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The following is a report by a reliable and trustworthy American of his breakfast meeting with the Government of Vietnam (GVN) Ambassador Bui Diem on 8 November 1968, at the residence.

1. On the way to this meeting, the news had come over the radio that President Thieu had proposed that, under the "our side, your side", formula, South Vietnam be designated head of the Allies delegation while North Vietnam be head of the Communist one. Bui Diem had the full text of Thieu's statement. He commented that the GVN position represented only a small change in the original U. S. proposal - rather than a totally new and different formula - but that it satisfied a number of Vietnamese concerns: it gave the GVN a more prominent status than the NLF, it would put negotiations on a Vietnamese-to-Vietnamese basis rather than a U. S. -to-Vietnamese basis, and it would clearly represent a new stage of negotiations rather than a continuation of the previous phase. Asked if he thought there was much chance of Hanoi's acceptance, he replied "no," but he added that it put the GVN on the offensive rather than in the position of appearing to scuttle negotiations.

2. Asked if he thought that, under one formula or another, the negotiations would be able to resume soon, Bui Diem said that he thought it would take some time. He said that he thought the fact that the U. S. now had a President-elect would slow down the planning process on the U. S. side, since President Johnson would wish to inform and seek the opinions of the President-elect's team; and it would also take some time to repair the damage to GVN-U. S. relations. Regarding the latter point, Bui Diem said that, while there was minor substantive difference in the U. S. and GVN positions - such as the U. S. willingness to leave GVN and NLF status at the peace talks ambiguous while the GVN wanted more precision - much of the difficulty

in GVN-U. S. relations had derived from misunderstanding and misinterpretation. He said that there were delicate nuances in the concept of negotiations and that the two governments "used the same language but gave it different meanings". Bui Diem said he had discussed this problem with Mr. Bundy and that they had agreed that, at some time in the near future, they should go over all that has transpired between the governments in recent days and seek to find in it some guidelines for future policy.

3. Asked if the GVN felt there was any U. S. attempt at deception, referring specifically to the apparent conflict between what Ambassador Bunker reportedly told President Thieu about proposals made to Hanoi and what Ambassador Phan Dang Lam had been told by Ambassador Harriman, Bui Diem replied he could not say that that was the case, but there apparently was some feeling in the GVN that President Johnson acted with undue haste and that he may have been influenced in part by domestic politics.

4. Bui Diem said that though he would handle things differently if he was in Ambassador Lam's position, he could not criticize Lam's actions because Lam's cables only pointed up substantive differences which did exist. Although the GVN and the U. S. did agree on the bombing halt, they did not agree on the arrangements proposed for negotiations, but these disagreements could probably have been resolved amicably if the announcement of the bombing halt had not been made so precipitously.

5. Asked how he would have handled things differently if he had been in Lam's place, Bui Diem said that relations between the U. S. and GVN delegations in Paris should be warmer than they now are. He said that when relations are stiff, it is impossible to chat at length informally and assure that each side understands all the nuances of the other side's position. He said that, for example, he knew Jordan and Vance well and could joke with them; if they had disagreements, each side would know fully the reason for the disagreement and they could still joke with each other. Bui Diem said that while he could risk a joke with Ambassador Harriman, Lam could not.

6. When asked if he knew of any planning in the GVN for sending a delegation to Paris, Bui Diem replied that if the newly proposed GVN formula was accepted, Vice President Ky could lead a delegation without having to face a woman (Mrs. Binh). He thought General Nguyen Duc Thang should accompany Ky. However, Bui Diem cautioned that a delegation should not be composed of too many Northerners. For example, if Dang Duc Khor went, it would probably be better that he not be a member of the delegation but a behind-the-scenes public relations man. Bui Diem said he would recommend that Senator Tran Van Lam (a Southerner) be included in the delegation, and Nguyen Lau Vien might also be considered.

7. Bui Diem said he expected to return to Saigon soon. He could not state precisely when, but would wait a short time to see if his return was requested, and if that did not happen he would propose it himself. He felt it would be normal for him to report back to Saigon in person on the results and implications of the U. S. elections.

8. He repeated the statement made at our last meeting that he had no desire to be included in a GVN delegation to negotiations, but he added that he would like to visit Paris from time to time during negotiations to assist behind the scenes in any way he could.

9. In a final comment on the elections, Bui Diem said he was pleased that Senators Morse, Gruening and Clark had not been re-elected, and he said that Senator Fulbright's re-election was offset by the election of Barry Goldwater.