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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM REPORT NO. TDCSDB-3/651,039

SUBJECT VIEWS OF BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, H.A.F. HOHLER, ON A NEUTRALIST SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM DATE DISTR. 14 AUGUST 1962
PRECEDENCE ROUTINE

DATE OF INFO. EARLY AUGUST 1962 REFERENCES NONE

PLACE & DATE ACQ. VIETNAM, SAIGON (7 AUGUST 1962) INDICATING THAT IT IS NOT A
APPRaisal SEE BELOW

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE

SOURCE (AN INDEPENDENT VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST (C) WITH EXTENSIVE CONTACTS; FROM ANOTHER VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST.

APPR. ALTHOUGH IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT THE STATEMENTS SET FORTH IN THE REPORT WERE MADE INDICATED, IT IS CONSIDERED DOUBTFUL THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER ACTUALLY HOLDS THE VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM.

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, H.A.F. HOHLER, TOLD A VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST ON 24 AUGUST 1962 THAT HE HAD BEEN READING SOME OF THE JOURNALIST'S ARTICLES AND WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN A LATE JUNE ARTICLE ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS AND THE SOVIETS OVER NORTH VIETNAM. AFTER DISCUSSING THESE DIFFERENCES AT LENGTH, THE AMBASSADOR STATED HIS BELIEF THAT A THIRD FORCE IN VIETNAM WAS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT ACTUALLY EXISTS, AND THAT SUCH A THIRD FORCE IN NORTH VIETNAM, COMBINED WITH NEUTRALIST ELEMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, IS THE ONLY HOPE FOR VIETNAM. HOHLER EMPHASIZED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM IS A NEUTRALIST COALITION SIMILAR TO OFFICES AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SAIGON WHERE

THE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE AT THE HOME OF PETER ROBERT

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS
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THAT WORKED OUT FOR LAOS. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT THE AMERICANS ARE NOT TRAINED IN GUERRILLA WARFARE AND CAN NOT WIN THE WAR AGAINST THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS (VC) IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

2. THE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE AT THE HOME OF PETER ROBERTS,

INFORMATION OFFICER AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SAIGON, WHERE

ROBERTS ARRANGED A MEETING BETWEEN THE JOURNALIST AND AMBASSADOR HOHLER.

JOURNALIST THE JOURNALIST HAS KNOWN ROBERTS FOR SOME TIME THROUGH PRESS CONFERENCES

AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AMONG JOURNALISTS. HE WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN

THAT ROBERTS HAD ARRANGED THE MEETING AT THE REQUEST OF THE LORCE IN AMERICA

AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO TALK WITH HIM.

JOURNALIST NEITHER THE JOURNALIST NOR ROBERTS HAD MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO STATE

THEIR VIEWS DURING THE CONVERSATION. THE JOURNALIST ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR

THAT, FAR FROM BEING NEUTRALIST MINDED, HE FEELS NEUTRALISM FOR

SOUTH VIETNAM MORE THAN ANY OTHER SOLUTION. SINCE HE BELIEVES

NEUTRALISM TO BE NO MORE THAN A MAJOR STEP TOWARD ULTIMATE TAKEOVER

AND CONTROL BY THE COMMUNISTS. ROBERTS SHARPLY DISAGREED

WITH AMBASSADOR HOHLER'S STATEMENT THAT THERE IS NO CHANCE OF

WINNING THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM, INDICATING THAT IT IS MUCH TOO

EARLY TO MAKE SUCH A BLUNT STATEMENT, ALLUDING TO THE HUGE EFFORT

UNDER WAY AND THE GAINS ALREADY APPARENT. ROBERTS DID SAY,

HOWEVER, THAT THE SURFACING OF THE OPERATIONS IN NORTH VIETNAM

CATMA NGHE AN AND HOA BINH SHOULD DEMONSTRATE TO THE

AMERICANS AND TO THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM THE FUTILITY OF SUCH OPERATIONS.

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ROBERTS ALSO COMMENTED THAT HE WAS SURPRISED AT THE FAILURE OF THE VC TO REACT EARLIER IN THE PROPAGANDA FIELD TO OBVIOUSLY EXPLOITABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM AND THE AMERICANS.

4. (SOURCE COMMENT. JOURNALIST) THE/ SAID THAT HE THINKS THE ARTICLE THAT CAUGHT THE INTEREST OF AMBASSADOR HOHLER/ MAY HAVE BEEN ONE DATED SAIGON, 29 JUNE 1962, APPEARING IN AN EARLY JULY ISSUE OF THE PHILIPPINE HERALD, ENTITLED "INTRA-PARTY RIFT IN RED NORTH VIETNAM - MOSCOW HAS AN EDGE ON PEIPING?" JOURNALIST, THE/ SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD READ OUT OF THE CONTEXT AND MISINTERPRETED VARIOUS STATEMENTS IN THE ARTICLE TO WHICH HE REFERRED, WHICH LED HIM TO CONSIDER THE/ A NEUTRALIST. THE STATEMENTS BELIEVED

INVOLVED, WHICH APPEAR IN LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE ARTICLE, ARE AS FOLLOWS: "STUDENTS OF COMMUNIST NORTH VIETNAM HERE WERE

OF AGREEMENT THAT THE REPORTED GAINS - AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING - BY THE PRO-SOVIET GROUP, WILL EXERT A TEMPERATE INFLUENCE ON THE COURSE OF EVENTS. UNLESS THE SCALES ARE TURNED BY PEIPING IN FAVOR OF ITS PUPPETS AND IF THE FREE WORLD KNOWS HOW TO CASH IN ON THE RED DISPUTE, THE CHANCES WERE NOT DISMISSED OF A LONGER TRUCE IN LAOS, AND EVEN OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO EMBATTLED VIETNAM.

5. (FIELD COMMENT. IN A LATE JULY CONVERSATION WITH AN AMERICAN OBSERVER, THE COUNSELLOR OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SAIGON, R.A. BURROWS, ATTACKED THE DIEM GOVERNMENT, STATING THAT

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THERE COULD BE NO HOPE OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE VC
UNLESS DIEM WERE REMOVED, IN CRITICIZING THE
ILLIBERALITY OF THE DIEM REGIME, BURROWS APPLIED STANDARDS
OF CRITICISM THAT EVEN THE MOST ADVANCED WESTERN DEMOCRACY WOULD
FAIL TO MEET. DURING THE SAME CONVERSATION, COLONEL HENRY LEE,
MILITARY ATTACHE TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY, EXPRESSED HIS OPINION
THAT THE WAR AGAINST THE VC WAS NOT PROCEEDING FAVORABLY FROM
THE WESTERN POINT OF VIEW. HE APPEARED CRITICAL OF DIEM AND
SEEMED INCLINED TOWARD A MILITARY JUNTA, POSSIBLY UNDER
MAJOR GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH.
6. (FIELD COMMENT. US AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM,
FREDERICK E. NOLTING, COMMENTED ON 8 AUGUST THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER
HAS NEVER GIVEN THE SLIGHTEST INDICATION THAT HE HOLDS THE
VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN THIS REPORT. ON 8 AUGUST, AMBASSADOR
HOHLER TOOK A COMPLETELY CONTRARY LINE IN A DISCUSSION WITH
AMBASSADOR NOLTING, EXPRESSING OPTIMISM REGARDING THE PROSPECTS
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM. AMBASSADOR NOLTING SAID THAT HE
BELIEVED THAT THE INFORMATION SHOULD BE TREATED WITH GREAT
RESERVE, AND WITH THE POSSIBILITY IN MIND THAT IT MAY REPRESENT
A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO CREATE MISTRUST BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES
AND GREAT BRITAIN.)
7. (FIELD COMMENT. NGO DINH NHU, BROTHER AND POLITICAL
ADVISOR OF PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM, TOLD AN AMERICAN OBSERVER

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ON 8 AUGUST THAT, WHILE HE CONSIDERS FRENCH POLICY BOTH IN PARIS AND IN SAIGON TO HAVE AS ITS OBJECTIVE THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, HE FEELS THAT THE BRITISH HAVE A CONTRARY POLICY MORE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE US. NHU SAID THAT HE HAS HAD NO INDICATIONS THAT CAUSE HIM CONCERN WITH RESPECT TO THE BRITISH ROLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM, AND INITIATED THE COMMENT THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER HAD SAID TO HIM RECENTLY THAT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH VIETNAM OR THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM WAS "UNTHINKABLE.")

8. FIELD DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR ONLY), CINCPAC PACFLT PACAF ARPAC.

END OF MESSAGE

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