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VIA CAS SAIGON 2077 FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE DTG 30/1030L
TO SEC STATE WASH EYES ONLY FOR RUSK, HARRIMAN, BALL, HILSMAN,
HUGHS OSD EYES ONLY FOR MCNAMARA, GILPATRIC, TAYLOR, KRULAK,
LVM WM. BUNDY
WHITE HOUSE EYES ONLY MCGEORGE BUNDY
INFO CASHONOLULU FOR ADM FELT EYES ONLY
CIA EYES ONLY MCCONE, CARTER, HELMS

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH CAS OFFICER EVENING OF 29 OCTOBER

1963 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] SAID THAT FOR PAST SEVERAL MONTHS HE HAS BEEN WORKING ACTIVELY TO UNIFY VARIOUS LOCAL GROUPS INTO COHESIVE POLITICAL ELEMENT. THESE GROUPS INCLUDE [REDACTED] FRONT FOR DEMOCRATIZATION, ELEMENTS OF THE DAI VIET PARTY, THE VNQDD AND DUY DAN PARTIES AND THE HOA HAO SECTION [REDACTED] STATED THAT IN SPITE OF THE HISTORIC INABILITY OF VIETNAMESE GROUPS TO FORM AN UNITED FRONT, HE HAS MADE DEFINITE PROGRESS IN BRINGING THESE GROUPS TOGETHER SINCE THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE IS SO FAVORABLE.

2. [REDACTED] SAID THAT ON THE BASIS OF THIS [REDACTED] HE

HAS, APPARENTLY AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ABOVE GROUPS, BEEN IN CONTACT WITH SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY. THE PURPOSE OF THESE CONTACTS HAS BEEN TO MAKE POLITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SENIOR OFFICERS IN CASE THERE IS A CHANGE OF REGIME. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THE MILITARY REACTION TO THE GENERAL NATURE OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS HAS BEEN ASSUREDLY FAVORABLE ALTHOUGH A FINAL DECISION AS TO DETAILS OF THE FORM AND STRUCTURE OF A NEW GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN MADE.

3. [] STATED THAT HIS THINKING AND THAT OF THE MILITARY OFFICERS COMPRISES BOTH SHORT AND LONG RANGE PROGRAM IMMEDIATELY AFTER A COUP D'ETAT, ASSUMING THAT IT WILL BE EXECUTED BY THE SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS, A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE FORMED WITH A GENERAL, PROBABLY DUONG VAN MINH, AS PRESIDENT. A CIVILIAN, PERHAPS TRAN VAN DO, WOULD BE NAMED VICE PRESIDENT. [] SAID HE BELIEVED THAT A MILITARY OFFICER WOULD BE NAMED MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, BUT THAT CIVILIANS WOULD HEAD ALL OTHER MINISTRIES WHICH WOULD PROBABLY BE REDUCED IN NUMBER FOR THE SAKE OF EFFICIENCY.

[] AND HIS COLLEAGUES BELIEVE THAT THE PLETHORA OF AMBITIOUS POLITICIANS BOTH IN AND OUT OF SOUTH VIETNAM MAKE MILITARY CONTROL OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT MANDATORY.

4. [] SAID THAT THE KEY FEATURE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE A QUASI LEGISLATIVE BRANCH KNOWN AS THE GROUP OF ADVISORS. THIS BODY WOULD HAVE THE POWER TO SUGGEST AND CRITICIZE, BUT NOT TO OVERRULE DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE ARE. THE ADVISORY GROUP WOULD NUMBER TWENTY FIVE OR THIRTY MEMBERS. TEN MEMBERS WOULD BE SELECTED BY CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL PERSONALITIES AND OTHER LEADERS. THE FIRST TEN MEMBERS WOULD INCLUDE IN ADDITION TO SOME OF THE PRESENT OPPOSITION LEADERS, REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR, DIFFERENT RELIGIONS ETC. THE FIRST TEN MEMBERS WOULD THEN SELECT ANOTHER FIFTEEN OR TWENTY MEMBERS MAINLY REPRESENTING VARIOUS AREAS OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND INCLUDING THE ETHNIC MINORITIES AND RELIGIOUS SECTS.

4. [] SAID THAT AFTER THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS TO ONE YEAR A NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD BE CHOSEN BY FREE ELECTION AND THAT ITS MEMBERSHIP WOULD BE LIMITED TO ABOUT FIFTY DEPUTIES. [] SAID THAT IN HIS CONTACTS WITH THE SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS IT HAS BEEN GENERALLY AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO RETAIN THE PRESENT SIZE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND STILL HAVE ENERGETIC AND CAPABLE DEPUTIES; THE EMPHASIS WILL BE ON QUALITY RATHER THAN ASSURING THAT EVERY SMALL REGION OF THE COUNTRY IS REPRESENTED. THE TRANSITIONAL GROUP OF ADVISORS WILL HAVE AS A PRIMARY OBJECTIVE THE PREPARATION FOR AN EFFECTIVE AND DEMOCRATICALLY CHOSEN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. [] SAID IT WAS ALSO AGREED THAT A TRUE AND RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS THE SINE QUA NON OF A NEW GOVERNMENT, AND THAT HE ENVISAGED HIS PERSONAL ROLE AS THE FORMATION OF SUCH AN OPPOSITION. [] ADDED THAT IT WAS PLANNED THAT AN EFFECTIVE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND A GENUINE OPPOSITION PARTY WOULD BRING ABOUT THE DISSOLUTION OF THE PRESENT OPPOSITION PARTIES (DAN VIET, VNQD, VU LY DAN, ETC) WHICH HE TERMED OBSOLETE AND GENERALLY WASTELESS.

6. [] SAID THAT WHILE THE LONG RANGE GOAL OF A NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MILITARY VICTORY AND ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REFORMS LEADING TO DEMOCRACY, THERE WOULD BE SHORT RANGE MEASURES NECESSARY THAT PERFORCE WOULD BE DICTATORIAL IN NATURE. HE MENTIONED THE ELIMINATION OF THE SAIGON PRESS (FOLLOWED BY SUBSTITUTION OF A RESPONSIBLE PRESS) AND THE ELIMINATION OF THE PRESENT JUDICIAL SYSTEM WHICH HE TERMED A POLITICAL ARM OF DIEM AND NHU. [] SOLICITED AMERICAN SUPPORT AND ADVICE IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

BOTH THE SHORT AND LONG RANGE PROGRAMS OF A NEW GOVERNMENT. IN THE CONTEXT OF AMERICAN SUPPORT AND ADVICE, [REDACTED] STATED THAT HE HAS BEEN WORKING ACTIVELY AMONG STUDENT ELEMENTS IN SAIGON FROM WHOSE RANKS FUTURE LEADERS WILL BE DRAWN. FOLLOWING THE BUDDHIST DISPUTE, A CLANDESTINE INTER-HIGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE COMPRISING TWENTY ONE MEMBERS REPRESENTING ABOUT FORTY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOLS WAS FORMED. THERE ARE SEVEN COMMUNISTS ON THIS COMMITTEE. [REDACTED]

SAID HE HAS BEEN ASKED BY OTHER STUDENTS HOW TO COUNTERACT THE COMMUNIST MEMBERS, BUT THAT IN THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE IT HAS BEEN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE ADVICE AND SUPPORT.

[REDACTED] DISCLAIMED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE TIMING OF A POSSIBLE COUP D'ETAT, AND WAS RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS MEASURES WHICH MIGHT BE TAKEN TO EFFECT A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE "DESTRUCTIVE" ASPECT OF ANY CHANGE, BUT WOULD BEND THEIR ENERGIES TO GETTING THE COUNTRY BACK ON THE ROAD WHEN THERE IS A CHANGE OF REGIME.

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