINE

DATE OF INFO. EARLY AUGUST 1962

REFERENCES EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs IN (C)

PLACE & DATE ACQ. VIETNAM, SAIGON (7 AUGUST 1962)

FIELD REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

APPRAISAL SEE BELOW

THIS IS **UNEVALUATED** INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE

SOURCE

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1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, H.A.F. HOHLER, TOLD A VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST ON 2 AUGUST 1962 THAT HE HAD BEEN READING SOME OF THE JOURNALIST'S ARTICLES AND WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN A LATE JUNE ARTICLE ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS AND THE SOVIETS OVER NORTH VIETNAM. AFTER DISCUSSING THESE DIFFERENCES AT LENGTH, THE AMBASSADOR STATED HIS BELIEF THAT A THIRD FORCE IN VIETNAM IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT ACTUALLY EXISTS, AND THAT SUCH A THIRD FORCE IN NORTH VIETNAM, COMBINED WITH NEUTRALIST ELEMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, IS THE ONLY HOPE FOR VIETNAM. HOHLER EMPHASIZED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM IS A NEUTRALIST COALITION SIMILAR TO

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THAT WORKED OUT FOR LAOS. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT THE AMERICANS ARE NOT TRAINED IN GUERILLA WARFARE AND CAN NOT WIN THE WAR AGAINST THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS (VC) IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

2. THE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE AT THE HOME OF PETER ROBERTS, INFORMATION OFFICER AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SAIGON, WHERE ROBERTS ARRANGED A MEETING BETWEEN ^{JOURNALIST} THE/ AND AMBASSADOR HOHLER. ^{JOURNALIST} THE/ HAS KNOWN ROBERTS FOR SOME TIME THROUGH PRESS CONFERENCES AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AMONG JOURNALISTS. HE WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT ROBERTS HAD ARRANGED THE MEETING AT THE REQUEST OF THE AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO TALK WITH HIM.

3. NEITHER ^{JOURNALIST} THE/ NOR ROBERTS HAD MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO STATE THEIR VIEWS DURING THE CONVERSATION. ^{JOURNALIST} THE/ ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR THAT, FAR FROM BEING NEUTRALIST MINDED, HE FEARS NEUTRALISM FOR SOUTH VIETNAM MORE THAN ANY OTHER SOLUTION SINCE HE BELIEVES NEUTRALISM TO BE NO MORE THAN A MAJOR STEP TOWARD ULTIMATE TAKEOVER AND CONTROL BY THE COMMUNISTS. ROBERTS POINTEDLY DISAGREED WITH AMBASSADOR HOHLER'S STATEMENT THAT THERE IS NO CHANCE OF WINNING THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM, INDICATING THAT IT IS MUCH TOO EARLY TO MAKE SUCH A BLUNT STATEMENT, ALLUDING TO THE HUGE EFFORT UNDER WAY AND THE GAINS ALREADY APPARENT. ROBERTS DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE SURFACING OF THE OPERATIONS IN NORTH VIETNAM AT NGHE AN AND HOA BINH SHOULD DEMONSTRATE TO THE AMERICANS AND TO THE GOVERNMENT/VIETNAM THE FUTILITY OF SUCH OPERATIONS.

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ROBERTS ALSO COMMENTED THAT HE WAS SURPRISED AT THE FAILURE OF THE VC TO REACT EARLIER IN THE PROPAGANDA FIELD TO OBVIOUSLY EXPLOITABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM AND THE AMERICANS.

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4. [REDACTED] COMMENT. THE/ JOURNALIST SAID THAT HE THINKS THE ARTICLE THAT CAUGHT THE INTEREST OF AMBASSADOR HOHLER/ MAY HAVE BEEN ONE DATED SAIGON, 29 JUNE 1962, APPEARING IN AN EARLY JULY ISSUE OF THE PHILIPPINE HERALD, ENTITLED "INTRA-PARTY RIFT IN RED NORTH VIETNAM - MOSCOW HAS AN EDGE ON PEIPING?" THE/ JOURNALIST SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD READ OUT OF THE CONTEXT AND MISINTERPRETED VARIOUS STATEMENTS IN THE ARTICLE TO WHICH HE REFERRED, WHICH JOURNALIST /LED HIM TO CONSIDER THE/ A NEUTRALIST. THE STATEMENTS BELIEVED INVOLVED, WHICH APPEAR IN LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE ARTICLE, ARE AS FOLLOWS: "STUDENTS OF COMMUNIST NORTH VIETNAM HERE WERE OF AGREEMENT THAT THE REPORTED GAINS - AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING - BY THE PRO-SOVIET GROUP, WILL EXERT A TEMPERATE INFLUENCE ON THE COURSE OF EVENTS. UNLESS THE SCALES ARE TURNED BY PEIPING IN FAVOR OF ITS PUPPETS AND IF THE FREE WORLD KNOWS HOW TO CASH IN ON THE RED DISPUTE, THE CHANCES WERE NOT DISMISSED OF A LONGER TRUCE IN TOTTERING LAOS, AND EVEN OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO EMBATTLED VIETNAM.

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5. [REDACTED] COMMENT. IN A LATE JULY CONVERSATION WITH AN AMERICAN OBSERVER, THE COUNSELLOR OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SAIGON, R.A. BURROWS, ATTACKED THE DIEM GOVERNMENT, STATING THAT

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THERE COULD BE NO HOPE OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE VC

UNLESS DIEM WERE REMOVED, IN CRITICIZING THE ILLIBERALITY OF THE DIEM REGIME, BURROWS APPLIED STANDARDS OF CRITICISM THAT EVEN THE MOST ADVANCED WESTERN DEMOCRACY WOULD FAIL TO MEET. DURING THE SAME CONVERSATION, COLONEL HENRY LEE, MILITARY ATTACHE TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY, EXPRESSED HIS OPINION THAT THE WAR AGAINST THE VC WAS NOT PROCEEDING FAVORABLY FROM THE WESTERN POINT OF VIEW. HE APPEARED CRITICAL OF DIEM AND SEEMED INCLINED TOWARD A MILITARY JUNTA, POSSIBLY UNDER

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MAJOR GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH.)

6. [REDACTED] COMMENT. US AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, FREDERICK E. NOLTING, COMMENTED ON 8 AUGUST THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER HAS NEVER GIVEN THE SLIGHTEST INDICATION THAT HE HOLDS THE VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN THIS REPORT. ON 8 AUGUST, AMBASSADOR HOHLER TOOK A COMPLETELY CONTRARY LINE IN A DISCUSSION WITH AMBASSADOR NOLTING, EXPRESSING OPTIMISM REGARDING THE PROSPECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM. AMBASSADOR NOLTING SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE INFORMATION SHOULD BE TREATED WITH GREAT RESERVE, AND WITH THE POSSIBILITY IN MIND THAT IT MAY REPRESENT A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO CREATE MISTRUST BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN.)

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7. [REDACTED] COMMENT. NGO DINH NHU, BROTHER AND POLITICAL ADVISOR OF PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM, TOLD AN AMERICAN OBSERVER

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ON 8 AUGUST THAT, WHILE HE CONSIDERS FRENCH POLICY BOTH IN PARIS AND IN SAIGON TO HAVE AS ITS OBJECTIVE THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, HE FEELS THAT THE BRITISH HAVE A CONTRARY POLICY MORE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE US. NHU SAID THAT HE HAS HAD NO INDICATIONS THAT CAUSE HIM CONCERN WITH RESPECT TO THE BRITISH ROLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM, AND INITIATED THE COMMENT THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER HAD SAID TO HIM RECENTLY THAT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH VIETNAM OR THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM WAS "UNTHINKABLE.")

8. FIELD DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR ONLY) CINCPAC PACFLT PACAF ARPAC.

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