

SECRET

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Thursday, October 26, 1967
6:40 p.m.

Mr. President:

Pres file

At last Prime Minister Maurer
reports to you via our Ambassador on
his trip to Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow.

This is worth reading, and, perhaps,
letting Gov. Harriman follow up on his
trip to Pakistan.

W. W. Rostow

SECRET

Bucharest 604

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(h)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By kg, NARA, Date 11-6-91

WWRostow:rln

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Wednesday, October 25, 1967

FOR THE PRESIDENT

~~DECLASSIFIED~~

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 94-451

Text of Cable from Ambassador Davis (Bucharest 604) By C6, NARA Date 3-30-95

Without my having found a suitable opportunity to make an informal approach to Acting Foreign Minister Macovescu, Prime Minister Maurer, on a half hour notice summoned me at 11 a.m. October 25 to inform me about his recent trip to Hanoi. Macovescu and an interpreter were the only others present for the interview which lasted two hours.

The Prime Minister began by referring to his discussions with Secretary Rusk and President Johnson during the time of the Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly on the Middle East crisis, in particular regarding Vietnam. He described his conversation with the President on this subject concisely and accurately, from what I know based on the memorandum of conversation. Maurer emphasized the President had made the central point of the South Vietnamese being able to decide their own destiny; i. e., if they wanted to adopt Communism, let them or vice versa; if they wished to unify with North Vietnam, let them or vice versa. The only U. S. interest in the South Vietnamese Government was to aid them in response to a request to help it defend the country against North Vietnamese infiltration and support of the war in the South.

The Prime Minister continued that in light of his discussion with the President, and Secretary Rusk, and in view of the developing situation, it had been decided he should go to Hanoi to consult with the North Vietnamese leaders to express the views of the Romanian Government. He summarized these views, which he presented to Hanoi, as follows:

The world wants to see the end of the Vietnamese war, not only public opinion but governments. There was unity in the U. S. Government on the Vietnam question. Witness his separate conversations with the President and Secretary Rusk, and he described to the North Vietnamese the U. S. Government position as outlined by them. The Romanians believed that under the present circumstances, prospects were opening up for discussions with the possibility of the discussions leading to a peaceful solution. Certainly the solution would not come immediately after sitting down at a negotiating table. But if the talks were conducted in a constructive and realistic fashion with the aim to provide the Vietnamese people with the right to decide their own destiny, to take into account the dignity and prestige of each state and to create conditions for establishment of normal relations and stability between Vietnam and the U. S., then the possibility of a solution existed. Romania believed it beneficial for all

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socialist countries to have good relations with the U. S. Although there were certain aspects in the policy of the U. S. with which Romania could not agree, this was also true in reverse. Despite differences, the U. S. and Romania had good relations.

Maurer then said that after this exposition to the Hanoi leaders, they discussed the possibilities of starting negotiations. Maurer had explained the Romanian position as follows:

The U. S. must stop immediately, unconditionally, and once and for all the bombing of North Vietnam.

North Vietnam must declare its agreement to start negotiations with the U.S. on elimination of the conflict. Certainly at this time armed action in South Vietnam would not cease.

It is one thing to mobilize and demobilize a force such as the U. S. has in South Vietnam. The U. S. could leave within three days and come back again within three days.

But if the Popular Forces in South Vietnam demobilized, then remobilization would require much more time. So talks would start with armed action in South Vietnam continuing. The aim of negotiations would be to put an end to these armed actions. They would cease effectively when the discussion would lead to mutually acceptable decisions and details could be discussed further.

At this point, I broke in to ask whether Maurer was saying that initial discussions would center on the cessation of military actions to be followed by political discussions.

The Prime Minister replied he did not separate these questions then or now. Military actions can cease only when both sides find a satisfactory political solution. As long as no guarantees existed that South Vietnam could decide its own destiny, there was no reason for them to put aside weapons. So, Maurer continued, he had requested the North Vietnamese friends to declare categorically that, in case the bombardment ceased unconditionally and forever, they would be willing to start negotiations because the U. S. position, as explained to him by President Johnson and Rusk, for a solution within the framework of the Geneva Agreements of 1954, provided a real basis for discussions.

According to Maurer, the Vietnamese replied in a sense which essentially agreed with the Romanians; i. e., if bombardment ceased, they would be prepared to enter negotiations. To my question whether the Vietnamese would

state a readiness to negotiate before or after the bombardment ceased, Maurer replied that he did not discuss the details. It was possible the Vietnamese could make this statement before or after. This was up to them.

Maurer commented that his discussions with the North Vietnamese had covered many aspects, but he would emphasize only those of interest for us to know.

A. They had reviewed the capacity of North Vietnamese resistance in case the war goes on. From all points of view, military, economic, political and social, "I can tell you North Vietnam can carry on a long-term struggle." This affirmative North Vietnamese assertion is well known throughout the world.

G. North Vietnamese leaders are aware they cannot and could not try to humiliate us. Discussions should be conducted in such a way that actual recognition of the South Vietnamese people to decide on their destiny should have the agreement and support of the U. S. Besides, the North Vietnamese do not look upon settlement of the South Vietnamese problem as necessarily leading to immediate reunification. It would depend upon what South Vietnam would decide.

C. Maurer received the strong impression from the North Vietnamese that they had an interest in the Romanian position on relations with the U. S. The North Vietnamese listened with great interest "to our explanation that friendly relations with the U. S. do not contradict the objectives of socialism throughout the world, but under certain conditions can contribute to socialism. Here I am betraying all my secrets." Maurer said he had told the North Vietnamese the Romanians are able to buy modern technology from the U. S. and the benefits it brought to Romania. This was good, not only for economic but political relations.

D. In sum, Maurer asserted that he found in North Vietnam a "position much more rational than he found a year ago in talks of much the same content." He asserted this position was not determined by a diminution of North Vietnamese military capacity. It was no secret the fighting capacity of North Vietnam is growing, and would continue to grow because of more important aid from socialist countries.

Maurer then said he would like to add some other aspects as he saw them in conjunction with his desire to put at the disposal of the U. S. the most complete information possible to help the U. S. Government with its judgment. Remarking he was not telling us a secret, he said that to a great extent the hard stand of Hanoi was influenced by the hard line of China. In the Romanian view, this Chinese influence in Vietnam at the present moment "from the war viewpoint" is diminishing. North Vietnamese leaders are judging much more "with their own brains" because other socialist countries have increased their aid and North Vietnam no longer is so dependent on the Chinese. Certainly, Maurer added, within the North Vietnamese leadership there are people whose ideas are closer to the Chinese and others not so close.

Asking rhetorically "why do I tell you this," Maurer replied because all these things should be taken in conjunction together, and the U. S. should take action to support those who use their own brains and not those who use the brains of foreigners for judgment. "It seems to me that a certain elasticity in the position of the U. S. would strengthen the position of independent elements in North Vietnam."

In sum, Maurer asserted, it seemed to him the possibility of a political solution to this problem appears to be opening. Sine qua non conditions were full liberty and freedom for the South Vietnamese people to decide alone their own destiny, whatever this decision would be, whether Communist or non-Communist, whether reunification or continuing division. Thus, the Romanians consider they have done their utmost to try to bring about an end to the conflict.

At this point, I asked whether North Vietnam had accepted this principle of full liberty of the South Vietnamese people to decide their own destiny. Maurer replied "Yes -- absolutely yes." He asserted that from their common discussions there emerged quite clearly acceptance of the principle that the South Vietnamese should decide their own destiny and indeed there emerged the possibility of diplomatic relations and special ties between the U. S. and the South Vietnamese state as a result of talks ending the conflict.

This shows the North Vietnamese leaders do not see the aim of the solution as reunification.

I referred to his comments on the hard stand of the Chinese and asked what he could tell me of his talks in Peking. In answering, Maurer said he was telling us all elements so leaders in the U. S. could make their best judgment. He was confident that the U. S. would do its best to find a political solution. Maurer then said in his talks with the Chinese there were mainly two things of use to us.

A. The Romanians had presented arguments to the Chinese on the necessity of improving relations with the U. S. They had given a long list of reasons and arguments, "because I saw from my conversations with the President the interest of the U. S. to have better relations with China." This seemed to the Romanians to serve the cause of peace and indeed an essential element. "We tried to convince the Chinese of this."

B. Vietnam. In their discussions on this problem, Maurer said, the Chinese did not alter their position as they had not on point A above. They stuck to their well-known positions. "However -- because there is a however," Maurer stated, that after they had concluded talks with the Chinese where they had reached no mutual understandings on these two points, the Chinese themselves expressed a desire to have such exchanges of views periodically once or twice a year. This desire the Chinese had not expressed before in any earlier talks.

Referring to his knowledge of the Asian mentality and especially that of the Chinese, Maurer commented that though the Chinese had not changed their views one iota on these two issues, they had asked for future exchanges of views on these problems and "that means something in our arguments and reasons arrested their attention." They showed more marked interest in them than on any previous occasion. Maurer did not expect any other reply from the Chinese as it is difficult for them to answer yes or no within 24 hours. More time was needed. The turmoil and conflict now going on in China made changes even more difficult. But Romanians had noted this change (i. e., Chinese interest in periodic exchanges of views) for the first time, and it was a good omen.

At this point, I asked whether the President's San Antonio speech on Vietnam had been available to him during the course of his discussion in Hanoi. Maurer replied in the affirmative, saying it had come over the radio during the course of their discussions the last day. I then had an interpreter read the President's two sentences in regard to cessation of the bombardment of North Vietnam as quoted in Secretary Rusk's opening statement of his news conference on October 12 and asked whether the North Vietnamese had reacted to this to the Prime Minister. Maurer replied negatively, saying the President's statement came by radio on the eve of his departure and the North Vietnamese had no definitive text.

Maurer then said that he wished to make clear his view on a central problem which in his opinion is looked upon in an erroneous way in the U. S. A. He said he did not, of course, discuss with the North Vietnamese leadership North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam. However, he would like to convey his own impressions. North Vietnam, of course, denied sending men into South Vietnam. According to Maurer's impressions, this is not quite true though he might be wrong. He knows they're sending supplies to South Vietnam; also weapons, munitions, medicine, food and possibly specialists and technicians for training. His impression is that North Vietnamese troops, even if they are to be found, are few. So when President Johnson speaks about an obligation not to take advantage of the cessation of the bombardment, he is referring to things which are not based on reality and cannot be followed by North Vietnam. For example, North Vietnam could not cease to support the struggle in South Vietnam because a struggle is going on. At any rate, the U. S. is doing the same thing for South Vietnamese armed forces. Maurer repeated, according to his view, North Vietnamese troops as such are few if any and that during a cessation of bombing, North Vietnam would continue to supply South Vietnam struggle with food and munitions and indeed some of the aid socialist countries give to North Vietnam. He concluded that President Johnson's formulation does not seem satisfactory as it proposes a unilateral condition.

I explained our point of view and the necessity of some indication from Hanoi of reciprocity if we should cease bombardment. I cited our experience when on past occasions we had ceased the bombardment of North Vietnam. Maurer showed himself well aware of our position, but said he thought more than that could be done. The U. S. is a great and powerful nation and could do more with their possibilities without risking failure. "Possible military disadvantage would be compensated by political advantage." In Maurer's opinion, there had never before existed so many favorable conditions for reaching a political settlement.

I then asked his impressions of the Soviet position. Maurer said he had talked with Kosygin en route to the Far East, but that on the way back, in the absence of Kosygin, Breshnev and Podgorny, Suslov and Polyansky had been authorized by the Soviet Government to conduct their talks with Hanoi and Peking. The Soviets had expressed agreement with the Romanian position saying they looked at things in the same way, but emphasized the decision must remain with Hanoi. Maurer added that, moreover, he had stressed to the Soviet leaders that an increase in economic and military aid by socialist countries to North Vietnam is apt to assure greater liberty to Hanoi. According to Romanian judgment, this would make Hanoi less dependent on the Chinese.

Maurer summed up by saying his thoughts were very clear. Negotiations would start. The U. S. would put forward a list of proposals unacceptable to North Vietnam and Hanoi would do likewise. Then the other nations desirous of seeing an end to the conflict would try to push the two sides together. "This is our hope and our desire." Friends of both sides would compel each to give a little here and there and both sides would be compelled to listen to them. Thus, in the end, a solution could be found.

I thanked Maurer for his information saying it would be kept in confidence and to this end it would help if there were no publicity in Romanian news media about our meeting. Maurer replied he had been on the point of bringing up this subject since he would appreciate that his telling us these things, even though they might be known to the Chinese and Hanoi, could cause acute embarrassment to him and to the Romanian Government if it became known.