

INFORMATION

**SECRET**

Wednesday, April 24, 1968  
5:15 p.m.

Mr. President:

You will wish to read this truly  
remarkable letter from Bourguiba to  
Ho Chi Minh.

W. W. Rostow

Tunis 4101 (2 sections)

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983  
By 19, NARA, Date 5-28-92

WWRostow:rin

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**TELEGRAM**  
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ACTION SS 30

INFO /030 W

R 241220Z APR 68  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5172

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 4104/1

EXDIS

SUBJECT: BOURGUIBA LETTER TO HO CHI MINH

FOLLOWING IS ENGLISH TRANSLATION HANDED TO ME BY FOREIGN MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S MESSAGE OF MARCH 20 TO PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH (UNNECESSARY WORDS OMITTED). FULL TEXT OF FRENCH ORIGINAL AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION BEING POUCHED.

"MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

PAGE 2 PUDKKR 4104/1 ~~SECRET~~

"YOU AND I ARE ELDERS OF THIS HANDFUL OF MEN WHO HAVE DEVOTED LIVES TO LIBERATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR COUNTRIES. OUR STRUGGLE HAS BEEN ALMOST AS LONG AS THIS CENTURY AND HAS NOT YET ENDED BECAUSE OUR IDEAL, REESTABLISHMENT OUR COUNTRIES IN INDEPENDENCE AND DIGNITY AS WELL AS EMANCIPATION OF OTHER PEOPLES OF THIRD WORLD, NOT YET ACHIEVED. YOU AND I, MR. PRESIDENT, HAVE SOUGHT THIS IDEAL TAKING GREATEST ACCOUNT OF REALITIES: GEOGRAPHIC SITUATION OUR COUNTRIES, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC LEVEL OUR PEOPLES AND INTERNATIONAL BALANCE OF POWER. THIS, NO DOUBT, IS REASON WHY, HAVING MADE PROGRESS TOWARDS OUR OBJECTIVE THROGH WAYS SO DIVERGENT, WE GIVE IMPRESSION OF BEING IN OPPOSITE CAMPS.

"FALSE IMPRESSION, OF COURSE: FOR EACH OF US HAS PRESERVED ESSENTIAL: HIS INDEPENDENCE AND RESPECT HE HAS FOR OTHER; AND THAT IS WHY I ADDRESS MYSELF TO YOU AGAIN AS

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ONE FIGHTER TO ANOTHER. LAST YEAR, ON OCCASION VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR, I FORMULATED WISH THAT NEW YEAR SEE AT LAST RESTORATION PEACE IN YOUR COUNTRY AND END TO SUFFERINGS OF VN PEOPLE.

~~PAGE 3 RUDKKR 410471 SECRET~~

"I ADDED: "KNOWING LOFTY PATRIOTIC FEELINGS WHICH HAVE ALWAYS ANIMATED YOU, I TAKE LIBERTY, THIS OCCASION, ADDRESS TO YOU FERVENT APPEAL THAT TET TRUCE BE PRELUDE TO NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND TO ESTABLISHMENT OF ENDURING PEACE".

"I AM CONVINCED THAT BEYOND ANY IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION, YOU WILL NOT SPARE ANY EFFORT FAVOR AND ENCOURAGE ALL POSSIBILITIES OF HONORABLE SOLUTION".

"NEGOTIATION CONSTITUTES ONLY WAY LIKELY TO PUT END TO SUFFERINGS OF VN PEOPLE, RESTORE PEACE TO VN AND PRESERVE SECURITY SOUTH EAST ASIA AND WORLD".

"I THINK I FIND MEANING OF YOUR STRUGGLE AND FEELINGS WHICH ANIMATE YOU SUMMED UP IN ANSWER YOU WERE KIND ENOUGH TO SEND ME ON TWENTY-THIRD OF FEBRUARY 1967. I HAVE STUDIED HISTORY YOUR PEOPLE AND KNOW THEIR EXCEPTIONAL ENDURANCE AND GREAT LOVE OF LIBERTY. I ALSO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHAT GEOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF VIETNAM IMPOSES UPON YOU.

~~PAGE 4 RUDKKR 410471 SECRET~~

"I ALSO KNOW USA, MEN WHO GOVERN THAT COUNTRY, THEIR PSYCHOLOGY AND THEIR IMPERATIVES OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICIES. I FORGET NEITHER AMERICAN REVOLUTION, NOR GENEROUS, EMANCIPATING AND UNIVERSALIST IDEAS WHICH USA DEFENDED JUST AFTER FIRST WORLD WAR, NOR EMINENT ROLE WHICH THEY PLAYED IN LAST GREAT WAR WHEN PRINCIPAL HUMAN VALUES WHICH MAKE UP PRICE OF LIFE SEEMED ON VERGE BEING SUBMERGED BY MERCILESS BARBARISM OF NAZIS AND JAPANESE WARLORDS. I CANNOT FORGET EITHER THAT, EVEN MORE RECENTLY, USA HAS PLAYED DECISIVE ROLE INTERVENING WITH OWN ALLIES TO FAVOR DECOLONIZATION OF GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLES

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OF AFRICA AND ASIA.

"IT SEEMS TO ME ONE CANNOT FORGET THIS FUNDAMENTAL FACT  
EVEN WHEN ONE, LIKE YOU, AT WAR WITH USA."

"TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION ALL THAT AND WHERE POLITICAL  
AND MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM STANDS, TAKING ALSO INTO  
ACCOUNT STATE OF WORLD AND AMERICAN OPINION, I DEEM IT MANDATORY,  
TODAY MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, TO SPARE NO EFFORT TO SEEK  
HONORABLE POLITICAL WAY OUT OF CONFLICT WHICH IS DEVASTATING

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VIETNAM. IN MILITARY FIELD, PARTIAL VICTORIES ARE POSSIBLE; BUT,  
TOTAL VICTORY IS NOT. I KNOW, OF COURSE, SOME CONSIDER MILITARY  
OPERATIONS AS ONE OF ELEMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR WHICH, IF  
IT LASTS TOO LONG WITHOUT DECISIVE RESULTS, CAN LEAD AVERAGE  
AMERICAN TO WEARINESS AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE TO ABANDON  
CONTEST.

"ONE SHOULD FEAR - AND A RESPONSIBLE LEADER OUGHT TO ENVISAGE  
THIS POSSIBILITY - THAT SUCH A CALCULATION MIGHT NOT  
PROVE RIGHT. REASONING BY ANALOGY IS NOT ALWAYS CORRECT;  
REACTIONS OF A GREAT PEOPLE ARE NOT EASILY PREDICTIBLE, AND NO  
MATTER WHAT ONE SAYS, HISTORY DOES NOT REPEAT ITSELF."

"I, FOR ONE, WOULD ADD THAT VICTORY ACHIEVED IN SUCH  
CONDITIONS, OVER "PAPER TIGER" AMERICA, WILL BE NEITHER IN  
INTEREST OF WORLD WHOSE BALANCE WOULD BE UPSET NOR IN THAT OF THE  
VN PEOPLE WHO WOULD HAVE WON VICTORY BUT ACHIEVED NEITHER  
INDEPENDENCE NOR PEACE."

"FOR, IT IS OBVIOUS, THAT WAR OF VN HAS NOW AS A STAKE  
SOMETHING WHICH GOES BEYOND VIETNAM ITSELF. YOU ARE, MR."

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PRESIDENT IN BETTER POSITION THAN ANYBODY ELSE TO FEEL INTER-  
FERENCES OF THE CLASSICAL COLD WAR BETWEEN USSR AND USA COMPLICATED  
BY IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CONFLICT WHICH OPPOSES RED CHINA TO

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USSR.

"UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES HIGHER INTEREST OF VN, CONCERN TO PRESERVE ITS INDEPENDENCE FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW, IMPERATIVE TO SPARE ITS YOUTH SO AS TO SET IT TO TASKS OF RECONSTRUCTION, NECESSITY TO KEEP OPEN DOOR OF COOPERATION WITH ALL GREAT POWERS, ALL THESE CONSIDERATIONS SEEM MILITATE IN FAVOR OF EARLY POLITICAL SOLUTION WHICH CAN ONLY RESULT FROM NEGOTIATION WITHOUT HUMILIATING PRECONDITIONS LIKELY TO BE PRESENTED AS CAPITULATION."

"I FEAR THAT, WITH OTHER STATESMEN, IF PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION NOT STARTED WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS, GREATER MISFORTUNES BEFALL VN AND SEA. I EVEN FEAR PRESENT WORLD EQUILIBRIUM - WHICH I RECOGNIZE IS AT TIMES UNJUST AND RESTRAINING FOR SOME COUNTRIES BUT WHICH HAS MERIT OF EXISTING AND BEING ONE OF BASES ON WHICH WORLD PEACE RESTS - WOULD BE UPSET. I FEAR WIDER CONFRONTATION WHICH WOULD SOON BECOME"

RUSSELL

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R 241220Z APR 68  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5173

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EXDIS

SUBJECT: BOURGUIBA LETTER TO HO CHI MINH

~~UNCONTROLLABLE AND IN WHICH SMALL COUNTRIES - YOURS AS WELL AS MINE - WOULD LOSE THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND MANKIND MOST OF ITS ACHIEVEMENTS.~~

"YOU ARE, MR. PRESIDENT, RESPECTED DEAN OF CHIEFS OF STATE OF THIRD WORLD. ALL THROUGH YOUR LONG CAREER YOU HAVE SHOWN, MORE THAN ONCE, YOU KNOW HOW NOT TO GO TOO FAR. TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION PSYCHOLOGY OF ADVERSARY, TO ACCEPT COMPROMISE EVEN THOUGH ALL OF ONE'S OBJECTIVES NOT YET REACHED, TO AIM BEYOND WAR AT COOPERATION, TO BASE INDEPENDENCE ON

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STRENGTH OF INTERNAL FRONT BUT ALSO ON BALANCE BETWEEN EXTERNAL GREAT POWERS, THAT IS DIFFICULT COURSE WHICH YOU AND I HAVE TRODEN AND WHICH, IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, HAS YIELDED CONCLUSIVE RESULTS.

~~"AIM TODAY SHOULD BE TO INSURE, FOR PREDICTABLE FUTURE, SECURITY OF NVN, INDEPENDENCE OF SOUTH AND POSSIBILITY THAT BOTH THESE COUNTRIES MAY ONE DAY REUNITE THROUGH PEACEFUL MEANS. ONE SHOULD ALSO, I THINK, SEE TO IT THAT NO GREAT POWER COULD EXTEND HEGEMONY OVER NORTH AND SOUTH AND THUS DISRUPT EQUILIBRIUM OF THE WORLD."~~

"COUNTRIES NEIGHBORING VIETNAM SHOULD NOT BE SUBJECTED

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~~TO PRESSURES LIKELY TO UPSET SITUATION PREVAILING IN REGION.~~

"IT APPEARS TO ME THESE OBJECTIVES ARE REASONABLE AND ACCEPTABLE TO YOURSELF, TO ALL VIETNAMESE OF SOUTH AND OF NORTH WHO CARE FIRST ABOUT INDEPENDENCE THEIR COUNTRY, AS WELL AS

TO USA. ALL I KNOW ABOUT YOU, DECLARATIONS OF YOUR GOVERNMENT AND THOSE OF FNL LEADERS, ALL I KNOW ABOUT AMERICAN LEADERS AND THEIR DECLARATIONS AUTHORIZE ME TO THINK THAT CONDITIONS FOR FRUITFUL NEGOTIATION EXIST TODAY ON THESE BASES.

~~PAGE 3 RUDKKR 410412 SECRET~~

"IT IS OBVIOUS THAT US AND OTHER GREAT POWERS HAVE HOPED TO CONTROL NORTH OR SOUTH OF VIETNAM TO PREVENT IT FROM FALLING UNDER CONTROL OR INFLUENCE OF OTHER GREAT POWERS. TODAY, ONE MAY HOPE THAT AN INDEPENDENT VN, FREE FROM ALL FOREIGN OCCUPATION, WOULD BE FOR THESE POWERS, ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION BECAUSE IT DOES NOT UPSET EQUILIBRIUM TO WHICH THEY ARE ATTACHED.

~~"I FEEL THAT BY CONTINUING WAR ONE CANNOT ATTAIN ANY OTHER OBJECTIVE. CONSEQUENTLY, ONE SHOULD, WITHOUT LOSING ONE MORE DAY, ENTER INTO NEGOTIATION. QUESTIONS OF PROCEDURE BECOME SECONDARY EVEN IF THEY PRESENT IMPORTANT MORAL ASPECT.~~

"WAR LIKE ONE WHICH TAKING PLACE IN YOUR COUNTRY CAN ONLY END THROUGH NEGOTIATION, AND NEGOTIATION MEANS RECIPROCAL CONCESSIONS AND ACCEPTANCE BY EACH OF PARTIES TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT HONOR, SELF-RESPECT AND IMPERATIVES OF OTHER. IF SUCH IS ALSO YOUR FEELING AND THAT OF YOUR GOVERNMENT, WOULD IT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO PUT LESS EMPHASIS ON THAT WHICH IS AFTER ALL SECONDARY - THE CONDITIONS OF NEGOTIATIONS - AND MORE ON THAT WHICH IS ESSENTIAL: THEIR CONTENT?

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"NOW THAT USA RE-EXAMINING ITS VN POLICY, SUCH ATTITUDE, IF IT APPEARS POSSIBLE TO YOU, COULD PAY OFF. IT COULD NOT ONLY DISPEL IMPRESSION WIDESPREAD IN WORLD - EVEN AMONG YOUR FRIENDS - THAT YOUR WAR OBJECTIVES INCLUDE HUMILIATION OF ADVERSARY, BUT ALSO THAW SITUATION BY MAKING POSSIBLE PRENEGOTIATIONS WHICH WOULD BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN WAR OBJECTIVES OF PARTIES.

"I CONSIDER MYSELF YOUR EVERLASTING FRIEND AND THAT OF YOUR COUNTRY OF WHICH I APPRECIATE THE TRIALS. I HAVE SOME CREDIT IN US WHERE I INTEND TO GO NEXT MAY. ALL MY LIFE, I HAVE FOUGHT FOR DIGNITY OF MEN AND COOPERATION BETWEEN NATIONS.

"WITHOUT SEEKING ANY MEDIATION ROLE OF WHICH I HAVE NO NEED, I FEEL CONCERNED FOR FATE OF EACH OF PEOPLE OF THIRD WORLD AND FOR PEACE WHICH, TO MY MIND, IS INSEPARABLE FROM INDEPENDENCE OF EACH COUNTRY AND AT SAME TIME FROM EQUILIBRIUM OF WORLD.

"I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT INTEREST OF OUR COUNTRIES AND REQUIREMENTS OUR TIMES MAKE IT OBLIGATION FOR US TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT EQUILIBRIUM AND TO PURSUE, IN ORDER TO IMPROVE IT, A POLICY OF "DETENTE, ENTENTE AND COOPERATION"

PAGE 5 RUDKKR 4404/2 ~~SECRET~~

PARTICULARLY WITH ALL GREAT POWERS. IF THAT EQUILIBRIUM WERE TO BE UPSET IN FAVOR OF SINGLE POWER AS CONSEQUENCE OF TEST OF STRENGTH WHICH INEVITABLY PUTS AT STAKE SELF-RESPECT OF ONE OF OTHERS, WOULD NOT VN BE ITSELF FIRST VICTIM?

"THAT IS WHAT LEADS ME, AFTER DEEP THOUGHT, TO SEND YOU THIS MESSAGE, MR. PRESIDENT, AND WISH RECEIVE YOUR OWN ANALYSIS. IF YOU WERE TO SHARE MY VIEW, I COULD THEN UNDERTAKE, IN NAME OF TUNISIA OR AT LEVEL OF OAU, ANY ACTION LIKELY CONTRIBUTE TO PREVENTING WAR FROM CONTINUING TO BE ONLY POLICY.

"FOR THAT, BOMBING OF YOUR COUNTRY SHOULD, OF COURSE, END; BUT IT IS EQUALLY NECESSARY THAT FORMULA FOR SELF-DETERMINATION OF SVN AND FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION BE PUT FORWARD WHICH WOULD SPARE INTERESTS INVOLVED, TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE COMMITMENTS TAKEN, INSURE INDEPENDENCE OF COUNTRY ITSELF.

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~~AND ITS NEIGHBORS WHILE AT SAME TIME OPENING POSSIBILITIES OF  
COOPERATION WITH ALL.~~

~~PAGE 6 RUOKKP 41041 SECRET~~

"I AM CONVINCED THAT, IF SUCH FORMULA WERE PUT FORWARD,  
FIGHTING COULD RAPIDLY STOP AND LONG AND HARD STRUGGLE OF  
VN PEOPLE CLEAR WAY FOR PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTION AND PEACE,  
FINAL OBJECTIVE OF THIS STRUGGLE TO WHICH YOUR NAME WILL  
STAY LINKED.

"AND TO CLOSE ALLOW ME, MR. PRESIDENT, EXTEND BEST WISHES  
AND BROTHERLY GREETINGS TO YOU AND PEOPLE OF VIETNAM."

GP-1. RUSSELL

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