

TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM (1)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

SUBJECT NGO DINH NHU COMMENTS ON BUDDHIST INFILTRATION BY VIET CONG; BUDDHIST TACTICAL ERROR; HIS DISCUSSION OF COUPS D'ETAT WITH THE GENERAL OFFICERS; AND HIS UNFAMILIARITY WITH ANY OPERATIONS INTO SOUTH LAOS DATE OF FO. 19 JULY 1963 AND AS STATED DATE ACQ. VIETNAM, SAIGON (19 JULY 1963) PRECEDENCE ROUTINE REFERENCES IN

APPRAISAL SEE BELOW FIELD REPORT NO.

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

SOURCE [REDACTED]

PPR [REDACTED]

1. NGO DINH NHU WAS IN A CALM MOOD ON 19 JULY 1963, UNLIKE HIS MORE EMOTIONAL AND AGITATED DEMEANOR OF 25 JUNE AT WHICH TIME HE WAS IN A STATE OF EMOTIONAL SHOCK AND IN A DANGEROUS FRAME OF MIND. AT THAT TIME HE FELT THAT IF A POINT OF DRASTIC DETERIORATION OCCURRED, AND IF PRESIDENT DIEM BECAME "SERVILE" TO A FOREIGN POWER, NHU WOULD CONSIDER IT IN THE VITAL INTERESTS OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO LEAD EFFORTS AGAINST DIEM.

2. NHU SAID THAT PRESIDENT DIEM HAD DEBATED IN HIS OWN MIND ALMOST TO THE LAST MINUTE ON WHETHER HE SHOULD ISSUE THE CONCILIATORY PROCLAMATION OF 18 JULY. NHU ADDED THAT HE, HIMSELF, HAD WORKED MOST OF THE DAY TO PERSUADE THE PRESIDENT

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NLC 01R 198-2-1.0
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E.O. 13526, SEC. 3.5
NLC-19-43a
By N/N NARA, Date 4/17

TO PROCEED FAVORABLY WITH ISSUANCE OF THE STATEMENT. CONSEQUENTLY, NHU HAD MISSED HIS SCHEDULED MEETING WITH THE GENERAL OFFICERS THAT DAY. HOWEVER, HE SAID HE INTENDS TO MAKE FUTURE WEEKLY MEETINGS EACH THURSDAY WITH THE GENERALS UNTIL THE TEN-WEEK SEMINAR ON STRATEGIC HAMLETS AND ON THE PROBLEMS OF UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES HAS BEEN COMPLETED.

3. COMMENTING ON THE BARRICADES AROUND THE PAGODAS OF THE BUDDHISTS, NHU SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) HAD INFORMATION WHICH INDICATED THAT THERE ARE TWO OR THREE BONZES AT XA LOI PAGODA WHO ARE WORKING UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE VIET CONG. HOWEVER, THE GVN HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE BONZES IN QUESTION. NHU ADDED THAT THEY DID NOT BELONG TO THE BUDDHIST LEADERSHIP. BECAUSE OF THIS SITUATION, NHU SAID THAT HE FELT IT INADVISABLE OR RISKY TO REMOVE THE BARRICADES AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME.

4. NHU MENTIONED THAT THE BUDDHIST LEADERSHIP AND THE VIET CONG WERE SPREADING ALL KINDS OF RUMORS AND UTILIZING THESE RUMORS AS A WEAPON IN THEIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GVN. THIS HAD BEEN SKILLFULLY DONE AND ENOUGH ELEMENTS FOR POSSIBLE CREDIBILITY HAVE BEEN INJECTED INTO THE RUMORS TO ACHIEVE ACCEPTANCE BY MANY UNINFORMED PEOPLE. HE SAID THAT ONE OF THE RECENT RUMORS WAS TO THE EFFECT THAT MADAME NHU HAD ENGAGED IN A VIOLENT FIGHT WITH VICE PRESIDENT THO OVER THE BUDDHIST PROBLEM. NHU CLAIMED THAT THE RUMOR WAS ABSOLUTELY FALSE.

5. NHU EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THE BUDDHIST LEADERSHIP HAD COME TO FEEL THAT THEY HAD MADE A TACTICAL ERROR IN SIGNING THE 16 JUNE AGREEMENT.

CONSEQUENTLY, THEY HAVE FALLEN BACK ON THE TACTIC OF ACCUSING THE GOVERNMENT OF BAD FAITH. THIS WAS A TACTIC BY WHICH TO NEGATE THEIR ERROR IN SIGNING THE AGREEMENT. NHU SAID THAT HE FEELS THAT ANOTHER BASIC MISTAKE COMMITTED BY THE BUDDHISTS HAS BEEN THEIR INSISTENCE ON PUNISHMENT OF THOSE GUILTY AT HUE DURING THE VIOLENCE WHICH OCCURED ON 8 MAY. THIS IS CONTRARY TO THE "COMPASSIONATE PHILOSOPHY" OF BUDDHISM AND IT IS REGARDED PREJUDICIALLY BY THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE WHO WERE INVOLVED.

6. NHU CONTINUED: THE MILITARY ARE OPPOSED TO THE BUDDHIST CAMPAIGN AND THEY FEEL THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN WEAK AND INEPT IN DEALING WITH IT. THEY HAD BEEN SYMPATHETIC AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BUDDHIST CAMPAIGN, BUT HAD BECOME IRRITATED AND ANGRY AS THE SITUATION WENT ON AND AS THE BUDDHISTS' POLITICAL AIMS BECAME MORE APPARENT. NHU HAD SAID PREVIOUSLY, ON 17 JULY, THAT "IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SOLVE THE BUDDHIST PROBLEM, IT WILL BE CONFRONTED BY A COUP D'ETAT LED BY THE MILITARY."

7. NHU THEN SAID IN REFERENCE TO THE 11 JULY MEETING WITH 18 OF THE 19 SOUTH VIETNAMESE GENERAL OFFICERS THAT HE THOUGHT HE HAD "PROFOUNDLY ASTONISHED" THE GENERALS AND THAT THIS ASTONISHMENT DERIVED FROM THE NATURE AND RANGE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER AS WELL AS HIS CANDID APPROACH TO IT. [REDACTED] COMMENT. AT THE 11 JULY MEETING WITH THE GENERALS, NHU CREATED THE IMPRESSION IN THE MINDS OF SOME OF THE GENERALS THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO JOIN THEM IN A COUP D'ETAT ATTEMPT. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION REGARDING HIS OBJECTIVE, HE SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN AWARE THAT THE GENERALS FELT DISSATISFIED, CONFUSED, HAD COMPLAINTS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER, AND WERE AGITATED AMONG THEMSELVES. CONSEQUENTLY, HE HAD THOUGHT IT A GOOD IDEA TO GO THROUGH A KIND OF "PSYCHOANALYTIC" PROCEDURE WITH THEM AND TO TRY TO SURFACE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT THEY HAD BEEN BROODING ABOUT INWARDLY. HE SAID THAT HE WANTED THEM TO TAKE AN OBJECTIVE LOOK AT THE PROBLEMS CANDIDLY AND IN PUBLIC AMONG THEMSELVES. ALL PROBLEMS SHOULD BE STUDIED AND DISCUSSED AND NO QUESTIONS SHOULD BE TABOO. HE TOLD THE GENERALS THAT HE WAS OFFERING THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE THEIR COMPLAINTS AND HE HOPED THAT THEY WOULD REMEMBER IN THE FUTURE THAT THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN THIS OPPORTUNITY. NHU WANTED TO "DEFLATE" THE PROBLEMS BY EXPOSING THEM TO THIS KIND OF "OBJECTIVE" SEMINAR DISCUSSION. HE STATED THAT HE THOUGHT THAT HIS APPROACH HAD PROBABLY CAUSED CONFUSION AMONG THE GENERALS, BUT THAT HE BELIEVED THAT, AT THE SAME TIME, THEY HAD EXPERIENCED SOME SATISFACTION. HE REMARKED, WITH PLEASURE, THAT THE GENERALS WANTED TO SEE HIM AGAIN AND THAT HE PLANS TO CONTINUE ATTEMPTING TO EXPOSE "THE MYTHS." [REDACTED] COMMENT. BY THIS, NHU MEANS ACCEPTED STEREOTYPES, CONFUSED IDEAS, RUMORS, AND SO ON.)

8. NHU ASKED THE GENERALS WHETHER THEY FELT THAT CAN LAO PARTY POLITICS HAD AFFECTED MILITARY PROMOTIONS. HE TRIED TO SHOW THAT MANY OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH THE GENERALS ATTRIBUTED TO THE GOVERNMENT OR TO THE NGO FAMILY WERE ACTUALLY DERIVATIVE FROM, AND ENDEMIC TO, THE NORMAL CONDITIONS OF AN UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRY. ONE GENERAL ASKED HIM WHY THE GOVERNMENT ALLOWED PEOPLE TO

TALK IN THE COFFEE SHOPS ABOUT A COUP D'ETAT. NHU ANSWERED THAT IT WAS USELESS TO TRY TO SUPPRESS SUCH GOSSIP BECAUSE THIS KIND OF TALK IS A NORMAL PHENOMENON IN AN UNDERDEVELOPED STATE. HE THEN WENT ON TO DISCUSS HOW ONE SHOULD CONDUCT A COUP D'ETAT IN AN EFFECTIVE WAY WHICH WOULD ACHIEVE DESIRED OBJECTIVES AND AVOID MESSY BLUNDERS AND UNNECESSARY BLOODSHED. "WHY SHOULD WE NOT DARE TO DISCUSS SUCH A SUBJECT?" ALL SUBJECTS SHOULD BE EXAMINED "COLDLY AND SCIENTIFICALLY." NHU SURMISED THAT SOME OF THE GENERALS PROBABLY THOUGHT THAT HE WAS TRYING TO "UNMASK THEM."

9. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, NHU DISCUSSED THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE DICTATORSHIP, REFERRING TO NAZI AND FASCIST PRECEDENTS. HE TOLD THE GENERALS THAT IF THEY WANTED A TRUE DICTATORSHIP, THEY WOULD HAVE TO DELINEATE AND UNDERSTAND THE ATTRIBUTES OF SUCH A DICTATORSHIP, SUCH AS AN IDEOLOGICAL BASE, THE MANIPULATION OF CROWD PSYCHOLOGY, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SINGLE PARTY TOTALITARIANISM, AND THE EXERCISE OF TERRORISM.

10. NHU REMARKED THAT THREE GENERALS HAD ASKED HIM WHY HE DISCUSSED A PROBLEM LIKE A COUP D'ETAT WHEN PRESIDENT DIEM WAS STILL IN OFFICE. IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT NHU MENTIONED HIS EFFORT TO APPLY A PSYCHOANALYTIC TECHNIQUE AND TO DEFLATE COUP D'ETAT THINKING. HE SAID THAT HE KNEW THAT THIS KIND OF QUESTION HAD AGITATED AMONG THEM AND THAT HE WANTED TO EXPOSE IT TO EXAMINATION. HE HAD SAID TO THEM: "IF YOU WANT TO CONDUCT A COUP D'ETAT, THIS IS THE WAY TO GO ABOUT IT IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE."

11. NHU SAID THAT HE ALSO EXPOSED THE ISSUE OF THE RULING NGO FAMILY AS A POLITICAL FAMILY. HE TALKED ABOUT TRANSFORMATION OF THE REGIME AND POINTED OUT THAT NO REGIME IS DEFINITIVE. NHU WAS NOT WORRIED ABOUT SOME OF HIS PROCEDURE BEING PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS AND SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS ON THE RIGHT TRACK, AT LEAST FOR THE MOST PART.

12. FINALLY, NHU CLAIMED TO BE UNFAMILIAR WITH ANY ACTUAL PLANNING FOR OPERATIONS INTO SOUTH LAOS.



NHU FURTHER COMMENTED TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GVN HAD BEEN SO PREOCCUPIED WITH THE BUDDHIST PROBLEM THAT IT HAD HAD LITTLE TIME FOR OTHER MATTERS.

13. THE IMPRESSIONS WHICH WERE GAINED BY [REDACTED] CONVERSATION WITH NGO DINH NHU, AS REPORTED ABOVE, WERE AS FOLLOWS:

A. THE ATMOSPHERICS OF NHU'S CONVERSATION WITH THE GENERALS REMIND ME OF CONSISTENT CHARACTERISTICS IN THE MAN WHICH I HAVE OBSERVED DURING THE PAST YEAR. HE IS INTELLECTUAL, ACADEMIC, PRIDES HIMSELF ON FREE THINKING, AND BELIEVES THAT EVERYTHING SHOULD BE SUBJECTED TO EXAMINATION AND REASON. THERE ARE NO "TABOOS" AND HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF A REVOLUTIONARY THINKER. HE HAS TAKEN THE SAME LINE WITH THE REPUBLICAN YOUTH AND HE HAS DONE SO RECENTLY ON THE BUDDHIST QUESTION, CLAIMING THAT ALL HE REALLY WANTS THE REPUBLICAN YOUTH TO DO IS TO EXAMINE SEARCHINGLY ALL ASPECTS OF THE QUESTION.

B. THE NATURE OF NHU'S CONVERSATION WITH THE GENERALS WAS BOUND TO CONFUSE THEM AND HE IS AWARE OF THIS FACT. HE SAID MANY THINGS WHICH JUSTIFY THE SUBSEQUENT ACCOUNTS RENDERED BY SOME OF THEM. HOWEVER, I DOUBT THAT ANY GENERAL ASKED HIM: "DO YOU WANT TO LEAD US IN A COUP D'ETAT AGAINST PRESIDENT DIEM?", OR THAT HE ANSWERED: "I DO". NEVERTHELESS, SOME OF THE GENERALS COULD UNDERSTANDABLY HAVE PLACED SUCH A CONSTRUCTION ON WHAT MUST HAVE SEEMED AN EXTREMELY PECULIAR LINE OF TALK.

C. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT NHU WAS TRYING TO "UNMASK" THE GENERALS. I AM INCLINED TO THINK THAT HE ACTUALLY WAS TRYING TO SURFACE WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THEIR MINDS AND DEFLATE, AS HE PUTS IT, SOME OF THEIR COMPLAINTS OR THINKING AND PLANNING. HE WOULD INEVITABLY DO THIS IN AN ELIPTICAL, AMBIGUOUS, AND ROUND ROBIN WAY SO CHARACTERISTIC OF HIM ON MOST OCCASIONS.

D. NHU'S MANEUVER MAY TURN OUT TO HAVE BEEN SHREWD AND EFFECTIVE, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. IT MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN RISKY, BUT HE ACCEPTS THE RISK.

E. BEHIND ALL OF THIS, NHU PROBABLY DOES HAVE DEVIOS AND PERSONAL POWER OBJECTIVES RELATING TO HIS EVENTUAL SUCCESSION AFTER HIS BROTHER, FROM ONE CAUSE OR ANOTHER, LEAVES THE SCENE. IT IS REMOTELY CONCEIVABLE THAT NHU IS PREPARING THE GROUND FOR AN EVENTUAL COUP D'ETAT UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES AGAINST DIEM AND LED BY HIMSELF. HOWEVER, WHILE BEARING THIS POSSIBILITY IN MIND, I AM NOT INCLINED TO GIVE MUCH CREDENCE TO IT AT THIS TIME.

14. DISSEM. STATE USMACV CINCPAC ARPAC PACAF PACFLT.

END OF MESSAGE



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2020-11-01