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~~TOP SECRET/PENNSYLVANIA~~

*Pres. file*

Saturday, October 21, 1967 -- 9:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Kissinger's account of the end of the Paris channel.

The hardening in their position is made absolutely clear by the reference to the Trinh interview of January 28: that language is talks "could" take place not "can," as in the private message of a few days ago.

The latest Burchett interview also goes directly back to the earlier interview and uses "could."

The two major possibilities are:

-- They regard U.S. politics and world diplomacy as too attractive to begin talks now.

-- Their talks with Communist China involve a new deal for support or, even, Chinese military action.

I am putting CIA to work on the latter hypothesis urgently.

W. W. Rostow

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-454

By 120, NARA, Date 10-4-95

WWRostow:rlh

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October 20, 1967

NODIS/PENNSYLVANIA

Paris 5545, from Kissinger

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-450

By 410, NARA, Date 7-21-95

I saw A and M for an hour and a half at 1900 at M's house to review our position prior to their calling Bo. I told them that Hanoi's message had been reviewed at the highest level and most carefully. In its present form it was simply too vague to be acceptable. M said that a French judge had told him that "pourront" implied a moral commitment. I replied that one of our highest judges held a different view. A then wrote down the following phrases and asked me about my reaction: "The bombardment and other acts of war against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) are the sole obstacle to meaningful negotiations. As soon as the bombing ceases, negotiations can begin." A said that he was prepared to put his personal position with Ho behind these phrases. I replied that while I could not speak for the U.S. Government, these phrases would be a big step forward. The DMZ problem would still have to be dealt with. (I had not seen the Burchett interview reported in your 57498 then.)

I left M's house at 2030 and returned to my hotel to await word about the appointment with Bo. At 2130 A called in great distress that Bo had refused to see them. We agreed to meet at 2230. The following is their report of the conversation. A did the talking and M listened on the extension and took notes.

A: We would like to see you urgently.

Bo: There is nothing new to say. The situation is worsening. There is no reason to talk again.

A: There is something new and very important.

Bo: Repeated word for word the same phrase as before.

A: There is something very important -- perhaps the most important juncture of our exchanges.

Bo: Repeated word for word the same phrase but then added: What is the important matter.

A: It has to do with the meaning of the last sentence of your last message and the sequence with which steps have to be taken.

Bo: Our position is perfectly clear. We stand on the Trinh interview with Burchett of January 28. Bo then repeated word for word the original phrase.

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M and A were distraught. M was close to tears and A, too, was extremely depressed. In these circumstances I confined myself to thanking them for their dedication and meticulousness. The channel failed, not for lack of goodwill or imagination, but because Hanoi either could not or would not talk. M said that at least we had learned what Hanoi meant by unconditional. I replied that no serious person could believe in an absolutely unconditional relationship. Our concerns had really been minimal: To make sure that Hanoi would talk promptly, that the talks would be serious and that Hanoi would not take advantage of the situation. A and M agreed. They half-heartedly urged a unilateral bombing pause but I said that this channel gave little encouragement for such a course. I told them again how much Washington appreciated their efforts. I told them that I would maintain strict secrecy. They promised that they would not comment no matter what might be said in other quarters. We agreed to meet tomorrow at 0930 to review the history of this channel.

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