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SUBJECT BELIEF OF NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH NGUYEN DUY XUAN AND OTHERS THAT THERE MUST BE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS

1. ON 14 APRIL 1975 NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROFESSOR NGUYEN DUY X U A N DESCRIBED THE UNOFFICIAL WORKING SESSIONS OF THE NEW CABINET ON 12 AND 13 APRIL.

2. XUAN SAID THAT MINISTER OF HEALTH SENATOR TON THAT N I E M, OF THE MODERATE THICH THIEN M I N H FACTION OF THE AN QUANG BUDDHISTS, INITIATED DISCUSSION ON THE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. NIEM ARGUED THAT THE PEOPLE ARE TIRED OF WAR AND ARE CONVINCED THAT A MILITARY SOLUTION IS NOT POSSIBLE. TO GAIN POPULAR SUPPORT, THE GOVERNMENT MUST SHOW THAT IT IS ACTIVELY SEEKING A POLITICAL SOLUTION WITH THE COMMUNISTS. XUAN BELIEVES THAT, THOUGH NOT SPECIFICALLY DISCUSSED, THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG CABINET MEMBERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN A CEASEFIRE AND TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THE CABINET MEMBERS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS NGUYEN VAN H A O, BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT HAS LITTLE CHANCE OF ACHIEVING MILITARY SUCCESS. XUAN SAID THAT HAO

CONTINUES TO BE CONCERNED WITH NATIONAL DEFENSE AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM; IN XUAN'S VIEW, HAO IS "OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY." XUAN SAID THAT HE IS PLEASED THAT PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN BACHAN "REAL" AUTHORITY, POINTING OUT THAT CAN WAS ABLE TO APPOINT CABINET AND DEPUTY CABINET MEMBERS WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING THIEU. XUAN ADDED THAT HE IS ENCOURAGED BY THE APPOINTMENT OF NGUYEN XUAN PHONG TO THE POSITION OF MINISTER OF STATE WITHOUT PORTFOLIO FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

3. DURING THE DISCUSSIONS, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE TRAN VAN DON DESCRIBED HIS MAIN TASK AS HALTING COMMUNIST FORCES AND THEN IMMEDIATELY TO BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE COMMUNISTS. HE DESCRIBED THE MILITARY SITUATION IN DARK TERMS, SAYING THAT THERE ARE "THREE OR FOUR" COMMUNIST DIVISIONS NOW IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS WHICH ARE MOVING SOUTH. DON REPORTED THAT MANY GOVERNMENT (ARVN) SOLDIERS ARE WITHOUT M-16 RIFLES AND THAT IT WILL BE SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE SUPPLIES ARE RECEIVED. DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD, DON INTENDS TO SUPPLY THESE ARVN SOLDIERS WITH WEAPONS FROM LOCAL DEFENSE FORCES, ON A "SELECTIVE" BASIS IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE THE POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECT THIS WILL HAVE ON MORALE OF THE LOCAL UNITS.

4. XUAN NOTED THAT HE JOINED THE CABINET FOR POLITICAL REASONS, TO PUSH FOR NEGOTIATIONS AND AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME TO PERSUADE PRESIDENT THIEU TO RESIGN. HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD NOT SUGGEST THIS TO THIEU DIRECTLY BUT THAT HE HOPES TO PERSUADE THIEU TO RESIGN THROUGH "INDIRECT" MEANS.