

S E C R E T

Conversation with Dr. Tuyen

August 9

The discussion dealt initially with my request for Tuyen's help in getting Major Binh to work in real harmony with us in Chuong Thien. Binh has a close relationship with Tuyen. Tuyen said he would be seeing Binh soon and would help.

During this part of the talk I made clear we believed it was possible to work with Binh and the central government in reaching a common policy in Chuong Thien, but that changes were necessary. I said that while Major Binh wished to concentrate on controlling the people we wished to concentrate on winning their support.

The conversation then turned to the general situation. Tuyen said the situation has reached an impasse, and implied, as he had several times before in the discussion, that the government was too inflexible.

I asked what he thought the Americans should do. He said we should put ourselves in a strong position to ensure that if there was a coup in Saigon the military would continue to carry on the war against the Communists in the countryside and not lose heart or march on Saigon. He mentioned General Cao as an example. The Seventh Fleet should make a show of force off North Viet Nam in event of trouble in Saigon, Tuyen said.

I said this might be possible some distance from Saigon but near the capital I doubted we would be able to exert much direct influence over military leaders if Saigon exploded. At any rate, I said, this would be a negative U.S. position. What could we do positively, and again, I said it was hoped a real common ground could be found with the government in deed as well as word.

*(on the RVN side)*

Tuyen replied he had his doubts since changes would involve not rational policy shifts but changes of emotions and deep-seated attitudes on the part of a small group (presumably the family). It would take a miracle, he said.

I said Mr. Lodge might be the miracle. He said the situation might get worse with Lodge. I said it was too soon to tell. He agreed.

Comments: Assuming Tuyen is planning, he apparently was feeling us out on an assurance to use our influence to hold ARVN quiet in the countryside while the government changed in Saigon. This suggests any plans might involve a lightning take-over completely from within, rather than an overt strike against the Palace. ~~unification~~ would not require much military backing. My Vietnamese friends tell me Tuyen obviously is worried and under strain.

*This approach*

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*at least initially.*