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Congressman Donald M. Fraser called on the PRG Representative to Paris and Ambassador to Geneva, Ambassador Pham Van Ba, on April 12 in Geneva. They held a two-hour exchange of views with emphasis on humanitarian matters and prospects for an end of fighting. Fraser urged the earliest possible ceasefire followed by negotiations. Ba's purpose in the exchange seemed to be to win support in Congress for a cutoff of U.S. aid to the GVN and to put PRG positions, policies and intentions in the best possible light. Fraser tried repeatedly to find some give in Ba's position on an early ceasefire. Ba insisted, however, that first Thieu must be removed and U.S. aid withheld from his successors. Fraser made clear that the PRG demand that the U.S. cutoff aid and thereby force the GVN to surrender before the ceasefire could start would be unacceptable to Congress and the American people. Fraser set the record straight on U.S. adherence to the Paris accords and noted that the USG, especially over the past year, had not fully availed itself of the provisions for military assistance.

Fraser said he understood the PRG had located remains of between 38 and 42 U.S. MIA in PRG-controlled territory and pressed for their return. Ba appeared conciliatory on this point and said he would forward this request to his government.

USEMB/S
4.14.75

SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN DONALD M. FRASER'S CONVERSATION WITH PRG
REP IN GENEVA

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FROM USDEL LOS

1. FOLLOWING VERSION OF CONVERSATION WAS PREPARED BY INTER-
PRETER AND HAS NOT BEEN SEEN BY CONGRESSMAN FRASER, WHO DEPARTED
GENEVA FOR MUNICH ON CONGRESSIONAL BUSINESS RIGHT AFTER MEETING.
FRASER PLANS RETURN WASHINGTON APRIL 17 IF NOT SOONER. WE SUGGEST
DEPARTMENT SHOW HIM THIS VERSION AND SEEK ANY ADDITIONS OR
CORRECTIONS.

2. SUMMARY: CONGRESSMAN FRASER CALLED ON PRG REPRESENTATIVE
TO PARIS AND GENEVA AMBASSADOR PHAM VAN BA AT PRG GENEVA OFFICES
MORNING APRIL 12 FOR TWO-HOUR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH EMPHASIS ON
HUMANITARIAN MATTERS AND PROSPECTS FOR END OF FIGHTING. BA'S
MAIN POINTS WERE THAT USG SHOULD ENCOURAGE THIEU TO STEP DOWN AND
CUT OFF AID TO HIS SUCCESSORS. PROCESS OF CEASEFIRE, PEACEMAKING
AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WOULD FOLLOW QUICKLY, BA SAID, IF USG
CUT OFF ALL MILITARY ASSISTANCE "PER PARIS ACCORDS". FRASER SET
RECORD STRAIGHT ON PROVISIONS OF PARIS ACCORDS AND NOTED THAT

USG, ESPECIALLY OVER PAST YEAR, HAD NOT FULLY AVAILED ITSELF OF
THESE PROVISIONS. FRASER CONTESTED SHARPLY SOME OF THE MORE
IMPORTANT AND OBVIOUS INEQUITIES IN BA'S PROPOSALS AND DROVE DOWN
PARTICULARLY HARD ON BA'S POSITION THAT PRG COULD NOT AGREE TO
CEASEFIRE UNTIL AND UNLESS USG HAD TOTALLY CUT OFF MILITARY
ASSISTANCE TO GVN. FRASER NOTED THAT SUCH A COURSE WOULD NOT
FACILITATE NEGOTIATION BUT RATHER WOULD COMPEL GVN TO SURRENDER
UNCONDITIONALLY, AND WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO CONGRESS AND AMERICAN
PEOPLE. FRASER SAID HE UNDERSTOOD PRG HAD LOCATED REMAINS OF
BETWEEN 38 AND 42 U.S. MIA IN PRG-CONTROLLED TERRITORY, AND PRESSED
FOR THEIR RETURN. BA SAID HE WOULD FORWARD THIS REQUEST TO HIS
GOVERNMENT.

3. BEFORE FRASER LEFT WASHINGTON APRIL 10 FOR GENEVA, WHERE HE
WAS AN ACCREDITED MEMBER OF USDEL TO LOS CONFERENCE, A CONSTITUENT
ACTIVE IN HUMANITARIAN MATTERS CONCERNING VIETNAM WAR HAD SOUGHT
AND OBTAINED AN APPOINTMENT FOR HIM TO CALL ON BA, AND URGED HIM
TO DO SO. MID-AFTERNOON APRIL 11 FRASER TELEPHONED PRG OFFICE
AND WAS ASKED TO COME IN FOLLOWING MORNING AT 9:30 AND TO BRING
HIS OWN INTERPRETER. FRASER SUBSEQUENTLY ASKED FSD FLOTT OF USDEL
LOS TO SERVE AS INTERPRETER. UNDER SECRETARY MAW CONCURRED.

4. MRS. FRASER ACCOMPANIED FRASER AND FLOTT TO MEETING, WHERE
THEY WERE RECEIVED BY BA AND AN AIDE WHOSE IDENTITY WAS NOT
ESTABLISHED. ATMOSPHERE WAS BUSINESSLIKE BUT RELAXED AND POLITE,
WITH NO STRIDENT POLEMICS OR ACCUSATIONS AND ONLY A MINIMUM OF
TEDIOUS REITERATION OF WELL-KNOWN PRG POSITIONS AND PROPAGANDA.
BA'S PURPOSE SEEMED TO BE TO WIN SUPPORT IN CONGRESS FOR CUTOFF
OF AID TO GVN AND TO PUT PRG POSITIONS, POLICIES AND INTENTIONS
IN BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT. BA'S EFFORTS WERE VERY MUCH AIMED AT THE
CONGRESS AND HE MADE NO ATTEMPT TO HIDE FACT HE WAS TRYING TO DRIVE
A WEDGE BETWEEN CONGRESS AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH, PARTICULARLY THE
PENTAGON AND EMBASSY SAIGON.

5. FRASER BEGAN BY DEPLORING THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS CONTINUATION OF THE WAR, THE BLOODSHED AND SAD PLIGHT OF REFUGEES. HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO GO BACK TO CONGRESS WITH SOME NEW THOUGHTS ON HOW A CEASEFIRE MIGHT BE ACHIEVED, HOW PEACE TALKS COULD BE STARTED BETWEEN GVN AND PRG, AND HOW INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE MIGHT BE

6. BA SAID CEASEFIRE CALLED FOR IN PARIS ACCORDS HAD NEVER BEEN HONORED BY GVN, WHICH FROM VERY OUTSET HAD SET OUT TO RECONQUER TERRITORY HELD BY PRG AND EXTERMINATE COMMUNISTS. BA SAID GVN BAD FAITH WAS SHOWN INTER ALIA BY ITS REFUSAL TO PUBLISH PARIS ACCORDS. THE MASSIVE DELIVERIES OF ARMS TO GVN JUST BEFORE ACCORDS WENT INTO EFFECT DID NOT MAKE GVN ANY MORE INCLINED TO RESPECT THE ACCORDS. NEITHER DID AMBASSADOR MARTIN'S STAUNCH SUPPORT FOR THIEU AND FREQUENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF REASSURANCE AND SUPPORT FOR THIEU FROM EXECUTIVE BRANCH. WHEN CONGRESS FINALLY BEGAN CUTTING DOWN MILITARY AID TO GVN, PENTAGON HOODWINKED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND DEFIED THE WILL OF THE CONGRESS BY FINANCIAL LEGERDEMAIN, FINDING UNEXPENDED FUNDS, ETC. PRG, AFTER LONG AND SAD EXPERIENCE, CONCLUDED THAT GVN, INCLUDING A SUCCESSOR-TO-THIEU GVN, WOULD NEGOTIATE ONLY IF U.S. AID WERE CUT OFF BY THE CONGRESS. THIS HAD WORKED IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA; IT WOULD WORK IN VIETNAM. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY.

7. RE REFUGEES, FRASER SAID THEIR NUMBERS SUGGESTED POPULARITY OF PRG WAS LESS THAN BA CLAIMED. BA SAID THEY CONSISTED MAINLY OF DESERTING ARVN WHO HAD CHANGED INTO CIVILIAN CLOTHES, OF PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN FRIGHTENED BY GVN'S DEMOGOGERY ABOUT BLOODBATHS AND SETTLING OF ACCOUNTS, AND OF PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN FORCED BY GVN AUTHORITIES TO FLEE. FURTHER, MANY FLED BECAUSE PAST EXPERIENCE TAUGHT THEM THAT ANY TERRITORY LIBERATED BY PRG WOULD SOON RECEIVE RAIN OF AMERICAN BOMBS AND SHELLS. ACTUALLY, THOSE WHO STAYED BEHIND WERE NOT MISTREATED AND THERE HAD BEEN NO BLOODBATHS. FRASER ASKED IF NEUTRAL OBSERVERS COULD ENTER PRG TERRITORY TO VERIFY THIS. BA SAID SOME WERE ALREADY THERE, AND DROPPED NAMES OF VARIOUS CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES ALLEGEDLY OPERATING NORMALLY IN RECENTLY LIBERATED AREAS. HE SAID RELIEF SUPPLY FLIGHTS FROM UN AND RED CROSS ORGANIZATIONS WERE LANDING IN DANANG. BUT WHEN FRASER PRESSED HIM FOR MORE CONCRETE AND CONVINCING ASSURANCES ABOUT SYSTEMATIC ACCESS TO PRG TERRITORY BY NEUTRAL OBSERVERS, BA SAID MORE TIME WOULD BE NEEDED BEFORE THIS COULD BE ALLOWED ON ANY LARGER SCALE BECAUSE PRG HAD TO CONSOLIDATE ITS CONTROL OVER NEWLY-LIBERATED TERRITORIES AND MOP UP ARVN REMANENTS THAT WOULD BE A THREAT TO SECURITY OF ANY NEUTRAL OBSERVERS. PRG WOULD FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY OF ANY NEUTRAL VISITORS AND IT WAS TOO SOON TO RECEIVE THEM. BUT THE BEST INDICATION OF THE RELATIVE POPULARITY OF THE TWO SIDES WAS THE RAPIDITY OF THE ARVN COLLAPSE; PRG SOLDIERS, WHO HAD NO HELICOPTERS, AIRCRAFT could not keep up with ARVN in retreat & collapse.

R. FRASER TURNED CONVERSATION BACK TO DESIRABILITY OF EARLIEST POSSIBLE CEASEFIRE AND HOW IT AND MEANINGFULLY NEGOTIATION PROCESS COULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT. BA PREDICTABLY INSISTED USG MUST FIRST REPLACE THIEU. FRASER CHIDED THAT THIS WOULD BE INTERFERENCE IN VIETNAMESE AFFAIRS, AGAINST WHICH BA HAD EARLIER REMONSTRATED. BA SAID ANY INTERFERENCE OUSTING THIEU WOULD BE GOOD INTERFERENCE AND COULD GO FORWARD WITH HIS BLESSING. FRASER SAID THAT IF A NEW GVN EMERGED AND THIEU WERE GUT AND NEGOTIATIONS RESUMED, HE SAW NO REASON WHY CEASEFIRE COULD NOT START WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS. BA REPEATED AND ENLARGED UPON PRG CONCERN OVER GVN LACK OF GOOD FAITH. BA NOTED THAT EVEN ANTI-THIEU FIGURES LIKE NGUYEN CAO KY AND OTHERS STILL ADVOCATED CARRYING ON THE WAR. ANY CEASEFIRE BEFORE A SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED WOULD ONLY BE USED, AS IT WAS RIGHT AFTER THE PARIS ACCORDS, TO REGROUP GVN FORCES AND IMPROVE THEIR POSITIONS. BA PROTESTED THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT CERTAINLY WANTED THE WAR AND THE ENDLESS KILLING OF VIETNAMESE BY VIETNAMESE TO STOP, BUT SAID ALL THEIR EXPERIENCE AND EVEN THE PUBLIC DECLARATIONS OF GVN OFFICIALS SHOWED THAT AS LONG AS U.S. AID CONTINUED THE WAR WOULD CONTINUE. HE MADE A RENEWED APPEAL FOR CONGRESSIONAL CUTOFF OF AID. IN ONE OF HIS RATHER FEW UNCAUTIOUS MIS-STATEMENTS OF FACT, HE SAID THAT CURRENT U.S. AID TO GVN WAS VIOLATION OF PARIS ACCORDS. FRASER POUNCED ON THIS, SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL, AND NOTED THAT FOR ABOUT A YEAR

USG HAD NOT BEEN REPLACING MATERIEL "PIECE BY PIECE AND TYPE FOR TYPE", AS IT WAS ENTITLED TO DO UNDER ACCORDS, BUT HAD BEEN SUPPLYING ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ARMS AND POL. WHEN ~~FRASER~~ REMARKED THAT DELIVERIES OF ARMS BY COMMUNIST COUNTRIES TO DRV/PRG SUBSTANTIALLY EXCEEDED AMERICAN DELIVERIES TO GVN, BA EVOKED U.S. PRE-PARIS ACCORDS STOCKPILING EFFORT AND SAID PRG DID NOT NEED ARMS FROM RUSS BECAUSE, ACCORDING TO AMERICAN ESTIMATES AND PRESS ACCOUNTS, IT HAD CAPTURED ONE BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF AMERICAN IN PAST MONTH.

4. FRASER SAID THAT IF PRG INTENDED TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH IT HAD NOTHING TO FEAR IN AN EARLY CEASEFIRE. HE TRIED VARIOUS REFORMULATIONS OF HIS THOUGHT TO SEEK SOME OPENING, SOME GIVE IN BAI'S POSITION, BUT FOUND NONE. HE MADE CLEAR TO BA THAT PRG DEMAND THAT U.S. CUT OFF AID AND FORCE GVN TO SURRENDER BEFORE THE CEASEFIRE AND NEGOTIATIONS COULD START WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PEOPLE.

10. FRASER THEN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD PRG KNEW EXACT WHEREABOUTS OF REMAINS OF BETWEEN 38 AND 42 AMERICAN MIA. HE SAID THAT HE SAW NO REASON WHY PRG SHOULD REFUSE TO ALLOW EXHUMATION AND RETURN OF REMAINS TO U.S. BA WAS SURPRISINGLY CONCILIATORY ON THIS POINT, AND SAID PRG WOULD PROBABLY BE RESPONSIVE ON ANY HUMANITARIAN MATTER OF THIS SORT. HE SAID FLATLY THAT HE WOULD FORWARD THE CONGRESSMAN'S REQUEST TO HIS GOVERNMENT.

11. BA WAS EQUALLY RESPONSIVE AND CONCILIATORY WHEN FRASER REFERRED TO CONVERSATIONS HE HAD HAD A MONTH BEFORE IN SAIGON WITH OPPOSITION LEADERS. BA SAID SOME OF THEM WERE ALL RIGHT AND THAT HE WAS SURE THEY WERE TELLING FRASER THE TRUTH ABOUT CONDITIONS IN SVN.

12. IN FINAL PLEA FOR CUTOFF OF AID BA SAID THAT LAOS SOLUTION HAD WORKED, THAT THERE HAD BEEN NEITHER VICTORS NOR VANQUISHED, NOR BLOODBATH NOR ACCOUNT SETTLING. SAME WOULD WORK IN CAMBODIA, NOW THAT U.S. WAS CUTTING OFF AID, AND COULD WORK IN VIETNAM IF CONGRESS WOULD FINALLY CUT OFF AID. ONLY THIS WOULD FORCE THE OTHER SIDE TO NEGOTIATE: THEY WERE THE CLIQUE THAT COULD GAIN AND SURVIVE ONLY IF THE WAR WENT ON, NOT THE PRG, AND THEY COULD HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO END IT AS LONG AS U.S. SUPPLIED THEM WHEREWITHAL AND FREQUENT HIGH-LEVEL STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT AND REASSURANCE. MEETING ENDED EXACTLY TWO HOURS AFTER IT STARTED AND WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT BOTH SIDES HAD SAID ALL THEY HAD TO SAY AND CONTINUATION WOULD ONLY INVOLVE REPETITION.

13. COMMENT: BA IS A FAIRLY SMOOTH AND SKILLFUL PROPAGANDIST. HE PROVED TO BE VERY WELL INFORMED ON ANYTHING OF IMPORTANCE THAT HAD BEEN IN THE AMERICAN PRESS, ON THE DECLARATIONS OF THE USG, GVN OR EMBASSY SAIGON, AND ON WHAT WAS GOING ON IN CONGRESS. PERSONALLY HE MAKES A GOOD IMPRESSION AND IS RATHER PERSUASIVE IN HIS PROTESTATIONS OF GOOD WILL AND CONCILIATORY PRG INTENTIONS. HIS PRESENTATION AND HIS CASE FALL APART, HOWEVER, UNDER THE QUIET PROBING AND SHARP REBUTTALS OF AN UNUSUALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND AWARE INTERLOCUTOR SUCH AS CONGRESSMAN FRASER, WHO MADE IT CLEAR TO BA THAT HIS CONDITIONS WERE SIMPLY UNACCEPTABLE.