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DIST 21 FEBRUARY 1968

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SUBJECT GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM EFFORTS TO RECOVER FROM THE
VIET CONG TET OFFENSIVE

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON []

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SUMMARY. BY 13 FEBRUARY 1968 THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN),
ACTING UNDER THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF THE CENTRAL ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE
(PROJECT RECOVERY), HAD ESTABLISHED 125 REFUGEE CENTERS IN SAIGON AND
WAS DISTRIBUTING FIVE-DAY SUPPLIES OF FOOD TO FAMILIES. A BLOOD DONOR
PLAN HAD BEEN STARTED, THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW APARTMENTS WAS UNDER
CONSIDERATION, COASTAL SHIPPING TO DANANG, NHATRANG, AND CAN THO HAD
BEEN RESTORED, FOOD STOCKS FOR I, II, AND III CORPS WERE BEING INVEN-
TORIED, A PLAN HAD BEEN DEVELOPED TO FORM SELF-DEFENSE UNITS, THE POST
OFFICE HAD BEEN REOPENED, AND RAILROAD REPAIR SHOPS WERE IN OPERATION.
AT LEAST 37 PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS WERE ASSISTING RECOVERY. TWENTY-FIVE
HUNDRED REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT CADRE (RDC) WERE SELLING RICE,

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HELPING REFUGEES, DISTRIBUTING SUPPLIES, GIVING FIRST AID, AND INFORMING ON SUSPECTED VIET CONG (VC). POPULAR REACTION TO THE PRESENCE OF THE RDC IN SAIGON WAS FAVORABLE. THERE WAS DISAGREEMENT AMONG RECOVERY PERSONNEL AT BOTH CABINET AND WORKING LEVELS, HOWEVER. RDC TEAMS FACED RED TAPE. VICE PRESIDENT KY AND POLICE DIRECTOR LOAN WERE AGAINST PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS HELPING. LOWER HOUSE DEPUTY MINH THOUGHT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS NOT GIVING ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO LONG RANGE NEEDS. YOUTH GROUPS WERE OFFENDED BY NGUYEN BAO TRI'S METHODS. ALL IN ALL, HOWEVER, THE COMMITTEE WAS DOING A CREDITABLE JOB. SOME PEOPLE WERE PROBABLY OFFENDED AND OTHERS IGNORED WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN INCLUDED, BUT THE COMMITTEE WAS NOT AS BAD AS ITS DETRACTORS CLAIMED NOR AS GOOD AS ITS PROMOTERS CLAIMED. VICE PRESIDENT KY DID WELL AND SO, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, DID THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND REFUGEES. THE PROBLEM WITH THE YOUTH GROUPS REFLECTED ON MINISTER TRI. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH PERFORMED WELL. THE COMMITTEE CLEARLY PROVIDED A STIMULUS TO GVN QUICK RESPONSE, A SENSE OF DRAMA WAS DERIVED FROM THE EFFORTS, AND SEVERAL POLITICAL FORTUNES WOULD BE AFFECTED. END SUMMARY.

1. ON 3 FEBRUARY 1968 THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) ESTABLISHED A CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF TO THE PEOPLE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY WITH GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG AS CHIEF OF STAFF. THE COMMITTEE WAS SET UP TO COORDINATE THE WORK OF ALL CIVIL AND MILITARY AGENCIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF RESTORING ORDER AND

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SECURITY, RESTORING THE SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, ASSISTING THE VICTIMS OF THE VIET CONG (VC) ATTACK, AND HELPING PEOPLE TO ORGANIZE FOR SELF DEFENSE. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES THE PRIME MINISTER, THE MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, THE MINISTERS OF DEFENSE, INTERIOR, REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL WELFARE AND REFUGEES, ECONOMICS, PUBLIC WORKS AND HEALTH; THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INFORMATION, AND THE CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF. THE TASKS OF THE COMMITTEE COME UNDER SUBCOMMITTEES FOR REQUIREMENTS (HOANG VAN LAC); RESOURCE AVAILABILITY (TRUONG THAI TON); ALLOCATIONS; INFORMATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS (NGUYEN NGOC LINH); AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION (KHU DUC HUNG). AT THE PROVINCE LEVEL, SIMILAR COORDINATING BODIES ARE BEING ESTABLISHED. THE MINISTERS MEET DAILY WITH VICE PRESIDENT KY AT 0900 FOR INSTRUCTIONS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES MEET DAILY AT 1700 WITH GENERAL THANG TO REPORT PROGRESS.

2. BY 13 FEBRUARY THERE WERE 125 REFUGEE CENTERS IN OPERATION IN SAIGON. THE IDENTIFICATION OF FOOD STOCKS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MORE REFUGEE CENTERS AND MOBILE SALES UNITS WAS CONTINUING. ENOUGH RICE AND PORK WAS BEING SOLD TO PROVIDE RECIPIENT FAMILIES WITH SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES FOR FIVE DAYS. THE CURFEW HOURS WERE BEING SHORTENED IN DISTRICTS ONE, TWO, AND FOUR OF SAIGON WITH MINIMUM RESTRICTIONS BEING APPLIED. SECTIONS OF DISTRICTS THREE AND FIVE HAD ALSO BEEN OPENED UP. A BLOOD DONATION PROGRAM HAD BEEN STARTED BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND USAID

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HAD INVENTORIED REQUIREMENTS AND CABLED NEEDS TO FREE WORLD CAPITALS. THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS WAS PREPARING A PLAN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF 10,000 MULTI-STORY APARTMENT UNITS AT A COST OF TWO BILLION PIASTRES USING LOCAL CONTRACTORS AND MATERIALS. THE VIETNAMESE COASTAL FLEET WAS BACK IN OPERATION AND WAS TO BE USED TO SUPPLY DANANG, NHATRANG, AND CAN THO. INVENTORIES OF FOOD STOCKS HAD BEEN MADE IN CORPS I, II, AND III. SUFFICIENT STOCKS WERE ON HAND. THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR HAD DEVELOPED A PLAN TO SET UP SELF-DEFENSE UNITS WITHIN SUCH SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUCTURES AS CITY WARDS, VILLAGE COMMUNITIES, AND EMPLOYEE GROUPS. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INFORMATION AND PRESS WAS PLANNING TO PUT OUT A NEWSLETTER FOR SAIGON REFUGEES, THE MAIN POST AND TELEGRAPHIC OFFICE HAD BEEN REOPENED, AND RAILROAD WORKSHOPS WERE BACK IN OPERATION AND REPORTING LITTLE OR NO DAMAGE.

3. THERE WERE 37 PRIVATE VIETNAMESE ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND REFUGEES INCLUDING CATHOLIC AND BUDDHIST WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS, THE VIETNAMESE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, THE VIETNAMESE CONFEDERATION OF LABOR, MERCHANTS ASSOCIATIONS, AND STUDENT AND YOUTH GROUPS. THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF PRIVATE GROUPS WAS LARGER THAN 37, BUT MANY HAD FORMED JOINT ORGANIZATIONS. DESPITE A SLOW START CAUSED BY TARDINESS ON THE PART OF GVN DISTRICT OFFICIALS, THE 2,500 REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT CADRE (RDC) WERE ENGAGED IN MANNING RICE SALES UNITS, WORKING IN REFUGEE CENTERS, DISTRIBUTING RELIEF SUPPLIES, GIVING SIMPLE FIRST AID,

5 ON THE PART OF GVN DISTRICT OFFICIALS, THE 2,500 REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOP-5
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 3 MENT CADRE (RDC) WERE ENGAGED IN MANNING RICE SALES UNITS, WORKING IN 4
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PROCESSING REFUGEES AND HELPING THEM FILL OUT OFFICIAL FORMS, AND TURN-
 ING IN SUSPECTED VC. THE PEOPLE HAD RECEIVED THE RDC WELL. MANY
 RESIDENTS OF SAIGON WERE SEEING THE RDC FOR THE FIRST TIME AND WERE
 IMPRESSED WITH WHAT THEY SAW, PARTICULARLY THE HONESTY AND MOTIVATION
 OF THE GROUP. THE PEOPLE BUYING RICE AT SOME CENTERS WERE BEGINNING
 TO IDENTIFY VC SUSPECTS TO THE RDC AND AS A RESULT ARRESTS WERE BEING
 MADE. RDC SONGS WERE HEARD FROM BUSES CARRYING RDC AROUND TOWN AND
 THE SOUND WAS IMPRESSIVE.

4. THE PICTURE OF ACTIVITY, COORDINATION, AND EFFECTIVENESS WAS
 MARRED, HOWEVER, BY INTERNAL SQUABBLING AMONG THE MINISTERS AND EX-
 CESSIVELY BUREAUCRATIC BEHAVIOR BY OFFICIALS ON THE WORKING LEVEL. FOR
 EXAMPLE, THE RDC TEAMS WERE OFTEN FRUSTRATED BY THE INABILITY OF THE
 DISTRICT OFFICIALS TO CUT THROUGH THE RED TAPE AND GET ON WITH THE JOB.
 IN ONE CENTER, ALL OF THE OFFICIALS INSISTED ON SIGNING THEIR NAMES TO
 A DOCUMENT BEFORE ONE PEASANT WAS ABLE TO PURCHASE HIS RICE. THERE WAS
 A REPORT THAT VICE PRESIDENT KY AND POLICE DIRECTOR LOAN HAD AGREED ON
 THE INADVISABILITY OF ACCEPTING OFFERS OF COLLABORATION IN REFUGEE RELIEF
 FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR ON THE GROUNDS THAT WITHOUT PRIVATE ASSISTANCE
 THE GVN WOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO DO THE JOB. KY AND LOAN WERE ALSO RE-
 5 PORTED TO BE FEARFUL OF HAVING "NEUTRALISTS" AMONG THEIR PRIVATE 5
 4 ORGANIZATIONS EXPLOIT THEIR ROLE TO CREATE A GROUNDSWELL IN FAVOR OF 4
 3 ENDING THE WAR IMMEDIATELY AND FORMING A COALITION GOVERNMENT. HO 3
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VAN MINH, ONE OF THE TWO LOWER HOUSE REPRESENTATIVES ON THE RELIEF COMMITTEE, BELIEVED THE COMMITTEE SHOULD TIGHTEN UP ITS MODE OF OPERATION. IT SHOULD NOT, FOR EXAMPLE, WASTE ITS TIME ON PERIPHERAL ISSUES AND SHOULD CONCENTRATE INSTEAD ON RESTORATION OF SECURITY AND AID TO VICTIMS. MINH FELT THAT THE COMMITTEE WAS MOVING AHEAD ON PROJECTS WITHOUT ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO LONGER RANGE NEEDS. MINH FELT THAT INSTEAD OF MERELY MOVING REFUGEES INTO TEMPORARY RELOCATION CENTERS, THE COMMITTEE SHOULD HAVE GIVEN IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION TO PERMANENT RELOCATION OF REFUGEES, INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION, AT LOW COST, OF BASIC HOUSING ON BURNED-OUT SITES — A PROPOSAL BEING DEVELOPED BY THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. THE COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED THAT ANYONE WISHING TO VOLUNTEER HIS SERVICES SHOULD DO SO DIRECTLY TO THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND RELIEF. MANY INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS FOLLOWED THIS INSTRUCTION BUT SOME, FOR EXAMPLE, THE YOUTH GROUPS, THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THEY VOLUNTEERED THEIR SERVICES TO THE COMMITTEE THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT. TO COPE WITH THE ASSISTANCE BEING OFFERED, MINISTER TRI HELD A MEETING ON THE MORNING OF 9 FEBRUARY WITH ALL VOLUNTEER GROUPS. HE TOLD THEM HE WANTED YOUTH TO GET INVOLVED IN GARBAGE COLLECTION, REFUGEE RELIEF, AND WRITING A DECLARATION AGAINST THE VC. HE PROVIDED NO SPECIFIC DIRECTION, BUT RATHER ASKED THE GROUPS TO SUBMIT PROJECTS FOR HIS CONSIDERATION. THE GROUPS WERE DISGUSTED WITH THIS PROCEDURE AND CEASED OFFERING THEIR SERVICES TO TRI. IN-

5	THE VC. HE PROVIDED NO SPECIFIC DIRECTION, BUT RATHER ASKED THE GROUPS	5
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3	TO SUBMIT PROJECTS FOR HIS CONSIDERATION. THE GROUPS WERE DISGUSTED	3
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STEAD, MANY GROUPS TURNED BACK TO THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND REFUGEES FOR DIRECTION.

5. ON BALANCE, IT MAY BE SAID THAT THE RELIEF COMMITTEE WAS DOING A CREDITABLE JOB. ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AN EXAMPLE OF ADVANCED MANAGERIAL OR POLITICAL SCIENCE IN ACTION, THE COMMITTEE MANAGED TO GET A PROGRAM MOVING AND TO MOTIVATE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO WORK WITH, OR AT LEAST BESIDE IT. SOME PEOPLE WERE PROBABLY ANTAGONIZED IN THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE COMMITTEE AND ITS PROGRAMS; MANY GOOD PEOPLE WERE PROBABLY IGNORED. NEVERTHELESS, THE PROGRAM WAS NOT AS DEFICIENT AS ITS DETRACTORS INSISTED NOR AS IMPRESSIVE AS ITS ENTHUSIASTS CLAIMED. VICE PRESIDENT KY WAS DOING A FIRST RATE JOB COVERING ALL BASES AND INSURING, WITH THE HELP OF NGUYEN NGOC LINH, THAT FULL (SOMETIMES TOO MUCH) PUBLICITY WAS GIVEN TO THE EFFORT. THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND REFUGEES WAS OBVIOUSLY SWAMPED BOTH WITH REFUGEES AND WITH THOSE WHO WISHED TO HELP; STILL, HE MANAGED TO SET UP MORE CENTERS EACH DAY AND KEEP THE CENTERS SUPPLIED WITH VITAL MATERIALS. MINISTER TRI FALTERED BADLY WITH YOUTH GROUPS AND DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE RECOVERED. THE ONLY CONCRETE ACTION REPORTED WAS THE DISPATCH OF HIW OWN CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES TO THE STREETS TO CLEAN UP THE TRASH, A JOB THE YOUTHS WOULD AND COULD HAVE DONE ON A CONTINUING BASIS HAD THEY BEEN GIVEN PROPER DIRECTION. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH WAS PERFORMING WELL. IT WAS TOO EARLY TO TELL HOW WELL THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS WOULD CARRY OUT

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HIS FUNCTIONS.

6. WHATEVER THE EVENTUAL JUDGEMENT OF THIS COMMITTEE MAY BE, IT WAS CLEAR THAT ITS FORMATION WAS A STIMULUS TO QUICK REACTION BY THE GVN, THAT A HEIGHTENED SENSE OF DRAMA WAS DERIVED FROM ITS EFFORTS AND THAT THE POLITICAL FORTUNES OF SEVERAL LEADING FIGURES WOULD BE AFFECTED BY ITS OPERATIONS.

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