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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Vice President Ky's Current Views on Paris Talks
and Other Matters

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1. Vice President Ky told that he plans to depart Saigon for Paris on 5 or 6 December 1968. He intends to stay in Paris two or three weeks and expects to return to South Vietnam (SVN) during a possible Christmas-New Years recess in the talks. He said he does not want to be absent from SVN for long because internal political developments might require his presence here.

2. Ky emphasized he has every intention of leading the government of Vietnam (GVN) negotiating team. The head of the official delegation will receive his instructions directly from Ky and if he does not follow them Ky will dismiss him. Ky said although he will not be sitting at the negotiating table, the words spoken there will be his words and the decisions reached will be his decisions. Ky also advised that Pham Dang Lam would head the GVN official delegation, at least for the immediate future. He noted that picking a head of delegation has been a very difficult task because the individual who is selected must be "non-controversial." He must be acceptable to North Vietnamese, South Vietnamese, Buddhists, Catholics, the military, etc., said Ky, and he must be willing to accept Ky's direction without question. In Ky's view, Lam fits this description. Ky described Lam as a man without much initiative but one who will follow directions.

3. Ky said he will organize the GVN team as follows: He will head the team and have an immediate personal staff for support in such areas as (a) the substantive talks, (b) constitutional or legal questions, (c) military affairs, (d) information, and (e) administration. Below Ky and his personal staff, the official representation will be divided into three groups: (a) the negotiating team, (b) the lobby group, which will be composed of dignitaries from SVN who will attend the talks officially but will not be members of the negotiating team, and (c) the information group. Dang Duc Khoi and Nguyen Ngoc Linh, two members of Ky's entourage who will be on his personal staff, will head the information group, while former Open Arms Minister Nguyen Xuan Phong will head up his personal staff. Ky said he did not know who would lead the lobby group but said Phong would be his staff man for lobby group activities. (This description of Ky's staff agrees in substance, although not in all details, with Thieu's concept, as reported earlier by another source.)

4. Ky described his plan for confronting the Communists at the negotiating table as one which would allow him to take the offensive, while recognizing that concessions will be needed from both sides. He anticipates his biggest problem will concern concessions which he might have to make in return for an agreement. He said he views the war in two parts: The aggression by North Vietnam (DRV) against the South Vietnamese and the internal war between the South Vietnamese, i. e. between the National Liberation Front (NFLSV) and the GVN. Referring to the North Vietnamese, Ky said that the first item of business should be a discussion of terms for DRV withdrawal from SVN. He feels the withdrawal agreement should be in motion before concessions for the withdrawal are agreed to by the U. S. / GVN side. He reasons that the DRV obtained a bombing halt without concessions and therefore the GVN ought at least to obtain a DRV agreement on withdrawal before granting concessions of its own. He realizes that an American troop withdrawal might be linked with DRV withdrawal and feels strongly that U. S. troop withdrawal should follow the DRV withdrawal.

5. Ky said it is essential for the GVN to have ironclad international guarantees that, having once withdrawn, the DRV will not reinvade SVN, particularly after a significant withdrawal of U. S. forces has been made. He expects negotiations on this point will be long and difficult and accompanied by increased military pressure from Communist forces in SVN. Ky said he hopes to take the offensive in the Paris talks and he will be reasonable and logical as well as firm. He is aware that proper conduct by the GVN could develop international pressure on the DRV to agree to a fair settlement.

6. Once DRV forces have agreed to withdraw from SVN and after these forces have been identified and fixed, Ky believes it might be possible to have a ceasefire between allied forces and DRV units. This does not mean that the ceasefire would apply to the Viet Cong, said Ky. Ky believes that the GVN should negotiate with the NFLSV after it has solved the problem of the DRV's aggression. Terms whereby members of the NFLSV would be integrated into SVN society should be negotiated between the GVN and the NFLSV and treated as an internal South Vietnamese matter.

7. Referring to his limited stay in Paris, Ky said he must return to SVN often to keep an eye on internal political developments. He said he has advised the President that the current government is too weak to enforce a peace, adding that he would like to see changes made in the cabinet to increase its ability to persuade the South Vietnamese people to accept a Paris settlement. Ky added that he has given Thieu advice on this matter but has not and will not demand changes lest they be considered to be a price for his cooperation. He said that Thieu must organize his government so that it can function under peacetime conditions. However, Ky was quick to add he has little faith in Thieu's ability to succeed and said that the Vietnamese and the Americans should prepare for a period of some political unrest.

8. Calling attention to the generation gap, Ky noted that current GVN leaders do not represent the aspirations of the majority of the Vietnamese people who are members of a much younger generation. He said the leaders of the youth will insist on an efficient government in a peacetime situation. In Ky's view it would be well for the U.S. and the GVN to allow a certain amount of political turmoil in the country to permit evolution of a political system that represents the real wishes of the Vietnamese people. To do otherwise, said Ky, will merely hand the country to the Communists. He believes that the problem is to guide and control the revolutionary processes and not to suppress them. He noted that Thieu appointed Prime Minister Tran Van Huong, at American urging, because the Americans thought Huong would unite the people. "Now," said Ky, "Huong is old and ineffective and his supporters are leaving him. The cabinet is weak." Ky believes "east and west cannot meet." Modern communications can develop closer cooperation, but Asians, including the Vietnamese, must be allowed to develop a national spirit, select their own leaders and form their own political institutions.

9. Ky said he is certain that the GVN has not seriously planned for peace and wondered if the American mission in Vietnam has done so. He suggested that immediate attention be given to the problems created by the demobilization of ARVN. He advocates planning now to preclude a disgruntled soldiery from creating political unrest and to permit the Vietnamese to rebuild their country in an orderly manner.

10. Ky said he had had a pleasant conversation with Ambassadors Bunker and Berger on 27 November and added that he hopes to meet with them again before his departure in order to preclude a repetition of the October-November U.S./GVN dispute over the Paris talks question. He said he hopes that Americans in Paris will understand that he will have his own views and that while he is willing to listen to the views of others and to compromise, he will not be dictated to. He stressed that he is not anti-American as some Vietnamese and American officials claim, but rather a long and true friend of the U.S. He said he also is a nationalist who wants an independent non-Communist Vietnam.

11. After advising that his wife would accompany him to Paris, Ky said he desires to visit the United States for the inauguration of President-elect Nixon on 20 January 1969. He wants to give the new administration an opportunity to get to know him first hand and he, in turn, would like to meet the new administration.