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PENNSYLVANIA

38
Tuesday, September 26, 1967 -- 9:00 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith a draft speech on Viet Nam.

You should read it in light of Nick's attached memorandum which makes the case for waiting for Hanoi's answer.

Bo will see M. and A. on Saturday.

If you decide to accept Nick's argument, I would not recommend revealing our latest formula (pp. 6-7).

If you decide to proceed with the speech, you will wish to have Gen. Eisenhower's assent to using the quotation on page 11.

The general question will also arise: Should the speech wait until next week, to see what comes through -- or not -- on Saturday.

If we don't surface the specific formula (pp. 6-7), the speech won't hurt -- and might help -- in Hanoi.

But you will wish to have Sec. Rusk's judgment.

Incidentally, the figures (p. 3) have the blessing of CIA, Defense, and State. But I'll report further on that tomorrow.

W. W. Rostow

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By rg16p, NARA, Date 10-23-91

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

September 26, 1967

PERSONAL

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Negotiations with North Vietnam.

This memorandum attempts to answer the question you posed at luncheon. It represents my own views and I do not know whether or not the Secretary would agree.

I. The Kissinger Exercise.

The significance of the Paris-Kissinger exercise lies in the fact that it is the closest thing we have yet had to establishing a dialogue with North Vietnam. It takes on particular significance in my view because, since last February, every attempt to get into communication with the North Vietnamese has been brutally and immediately rebuffed. This has been true in Moscow in April and in Vientiane in June. By and large it has also been true of indirect communication. While Kissinger has not talked yet directly to Bo, he did succeed in establishing a dialogue with him, through intermediaries and written messages, and Bo's attitude has been consistently to keep the channel open and to encourage dialogue.

To refresh your recollection briefly, the sequence has been as follows:

- (1) Our basic message was delivered to Bo on August 25.
- (2) On September 11 Bo delivered a formal reply,

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repeating the standard Hanoi position and arguments, but pointedly declared he was anxious to keep the channel open.

(3) On September 13 we formally replied arguing that our proposal did not involve "conditions".

(4) On September 23 Bo replied, apparently to our message of September 13, complaining about our intensified bombing which Bo gave as the reason for his refusal to see Kissinger.

(5) On September 25 Kissinger replied defending our bombing policy partially on grounds of secrecy. On September 25 Bo also stated the following:

"Bo replied that the DRV Prime Minister had made it clear that there could be no formal discussions between the US and the DRV as long as any level of bombing continued in the North, but, Bo added, preliminary discussions between Bo and Kissinger might not fall under such prohibition. Bo said he would let him know whether such preliminary discussions were possible within a few days." (underscoring added)

We should hear towards the end of the week whether or not there can be "preliminary discussions" between Bo and Kissinger. I find it significant that the phraseology "preliminary discussions" was employed by Bo. Preliminary to what? It would seem to me that these discussions could only be preliminary to formal discussion which could take place if our offer was accepted. Kissinger, if he talks to Bo, should pressure the modalities of formal discussions: time, place, date, possibly agenda.

This seems to me the easier because of the statement today from Hanoi that North Vietnam would be prepared to open

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"serious and significant talks" three or four weeks after the United States halted its bombing without formulating any conditions. (The three to four weeks is clearly negotiable in the light of other information if we can get into preliminary discussions.)

We know that Bo has been in constant communication with Hanoi. His demeanor has indicated that to a large extent he was acting under instructions. We know that we are dealing with a divided government in North Vietnam, and it is at least a reasonable inference that our offer has sufficient appeal for them not to reject it out of hand as they could have done by refusing further communication, and which they have done in the past. This hypothesis seems to me supported by the public statement from Hanoi today which, if nothing else, is certainly the most forthcoming statement they have made on the subject of negotiations.

If you are seriously considering a bombing pause to test Hanoi's intentions, it seems to me particularly important that the Paris channel not be abruptly ruptured. One thing that we have learned is that once communication is broken off, it takes considerable time to turn it on again. And it seems to me that the most effective pause would be one which followed some kind of dialogue -- "preliminary discussions" -- of the type contemplated by Bo.

II. Relationship of Pause in Bombing and Discussions.

Virtually every time we have had a contact, direct or indirect, with Hanoi, they or their spokesman have cautioned that an escalation of bombing would prejudice the condition of discussions. This was true with respect to the Polish operation, the Moscow operation, and the current Paris operation. Whether or not there is any merit or substance

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to the Hanoi statements the simple fact is that there have been actions widely regarded as escalatory which coincide with our efforts to enter into negotiations. It is entirely possible -- I think probable -- that these actions were seized upon as excuses by Hanoi. But it is not possible to prove that point and there is sufficient plausibility in their position to cast doubt in the minds of other governments and a substantial segment of American public opinion as to the sincerity of our efforts. Since I know that our efforts have been sincere and since I think these are merely excuses, I would like to eliminate all possible doubt with respect to the Kissinger negotiations. If Bo refuses to see Kissinger, then I see no problem with resuming the normal level of bombing in Hanoi. If Bo agrees to see Kissinger, I think it important to continue the circle at least until we see whether the Kissinger channel is leading towards prompt and productive discussions.

I do not believe that Hanoi is presently likely to enter into serious discussions. But I think that it is important in terms of both circumstances and public relations that we test that possibility to the hilt. I do not think we pay a heavy price in delaying hitting again a very small percentage of the targets in North Vietnam. We know that destruction of those targets this week or next week can have absolutely no significance in terms of the conduct of the war. There is an outside chance that it could have some impact on the search for peace. And I would play along with that chance -- which I acknowledge to be very small indeed -- because the consequences are so great.

Respectfully,

Mark S. Dugan

Acting Secretary

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HANOI "Sources" on Viet-Nam Talks
PARIS AFP IN ENGLISH 1800 GMT 26 SEPT 67 E
(BY BERNARD-JOSEPH CABANES)

(Text) Hanoi--North Vietnam would be prepared to open serious and significant talks with the United States, to use the words employed by U.S. Delegate to the United Nations Arthur Goldberg, three or four weeks after an unconditional halt in U.S. acts of war against the North, Hanoi sources said today.

A source said: In order to (?begin) talks, we only ask the Americans to halt, without formulating any conditions, their bombings and other acts of war against North Vietnam, because it is not possible to talk in the midst of the bombings.

This statement echoes a key phrase in a speech made earlier this month by North Vietnam Premier Phan Van Dong. However, it comes after the speech made in the United Nations by Mr. Goldberg last week seeking clarification of Hanoi's position.

The sources stressed, however, that if Washington simply announced that it was halting the bombings for a certain period, no talks would be possible, because the halt would be conditional. However, without conditions, the talks would take place, the sources said. The sources indicated that Hanoi would make no spectacular public statements or gestures following Mr. Goldberg's speech. There are two reasons for this:

North Vietnam (?feels) that its position is now well known. Further repetition of its views might be interpreted as a sign of weakening resistance. But their resistance is not weakening, as shown by a recent long article by Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap affirming his (words indistinct).

The sources add that Mr. Goldberg's speech also betrays U.S. concern at its unfavorable military situation in South Vietnam. The United States is also aware that its diplomatic relations are being (word indistinct) by the continuation of the war, the sources state.

In this difficult situation, the United States, without going so far as to accept an unconditional halt to the bombings, has been obliged to use ambiguous phrases which finally add up simply to a restatement of its demand for a reciprocal gesture from Hanoi if Washington agrees to stop the bombing, a demand North Vietnam has already rejected.

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It is right that from time to time I share with you my thoughts about Viet Nam. Our men are fighting there. Our resources are committed there. Our nation's word is pledged there.

I have asked myself some questions which I know are also on your minds. And I will give you the best answers I know.

First, are the Vietnamese -- with our help and the help of their other fighting allies -- making progress towards the common goal? Is there a stalemate or is there forward movement?

Most of the reports I see make clear that there is progress and forward movement.

There is positive movement towards constitutional government -- however imperfect these first steps may seem. Historians will judge it something of a miracle, I believe, that the Vietnamese have thus far met the political schedule they laid down in January 1966. The people of South Viet Nam want constitutional government; and they are achieving it.

step by step. On November 1st a legitimate elected government will be inaugurated; and, I am sure, its leaders will follow a program of action which responds to the desires of the Vietnamese people for self-determination and peace, for an attack on corruption, and for movement forward in economic and social development.

There is progress also in the war. The campaigns of the last year drove the enemy from some of his major interior bases. Between 1964 and 1966 they tried for victory inside South Viet Nam. Now they seek not military victory but the prolongation of war itself. By massing troops in the demilitarized zone, they seek to divert our forces from pacifying the countryside and to continue to inflict casualties on our men. They are continuing to send forces South to strengthen Viet Cong units which can no longer be maintained from the shrinking population base controlled by the Viet Cong.

In the months ahead we shall be taking new steps to make such

infiltration still more costly and difficult than it already is.

Meanwhile, there is steady, heartening progress within South Viet Nam. The proportion of the population securely under government control has increased steadily since we made our fundamental commitment in mid-1965. Conservatively estimated, that proportion has risen from about 45% to about 65% since that time. The proportion under Communist control has declined from about 20% to about 15%. Those in the contested areas have also declined sharply. This positive trend is reflected in the registration and voting figures of the successive elections which have taken place over this period.

But the struggle remains hard. The Vietnamese have suffered severe casualties, civilian as well as military. We and their other allies are also suffering heavily as the battle proceeds.

American casualties have reached a level of about 11,000 killed in action and about 85,000 wounded; although it is good to know that, of the

wounded, approximately 79,000 have been or are expected to be returned to duty.

I wish I could name for you the day the war will end. But I cannot.

What I can tell you is that every responsible adviser available to the President -- military and civilian, in Saigon and in Washington -- reports solid and steady progress; and their judgment is borne out by the statistics of the conflict, by captured enemy documents, and by the flow of defectors from the Communist camp.

I know there are other questions on your minds.

There are some who ask: Why not negotiate now? The answer is, of course, that we are wholly prepared to negotiate now. I am ready; this government is ready; our South Vietnamese allies are ready. But with whom do we negotiate?

I am ready to talk with Ho Chi Minh tomorrow.

I am ready to have Secretary Rusk meet with their Foreign Minister tomorrow.

I am ready to send a trusted representative to any spot on this earth to talk in secret with a spokesman for Hanoi.

I am ready to have the issue of Viet Nam dealt with by the United Nations.

We have made this very clear to Hanoi. We have done it directly. We have passed the word through third parties. We have made efforts in dozens of capitals and on hundreds of occasions.

But either we get no response or we get a firm "no."

But we shall continue to try -- hoping always that reason will at last prevail; for one of these days Hanoi will realize that it cannot win and that its destiny lies not in taking over South Viet Nam by force but in joining the other nations of Southeast Asia in raising the welfare of the people who live in North Viet Nam.

Others ask: Why not draw back, protect the cities and the populated areas in enclaves, and reduce our side of the war?

The answer is that this would turn back to the Viet Cong important parts of the rural population. It would also permit the Viet Cong safely to concentrate their forces at points of their own choosing and decimate the Vietnamese forces and their allies. It was precisely this strategy which led to the defeat of the Kuomintang in Mainland China. And we can see at the demilitarized zone what happens when the enemy feels secure and can choose the time and place and rhythm of battle.

Every responsible military adviser available to the President agrees that an enclave strategy in Viet Nam is a road to disaster; and I am convinced that they are correct.

Others ask: Why do we not stop the bombing of North Viet Nam and see if the other side might then talk?

I have recently informed Hanoi that:

"The United States is willing to stop the aerial and naval bombard-

ment of North Viet-Nam with the understanding that this will lead promptly to productive discussions between representatives of the United States and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam looking toward a resolution of the issues between them. While discussions proceed either with public knowledge or secretly, the United States would assume that the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation."

I think you will agree that there could be no fairer proposal than that. The answer I received was negative. Hanoi is not yet ready for peace.

Why is this so? Why in the face of military and political progress in the South and the burden of our bombing in the North do they persist?

From many sources the answer is the same. They still hope that the people of the United States will not see the struggle through to the end. As one Western diplomat recently in Hanoi put it: "They believe their staying power is greater than ours and that they can't lose." A recent visitor from a Communist capital concluded: "They expect the war to be long

and that the Americans will in the end be defeated by a breakdown in morale, fatigue, and psychological factors." As the North Vietnamese Premier said as far back as 1962: "Americans do not like long, inconclusive wars -- and this is going to be a long, inconclusive war. Thus we are sure to win in the end."

This is not the first time in our history that Americans have been put to such a test of nerve, and will, and endurance. In every war in our nation's history there were long dark passages. Intellectuals and political leaders, preachers and journalists, cried out for peace at almost any price.

In the Revolution, James Warren wrote to John Adams in 1788 describing the situation in Boston: "I wish it were in my power to tell you that the number and influence of the Tories here were reduced, but I think they gain ground fast."

In the War of 1812 historians record: "The truth seems to be that the war was unpopular throughout the country," once it appeared "that it

would not be a walk-over."

In the Civil War, a Confederate General wrote his wife in 1864:

"We learn from gentlemen recently from the North that the Peace Party is growing rapidly -- that McClellan will be elected and that his election will bring peace, provided always that we continue to hold our own against the Yankee armies."

And so it has been at other times of testing.

But, in fact, most Americans have never been "summer soldiers."

It is fundamental, however, that as we face the future we be crystal clear as to why we are determined to see this through. There are two reasons.

First, the word of our nation was pledged in 1955 -- in the SEATO Treaty -- that we would act to meet the common danger in the face of armed attack on South Viet Nam. There is armed attack on South Viet Nam.

Second, we undertook that pledge because the vital interests of

the United States were judged to be at stake in protecting Southeast Asia from being taken over by the Communists.

Speaking for the Eisenhower Administration, Secretary of State Dulles said in March 1954:

"Southeast Asia is astride the most direct and best-developed sea and air routes between the Pacific and South Asia. It has major naval and air bases. Communist control of Southeast Asia would carry a grave threat to the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, with whom we have treaties of mutual assistance. The entire Western Pacific area, including the so-called 'offshore island chain', would be strategically endangered."

Five years later, President Eisenhower expressed his own feelings and the opinion of his Administration when he spoke directly of Viet Nam.

"Strategically," he said, "South Viet-Nam's capture by the Communists would bring their power several hundred miles into a hitherto free region. The remaining countries in Southeast Asia would be menaced

by a great flanking movement. The freedom of 12 million people (--now 17 million--) would be lost immediately, and that of 150 million others in adjacent lands would be seriously endangered. The loss of South Viet-Nam would set in motion a crumbling process that could, as it progressed, have grave consequences for us and for freedom..."

Recognizing our deep interest in Southeast Asia, the United States Senate on February 1, 1955, approved the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty by a vote of 82 to 1. One Senator after another -- including many still in the Senate -- stated his understanding that the defense of Viet Nam was an integral part of the defense of Southeast Asia, and that the defense of Southeast Asia was vital to the interests of the United States.

When President Eisenhower on January 19, 1961, reviewed with President-elect Kennedy the situation for which he was about to assume responsibility, he stated: "If Laos is lost to the Free World, in the long run we will lose all of Southeast Asia." And the fate of Laos is clearly bound up with that of South Viet Nam.

On July 17, 1963, President Kennedy said, speaking of Viet Nam, "We are not going to withdraw from that effort. In my opinion, for us to withdraw from that effort would mean a collapse not only of South Viet-Nam, but Southeast Asia. So we are going to stay there."

There are some who argue that three American Presidents have been wrong. They believe that this view -- of the connection between the fate of Viet Nam and the fate of Southeast Asia -- is out-of-date. They argue that we might let Viet Nam go and Laos; but that somehow independence and freedom could sustain themselves in that critical part of the world, important in itself and as the gateway to the Indian subcontinent.

I can tell you -- from face to face talks -- that no responsible statesman in Asia shares that judgment. There is none who would contest the judgment of former Prime Minister Menzies of Australia: "The takeover of South Viet Nam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and Southeast Asia."

And so it is clear that the war we are fighting to defeat aggression in Viet Nam -- to permit those 17 million people the right peacefully to determine their future -- is also a war that will determine the future shape of Asia -- where two-thirds of humanity lives.

This is no empty abstraction. Asia is, in fact, beginning to determine its own future; and it is doing so precisely because it believes we shall see it through in Viet Nam.

In fact, we can now see the domino theory operating in reverse. Heartened by our commitment and our progress in Viet Nam, the nations and peoples of Asia have begun to build the foundations of their long-run prosperity and their security. The disintegration and piecemeal takeover which might have happened have given way to confidence and cooperation among them -- for the first time in the long history of Asia.

Asians have in a very short time:

-- set in motion the Asian Development Bank;

-- invigorated the work in the Mekong Valley;

-- begun to formulate new regional plans in education, transport,

agriculture, and communications;

-- initiated regular consultations among the central banks.

Politically nine Asian nations have set up the Asian and Pacific Council; five have formed the Association of Southeast Asia Nations.

In short, there is new life, new energy, a new spirit of cooperation in the Asia of today. This large and vastly important part of the human race is on the march. They have a dream of progress -- and they are working it come true.

And the Asian leaders and their governments recognize that it would not be so if the United States did not believe deeply in the importance of Asia -- if the United States were not standing firm in Viet Nam.

Many leading Asians have said that the allied commitment to Viet Nam has bought time for the rest of Asia. And they are determined to use that time well.

As the distinguished Prime Minister of Singapore said not long ago:

"...if we just sit down and believe people are going to buy time forever after for us, then we deserve to perish."

But Asians are not sitting down and waiting. They are planning,

and working, and moving ahead.

They do not deserve to perish; they will not perish.

This, then, is where we are in Viet Nam -- and why we are in

Viet Nam.

But there is another, deeply important reason for our role. It has to do with our vision of the world -- and with our goals as a nation.

Twenty-two years ago, the biggest and most destructive war in history came to an end.

Even before the guns fell silent, we Americans had a clear idea of the kind of world we wanted. And we knew that it required us to be

part of -- not apart from -- that world.

And so -- together with most other nations -- we pledged ourselves "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace..."

We quickly found, however, that the noble aims of the United Nations Charter would not be achieved automatically. Hopes were not enough. Good intentions were not a sufficient guarantee.

Wishing for a world at peace -- for a world free from aggression -- for justice in the affairs of men and nations -- would not make it so.

For some men still coveted the territory of others.

Some still wanted to control the minds and the lives of their neighbors.

The temptation to use force to achieve these goals had not been buried in the rubble of World War II.

We could have walked away from a devastated Europe.

We could have pulled out of a war-torn Asia.

We could have -- but we didn't.

Because we knew that to do so would only have postponed --

not prevented -- the day of reckoning.

We were determined not to make the mistake of the 1930's --
the mistake of thinking that we could live in comfort and security and pay
no attention to the rest of the world.

In Europe, we helped forge the shield of NATO -- a shield that has
protected Western Europe for two decades.

We designed the Marshall Plan to help revive the economic life of
free Europe.

In Asia, we invested heavily in defeated Japan and in the victims of
Japanese aggression.

Through that wide arc of the world that runs from northern Europe
through the Mediterranean, on to Southeast Asia, and northward to Japan
and Korea, the American promise sounded loud and clear:

Stand fast; stand free; and we shall stand at your side.

These two decades have not been easy for us -- or for others.

Time and time again, our motives were questioned and our will was tested.

Friends and enemies alike wondered: Will the Americans back out when the going gets tough? Won't they take the easy way and withdraw? Do they really want to help others so far from their homeland?

But when the time of testing came, our word was good.

The people of Berlin found it was good when Stalin tried to strangle their city.

The people of Greece and Turkey found it good when threats to their nations rose.

The people of South Korea found it good when invading armies swept in from the North.

Today, the people of South Viet Nam are finding it good as they struggle to build a nation in their own way.

We did not give our pledges lightly.

We did not give them only out of compassion and generosity.

We gave them because it was right -- because it was in our own true interest.

It takes little imagination to picture the kind of world we now would be living in if we had not been a partner of Europe in the 1940's -- if we had not helped defend Korea in the 1950's -- if we were not now fighting to preserve some reasonable order and stability in Southeast Asia.

The price of these efforts has been heavy, indeed. But the price of not having done them would have been vastly greater.

We know it. Our friends know it. And our enemies know it, too.

And so we shall press forward.

We will keep our word.

We will do what must be done.
