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50~~SECRET/NODIS~~

January 31, 1969

EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Communication with Hanoi Prior to January 20

Prior to the inauguration, President Nixon was in communication with the North Vietnamese through a contact who is personally known to the top leaders in Hanoi. The messages were sent by me to the contact who delivered them to Mai Van Bo (DRV representative to the Government of France) and vice versa.

The President initiated the exchange with his message of December 20 (Tab A), which told the North Vietnamese that his Administration was prepared to undertake serious talks. On December 31, Hanoi sent its reply (Tab B), which emphasizes that its point of primary concern is U. S. willingness to withdraw troops. The ball was kept in play by the President's response of January 2 (Tab C), which states inter alia that his Administration is ready to withdraw U. S. forces from South Vietnam as part of an honorable settlement which includes mutual troop withdrawal. The North Vietnamese replied on January 13 to the President's message (Tab D). The President has not replied to this latest message.

The President has asked that this be very closely held.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

 NR/N, no. 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
 ut, NARA, Date 12/15/99

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~~SECRET~~/NODIS

December 20, 1968

Message to the North Vietnamese

- "1. The Nixon Administration is prepared to undertake serious talks.
- "2. These talks are to be based on the self respect and sense of honor of all parties.
- "3. The Nixon Administration is prepared for an honorable settlement but for nothing less.
- "4. If Hanoi wants, the Nixon Administration would be willing to discuss ultimate objectives first.
- "5. If Hanoi wishes to communicate some of their general ideas prior to January 20, they will be examined with a constructive attitude and in strictest confidence."

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December 20, 1968

MESSAGE TO ^{the} NORTH VIETNAMESE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

From: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

As we discussed today, I sent the following communication to Hanoi through a contact used in previous exchanges who is personally known to the top leaders in Hanoi. The message was as follows:

- "1. The Nixon Administration is prepared to undertake serious talks.
- 2. These talks are to be based on the self-respect and sense of honor of all parties.
- 3. The Nixon Administration is prepared for an honorable settlement but for nothing less.
- 4. If Hanoi wants, the Nixon Administration would be willing to discuss ultimate objectives first.
- 5. If Hanoi wishes to communicate some of their general ideas prior to January 20, they will be examined with a constructive attitude and in strictest confidence."

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December 31, 1968

1. We have on several occasions clearly declared that we came to Paris with a serious attitude and full of goodwill. If the US sincerely desires to resolve the problem and reach an honorable solution, as it has often said, it also must have a serious attitude and goodwill.
2. In order to arrive at a peaceful solution to the problem of Vietnam our position is very clear. It is founded on the Four Points of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which were reaffirmed on November 2, 1968. We also approve the Five Points for a political solution of the problem of South Vietnam put forward by the National Liberation Front on November 3, 1968.*
3. At the present time, if the conference of the four in Paris has not yet begun, it is because the Saigon Administration uses procedural issues to delay its opening, and because the representatives of the US support the absurd demands of the Saigon Administration. It is only after the opening of the conference that one will be able to discuss the deeper questions relating to a peaceful solution to the problem. However, if the US wishes, it may communicate its general ideas, and its specific ideas for making more precise points that are already known, for our serious examination.

Mai Van Bo commentary: At the beginning, I believe that the question is to know if the US wants peace, if it really wishes to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam, or if it only talks of this to make it possible to do nothing. For the rest, evidence indicates that the Saigon Administration does not want peace. Instead it wishes that the US remain in Vietnam so that it can continue to make a living from the war. As the US already leans on that Administration, we seriously doubt its attitude. To be quite honest, as long as the Thieu-Ky-Huang clique remains at the head of that Administration, it will be difficult to settle any of these problems.

* ~~A discussion of the Four and Five Points is at Tab C.~~

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January 2, 1969

Message to the North Vietnamese

"We have noted with interest Mai Van Bo's communication.

"In reply to his question, the Nixon Administration is willing to negotiate seriously and in good faith.

"The Nixon Administration solemnly affirms its readiness to withdraw U. S. forces from South Vietnam as part of an honorable settlement, which includes mutual troop withdrawal.

"It is our belief that progress depends on concrete proposals to achieve an honorable peace.

"We reaffirm our readiness to examine Hanoi's ideas carefully, with goodwill and in strictest confidence."

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