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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

SAVA 73-73

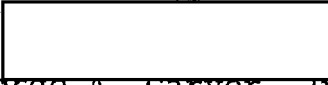
11 May 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Personal Message from Mr. Polgar

1. On 9 May, our Station Chief in Saigon, Mr. Polgar, sent me a private, back channel personal message setting forth his views on the realities of those aspects of the Vietnam situation likely to be raised in your forthcoming talks with Le Duc Tho. Mr. Polgar's message was intended for my background information and for my eyes alone. We are friends as well as professional colleagues and in his personal message he outlined his thoughts in the blunt, candid language one uses when (often only when) writing privately to a friend.

2. I have a high respect for Mr. Polgar's perceptivity, hard-headed (but sophisticated) realism and overall grasp of the Vietnam situation. What he says hits my ears with the ring of the real world. I found his comments usefully enlightening and thought you might also find them of some value. I am therefore taking the liberty of sending you (and you alone) the attached single copy of Tom's 9 May cable to me.

  
George A. Carver, Jr.

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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Attachment

O/DCI/SAVA/GACarver/mee

Orig - Addressee

1 - GAC Chrono

1 - VAS Chrono

1 - VAS/RAC W/H Spec Orig

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TO IMMEDIATE HEADQUARTERS  
PERSONAL FOR MR. CARVER FROM MR. POLGAR

1. IN CONNECTION WITH KISSINGER - LE DUC THO TALKS, WISH TO MAKE FOLLOWING REMARKS FOR YOUR BACKGROUND INFO AND POSSIBLE UTILIZATION IN DISCUSSIONS YOU MAY PARTICIPATE IN CONNECTION WITH UPCOMING MEETINGS IN PARIS.

2. THE ESSENTIAL FACT CONFRONTING THE NEGOTIATORS IS THAT THE AGREEMENT ON THE CEASE-FIRE IN VIETNAM HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED. TO BE SURE, WE HAVE A "LESS FIRE" WHICH REPRESENTS PROGRESS OF A SORT. SIMILARLY MANY OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND PARTICULARLY ARTICLE 20 ON LAOS AND CAMBODIA WHICH IS OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE TO ALL PARTIES IN VIETNAM, HAVE NEVER BEEN IMPLEMENTED. THE PERIOD SINCE 28 JANUARY HAS BEEN MARKED BY THE GROSSEST VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASE-FIRE BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THERE HAVE NOT BEEN CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS BY THE GVN -- THERE HAVE BEEN AND THEY CONTINUE -- BUT IT WAS THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WHO HAVE CREATED

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SECURITY CLIMATE AFTER 28 JANUARY WHICH MAKES CONTINUING GVN MILITARY/SECURITY OPERATIONS INEVITABLE.

3. THE PARIS AGREEMENTS WERE BASED ON A PIECE OF LEGAL FICTION THAT THERE ARE TWO GOVERNMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. THERE IS NOTHING ON THE COMMUNIST SIDE WHICH COULD BE MISTAKEN FOR A GOVERNMENT. EVEN THE HUNGARIANS AND THE POLES HAVE FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT REPEAT GOVERNMENT, IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND ADMIT PRIVATELY THAT THEY WERE MISINFORMED ON THE SITUATION. THERE ARE, TO BE SURE, TWO ARMIES: THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE. WITHOUT THE PRESENCE AND SUPPORT OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE THE PRG ARMY WOULD HAVE NO VIABILITY WHATSOEVER.

4. THE GVN AGREED TO THE CEASE-FIRE IN PLACE, APART FROM THE AMERICAN PRESSURE, BECAUSE IT FINALLY DAWNED ON THEM -- AS THE STATION MAINTAINED ALL ALONG -- THAT ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS WERE NOT SERIOUSLY IMPERILED BY THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT.

5. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AGREED TO THE CEASE-FIRE BECAUSE THEY HAD NO ALTERNATIVE, HAVING FAILED

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IN REACHING THE OBJECTIVES OF THEIR OFFENSIVE AND BEING UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE AT HOME. (THIS REFLECTED BY OUR VARIOUS ANALYSES OF COSVN REPORTING AND BECAME QUITE CLEAR BY LATE SEPTEMBER 1972.) THE COMMUNIST POLICY IN SOUTH VIETNAM HAS LONG BEEN BASED ON A SERIES OF MISCALCULATIONS, CULMINATING IN THE ATTEMPTED LAND GRAB IN OCTOBER AND AGAIN IN JANUARY. THE NVA HAVING FAILED IN THE LATTER, THE GVN HELD AS OF THE CEASE-FIRE PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING IN SOUTH VIETNAM WORTH HOLDING. GVN ALSO HELD TRULY COMMANDING POSITION WITH RESPECT TO POPULATION AND RESOURCES. ANY PEACEFUL EVOLUTION FROM THE "IN PLACE" SITUATION OF JANUARY 73 WOULD AND IN FACT DID CONTRIBUTE TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE GVN. I AGAIN CITE [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] AS MY AUTHORITIES TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GVN HAS OVERWHELMING CONTROL AND COULD WIN ANY ELECTION WITH A VERY LARGE MAJORITY.

6. UNDER NO POSSIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES COULD THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OR THE PRG AGREE TO A DETERMINATION OF WHO CONTROLS WHAT, BECAUSE ANY SUCH DETERMINATION WOULD LEGALLY FIX UPWARD OF 90 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION -- MAYBE AS HIGH AS 98 PERCENT -- UNDER

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GVN CONTROL. IT IS AN UNDENIABLE FACT THAT SOUTH OF THE THACH HAN (QUANG TRI) RIVER THE GVN HAS A DEMONSTRABLE HOLD ON ALL POPULATED AREAS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOME MOUNTAIN VALLEYS AND LOC NINH. CONVERSELY, THE AREAS UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL ARE SUCH THAT THE ICCS CANNOT STAY THERE BECAUSE OF LACK OF FACILITIES OR FOR HEALTH REASONS (DUC CO). IT IS ALSO AN UNDENIABLE FACT THAT THE ICCS HAS DEPLOYED TO ALL THE LOCATIONS IN GVN TERRITORY AS SPECIFIED IN PARIS, BUT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DUC CO (SINCE EVACUATED) TO NONE UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL.

7. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE COMMUNISTS OBFUSCATE THE ISSUE BY CREATING CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT COULD NOT BE MADE EFFECTIVE. THE SOUTHWARD MOVE OF ARMOR AND ARTILLERY, THE CONTINUING INFILTRATION OF MEN, THE LAND GRAB ATTEMPTS (TON LE CHAM, HONG NHU) THE CONTINUING HIGH LEVEL OF SELECTIVE TERRORISM, ETC., WERE OBVIOUSLY IN IMPLEMENTATION OF HANOI'S POLICIES. BUT THEY ALSO BECAME PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL FACTORS IN THE FORMULATION OF THE GVN'S ATTITUDES. CLEARLY THE GVN WILL TAKE MEASURES TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST WHAT IT SEES AS SYSTEMATIC COMMUNIST

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ENCROACHMENTS ON ITS POSITION AND THE TIT FOR TAT GAME CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE, WITH MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS.

8. THE PARIS AGREEMENTS DID NOT CHANGE TWO ESSENTIAL FACTS WHICH GOVERN THE POLICIES OF THE GVN:

A. SOUTH VIETNAM REMAINS UNDER CONTINUING MILITARY PRESSURE OR THE THREAT OF SUCH PRESSURE FROM THE NORTH, AND

B. ACTIVE SELF-DEFENSE MUST THEREFORE REMAIN THE ESSENTIAL OPERATING PRINCIPLE OF THE GVN.

9. AS STATED IN OUR "X PLUS 90" SITUATION APPRAISAL, THE GVN CANNOT BUT REACT TO HANOI'S POLICIES. THERE ARE NO COMPARABLE INFLUENCES ON THE NORTH. BECAUSE OF OUR ANXIETY TO SEE THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTED, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT -- AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION -- IS MORE LIKELY TO CONCENTRATE ON PRESSURING THE SOUTH, SIMPLY BECAUSE THE GVN IS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND MORE AMENABLE TO OUR APPROACHES. FOR EXAMPLE A LOT IS SAID ABOUT ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF THE DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS BY THE GVN. WE HAVE YET TO HEAR

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ABOUT THE EXTENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS IN  
NORTHERN QUANG TRI OR LOC NINH, OR INTERNATIONAL  
CRITICISM OF THE LACK OF SAME. THE ICCS CAN AND DOES  
TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN TERRITORY CONTROLLED BY THE  
GVN; IT CANNOT TRAVEL EXCEPT UNDER MOST STRINGENT  
RESTRICTIONS, TO PRG CONTROLLED TERRITORY. NO ICCS  
AIRCRAFT WAS EVER SHOT AT BY GVN FORCES.

10. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? WE BELIEVE  
THAT PROMPT DETERMINATION OF THE AREAS CONTROLLED  
BY EACH PARTY WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE. IT IS  
EQUALLY DESIRABLE THAT ALL MILITARY FORCES BE FIXED  
"IN PLACE," I.E., THEY SHOULD BE SURFACED AND  
COUNTED AS ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY GENERAL WEYAND.  
IF THIS WERE TO BE ACCOMPLISHED, CONTROL OF THE  
"IN PLACE" PROVISIONS COULD BE IMPLEMENTED, AS COULD  
BE THE SUPERVISED LOGISTICS SUPPORT OF THE FORCES WHICH  
HAPPEN TO BE LOCATED IN ENCLAVES IN TERRITORY CONTROLLED  
BY THE OTHER SIDE (TYPICALLY THE VC BASE AREAS, BUT  
ALSO AN LOC AND TON LE CHAM). WE MUST, OF COURSE,  
RESIST THE TEMPTATION OF FOLLOWING THE JOURNALISTIC  
PRACTICE BY WHICH ALL UNINHABITED AREAS ARE IPSO FACTO  
CONCEDED TO THE COMMUNISTS. CONTROL OF AREAS MUST BE

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PROVEN AND SHOULD BE KEYED TO PERMANENT PRESENCE OF ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER OR TO RECOGNIZABLE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS.

11. WE ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD ACCEPT SUCH A DEMARCATION OF TERRITORY, NOR DO WE BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO SURFACE LOCATION AND STRENGTH FIGURES OF THEIR MILITARY FORMATIONS. INSTEAD WE EXPECT THAT THE "NIBBLING AWAY" WILL CONTINUE, WITH THE COMMUNISTS ATTEMPTING TO CARVE OUT SUFFICIENT TERRITORY TO SHOW A CONVINCING PRESENCE WITHIN THE BORDERS OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND THE GVN CONTINUING TO RESIST SUCH EFFORTS. IN TURN THE GVN WILL ATTEMPT TO REDUCE AND RESTRICT COMMUNIST PRESENCE IN THE AREAS WHICH ARE MOST SUSCEPTIBLE TO GVN PRESSURES, SUCH AS BASE AREAS 470 AND 490 IN THE DELTA. THIS PROCESS INEVITABLY LEADS TO A CONTINUATION OF LOW LEVEL MILITARY ACTIVITY, WHICH THE ICCS CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO STOP.

12. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AS FORESEEN BY THE AGREEMENTS IN PARIS IS NOT LIKELY IN TERMS OF THE VIETNAMESE REALITIES AND WE DO NOT FORESEE ANY MEASURABLE PROGRESS THROUGH

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POLITICAL PROCESSES TOWARD A SINGLE GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM, UNLESS HANOI CAN BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT A MINOR ROLE FOR THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT IN SOUTH VIETNAM'S POLITICAL LIFE. INSTEAD WE EXPECT A GRADUAL HARDENING OF THE DE FACTO BOUNDARIES, WITH THE PRG ATTEMPTING TO DEVELOP THE SEMBLANCE OF A STATE IN QUANG TRI AND IN THE TAY NINH-BINH LONG-PHUOC LONG AREA AND THE GVN SUPREME IN ITS AREA. IT WILL NOT BE A TIDY SITUATION.

13. TO CONCLUDE, WE DOUBT THAT KISSINGER AND LE DUC THO CAN NEGOTIATE AND IMPOSE A SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM AS INDEED NO COMMUNIST COALITION PARTNER HAS EVER BEEN SUCCESSFULLY "INTEGRATED" INTO A NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME. THE GVN IS OPPOSED TO ANY COALITION, FOR GOOD REASON, AND THE COMMUNISTS WILL NOT ACCEPT ELECTIONS IN WHICH THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE THE BIG LOSERS. THE BEST THAT CAN BE HOPED FOR IS THAT THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE CAN BE KEPT BELOW THE THRESHOLD WHERE WE MUST TAKE OFFICIAL COGNIZANCE.

14. THE ABOVE SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A STATEMENT OF PESSIMISM. ON THE CONTRARY, WE BELIEVE THAT THINGS

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ARE NOT GOING ANY WORSE THAN SHOULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED (SEE OUR EARLY DECEMBER APPRAISAL OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS). PEACEFUL EVOLUTION IS LIKELY TO TAKE MANY YEARS INSTEAD OF A COUPLE OF MONTHS AS PERHAPS SOME HAD HOPED.

15. WHILE WE COULD LIVE WITH THIS SITUATION FROM A PURELY MILITARY POINT OF VIEW, THE CURRENT UNSETTLED CONDITIONS MAY BE MORE IMMEDIATELY HARMFUL TO THE INTERESTS OF THE GVN THAN TO THE LONG TERM COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES. THE "ACTIVE" DEFENSE POSTURE WHICH THE GVN MUST ASSUME AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACK REQUIRES THE CONTINUING MAINTENANCE OF A LARGE ARMY WHICH THE GVN CANNOT AFFORD ECONOMICALLY. THE UNCERTAINTY, NOW GREATER THAN EVER, ABOUT THE WILLINGNESS OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS TO AUTHORIZE CONTINUING MASSIVE AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM LOOMS LIKE A VERY LARGE BLACK CLOUD ON THE GVN'S HORIZON. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO OBVIOUS CONNECTION, THE WATERGATE AFFAIR HAS HARMED THE PROSPECTS OF SOUTH VIETNAM IN WASHINGTON. AT THE SAME TIME, THE LACK OF SUBSTANTIAL AMERICAN AID WOULD ALSO INFLUENCE OTHER POTENTIAL DONORS AND THEREBY AGGREGATE THE PROBLEMS OF THE GVN IN MEETING THE

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES. FAILURES OR SHORTFALLS IN THESE AREAS COULD IN DUE COURSE HAVE UNDESIRABLE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES.

16. IN SUMMARY, THEN, WHILE THE GVN'S SHORT TERM PROSPECTS ARE NOT NECESSARILY AFFECTED BY THE CURRENT SITUATION IN WHICH THE GVN HAS MADE RELATIVE GAINS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE COMMUNISTS, IN THE LONGER RUN THE UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT SOUTH VIETNAM'S POLITICAL FUTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MAY WELL ERODE THE GVN'S CURRENTLY EFFECTIVE CONTROL.

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