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#39 meeting notes	open 7-17-85 NLS 84-322 meeting with Pope Paul	12/23/67	A
	1 p. possible classified info.		
#40 meeting notes	open 7-17-85 NLS 84-322 meeting with Pope Paul	12/23/67	A
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#41 aide memoire	open 7-17-85 NLS 84-322 from President to Pope Paul	12/23/67	A
	7 p. possible classified info.		

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President's Meeting with Pope Paul (Dec. 23, 1968)

(from J. Valenti's notes)

President gave the Pope an aide memoire. It noted the Pope's appeal for a bombing halt.

"My country has tried this path before. I would not exclude the possibility that it may again appear wise at some point."

It cited two objections:

- 1) past sterile experience and danger to our troops
- 2) If Hanoi was able to improve its military position (because of a halt), any talks would be sterile and dilatory on Hanoi's part.

"Those judgements could change." It noted that the San Antonio offer had been rejected by Hanoi, publicly and privately.

Referred to his recent TV interview regarding elections and the possible role of NLF "individuals" in finding peace.

Discussed the question of POW's. Suggested Pope's sending a representative of NVN to discuss the matter and if possible look into the condition of our prisoners. Noted GVN would agree to a visit to SVN and observation of prisoners there.

Pope said that of course he could not support war ~~fixany~~ ~~kind~~ but that he wanted to help.

Discussion of Kosygin. President recalled Glassboro.

Said he expected "kamikaze" tactics to be used by NVN/VC.

(above from back-up material on President's trip to Holt funeral and beyond)

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Auth: NLS 84-322
By sig, Date 7-17-85

DECEMBER 23, 1967 IN THE POPE'S OFFICE

Meeting of the Pope and the President - Meeting began at 8:50 p. m. ended 10:07 p. m.

After asking about each other's health, the following dialogue took place.

PRESIDENT: I was impressed with the December statement of his Holiness and of his recent reply to the College of Cardinals. The Holy Father and I think very much alike on many issues.

I have just come from Australia where I talked with practically all the leaders of the Asian world. We feel we are ready to stop the fighting immediately but we can't stop just half a war; we must stop it all. Hanoi has great problems but they believe the U. S. will tire and fail just like France did - and then they can win by default what they lost on the battlefield. We are being extremely careful not to widen the war by bringing China and Russia.

One half of our people want to do more.

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Twenty percent of our people want to pull out. Thirty percent follow the moderate course of the President - thus 80 percent of the U. S. either follows the President or wants to do more. Twenty percent make all the noise and mislead Hanoi into believing we will give up.

So I have this problem of keeping the pressure on without widening a war. My right hand keeps the pressure steady and with my left hand we seek negotiations.

Here it seems is where the Holy Father can play a great part.

POPE

I want the President to know that I have not only given counsel to South Vietnam but I have scolded the North for not making moves toward peace.

PRESIDENT

I think your statements have been fair and just. I want to express the hope that with President Thieu and the new Senate President the Holy Father may be able to

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persuade them to begin informal talks with ~~the~~ ^{SOME OF THOSE} ~~associated with the~~ ^{ASSOCIATED WITH THE} ~~NLF~~ NLF. Ultimately South Vietnam must settle its problems in South Vietnam - a settlement on the basis one man-one vote constitutional government. Then the U. S. can come home just as we did in Europe and in Asia and spend the money we are expending on war on education, health, and all the other needs of our people.

(At this point the President gave to the Pope and to Cardinal Cicognani copies of a proposed press release dealing with this conference. The Pope objected to a line near the end of the release which said "We will never surrender South Vietnam to aggression or attack." R The Pope said that if this line were in the release it would appear that the Pope was endorsing war. The conversation resumed.)

POPE

I am grateful for your visit and also your sentiments and your work in behalf of peace. I will never forget our conversation in New York. The five points that you outlined before you left on your trip were very good. I understand very well the situation of the U. S. today.

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POPE (Con'td) You went to South Vietnam to protect and defend a small country and now you are engaged in a great war. We must declare our own position to the world as friends of peace and foes of war. I must differentiate my position from yours although I very clearly understand your good intentions and your good hopes. I want to further the solidarity of my agreement with your intentions but you must understand I can never agree to war.

Perhaps the methods you are now using will not arrive at your expected goal. North Vietnam will not cease its activities - especially when it has great powers supporting it. I do not believe the war will end but I do believe that its character can change, becoming a defensive rather than an offensive one.

PRESIDENT Does his Holiness believe that Soviet Russia wants this war to continue?

POPE It is difficult to say but when Podgorny was here he told me that Russia would never abandon the cause of North

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Vietnam. I tried to convince him that this was the proper time to collaborate with the U. S. in peace moves but I received negative results.

Is there some way the U. S. could give an impression of a change in the character of this war to gain world favor? I am hurt and saddened that the U. S. moral position is injured by world opinion.

In talking with Vice President Humphrey I reminded him that the U. S. has great missions that it performs as the guardians of freedom. Your great society programs are applauded. ^{But} ~~What~~ the Vietnam episode colors all this.

What can I do to come to your aid? We will continue to preach peace and to be witness to your good intentions.

Might it be possible for the U. S. to give new examples of its generosity?

I have received messages from great personages of the world to plead with you to stop the bombing. The Church

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cannot give its approval to bombing as a means of defending liberty. Is there anybody that we can contact as an ~~xxx~~ intermediary - the only one we know is the Commission and that is very weak.

Can I be an intermediary for you - I could say that I know that what the U. S. says is true - that it truly wants peace. Can you give me your assurances of this?

PRESIDENT Yes, of course, and this statement that we have read says it too. ~~Qax~~

CARDINAL
CICOGNANI But Hanoi refuses to talk. How can we overcome this?

PRESIDENT We have stopped bombing five times but this only increases the murder. Now we are hopeful that South Vietnam ~~xxxx~~ and representatives of the NLF can talk and settle their differences locally.

POPE May I say this to the Russians: I have discussed all of this with President Johnson and he wants very much to stop this war. What will you do? May I say this to the

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Russians and use your name?

PRESIDENT: Yes. What you would be saying is essentially what the Aide Memoire says but of course we both agree that the Aide Memoire should not be made public.

Kosygin told me at Glassboro that he had ^{word} ~~word~~ if the U. S. stopped the bombing, negotiations could get started. We said that we would stop the bombings if talks would get started. He said that he would talk to North Vietnam . When we received no word from him, we asked our Ambassador to press him for some kind of report. Finally Kosygin said "You are still bombing and nothing can be done. " Thus he slammed the door on us. We believe that he talked to North Vietnam and they told him no. We never publicized this.

When Kosygin met earlier with Wilson, he said he wanted to get talks started but North Vietnam said no then also. We know that China and Russia are supporting and will continue to support Hanoi.

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We think the Russians would like the hostilities to stop because they don't want a confrontation. But I am not sure of this.

POPE Unhappily, the U. S. is more exposed to propaganda than the Russians are. Please continue these appeals. Patience is needed. Everything you do for peace I will support.

PRESIDENT Hanoi is simply not going to the conference table because Hanoi believes they will win this war in Washington. It will take a long time to prove but I am convinced the best avenue available to us now is in the South -- talks informally between the ~~two governments~~ Thieu government and representatives of the NLF.

POPE Your suggestion for South Vietnam is good. I will encourage it.

PRESIDENT It seems to me that if South Vietnam's government would more or less leave us and talk informally with the NLF - and thereby the NLF leave Hanoi - this could be a way for South Vietnam to settle its own fate and have

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Hanoi and the U. S. pull away.

POPE

This is all very good but it will take time.

PRESIDENT

We must begin. It would be very useful if the Pope through his sources in South Vietnam could persuade Thieu and others to talk to the NLF informally. Anything the Holy Father can ~~do~~ do to encourage this will be very beneficial. This would be one effective way of disengaging the NLF from Hanoi - and South Vietnam from us.

I am also very hopeful the 'Pope will send a representative to see our prisoners in North Vietnam and to see the prisoners being held in South Vietnam. Hanoi ~~is~~ is ignoring and violating the Geneva convention prisoner rules. If the Pope can call on both sides to accord just and humane treatment to prisoners and ask for permission to visit both sides, we would be willing to open our doors immediately.

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POPE

I ~~xxxx~~ urge you to have patience and perseverance in seeking peace. I believe it important for you to give new aspects to this war - to make it a more defensive war instead of an offensive war. It will strengthen your moral position in the world. You are now being accused of being unjust. You can ~~na~~ make the same propaganda yourself by changing the war.

(At this point the President went over the press release again with the Pope. The President said that he would strike the sentence that the Pope felt was a bit ~~objectional~~ objectionable. The Pope and the Cardinal both agreed that this would meet their approval.)

CARDINAL
CICOGNANI

With whom should Thieu and the new Senate President talk?

PRESIDENT

Thieu is a good man - honest - and a Catholic. As you know, the Catholics are in a minority in South Vietnam. In the recent election, a new

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Senate was voted in and a Catholic was elected as President of the Senate. They are both men of strength and firmness. I hope the Pope will encourage them to talk - (and here the President smiled and gestured to the Pope) just as the Pope encouraged me to pass my education bills. We are now spending \$9 billion more on education. And the Pope can claim some responsibility for this.

(The Pope smiled and offered his hands in a gesture of affection for the President.)

POPE I am hopeful that you will exploit every possibility that will lead to peace.

PRESIDENT I want to do what I think is the best thing to do - to get the South Vietnamese to handle the problems of South Vietnam. We have a story in Texas about Ford automobiles carrying a slogan on the trunk of each car that said "Made in Texas by Texans ^{FOR TEXANS}. My motto now is "Peace in South Vietnam for South Vietnam

and by South Vietnamese.

What I would hope that the Pope would do is this !

Through your Apostolic Delegate or other effective

channels tell Thieu and the Senate President to

talk to representatives of the NLF and to do it in their

own way. If the Pope would do this, I strongly believe

it would offer some chance of peace.

POPE

I think I can do something.

PRESIDENT

You can say that ~~the~~ ^{THIEU} President is willing to have informal discussions, why not you?

POPE

Is it possible that the truce at Christmas could be extended by a day or two? Could you not show the world that on the day of peace January 1 you will also make this a day of truce?

PRESIDENT

My problem is this: My military leaders tell me that the North Vietnamese have trucks lined up bumper to bumper and as soon as the truce begins they start them moving

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and those supplies and those men kill our soldiers.

On August 25 I told Hanoi we would draw a circle around it of three hundred miles and if we stopped bombing there could talks begin?

On September 10 at San Antonio I made my speech which publicized a portion of this.

I held back until October 25 - and during that time they kept coming and they kept killing.

Arch Bishop Lucey went to South Vietnam as one of my observers during the election. He told me that every time we quietened down they increase their pressure. In the ~~27~~ 37 day bombing pause, they built up a seven months supply.

POPE

Where do they get their men, their means, their materiel?

PRESIDENT

By terror they are recruiting in the South - and they are now down to 14 year old boys. They are getting desperate and we are certain that we are hurting them very very much. They are using Kamikaze tactics for

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they desperately want a victory and they are unable to achieve one.

POPE

We shall pray for you and we shall pray for your efforts for peace.

PRESIDENT

Is it agreeable now for me to release this statement with the one sentence removed?

Q The Pope nodded his head and said "Yes, it was agreeable."

I don't want to press the point but I did want to know if I can assume that the Pope will try to bring the South Vietnamese to informal talks - and will immediately help out the prisoner problem. (The Pope nodded.)

POPE

Would you have any objection to receiving an aide memoire from me which would set forth my views?

I want you to know that we will follow the same theme as we have before. I assure you of my loyalty and devotion to the ideals that the U. S. stands for.

PRESIDENT

Will the Pope be helpful in getting the South Vietnamese to talk informally with the NLF along the lines I have

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outlined?

POPE

I will do whatever ~~is~~ is possible. I will study the prisoner situation and see what contacts can be made. This is a cause which is close to my heart.

Aide Memoire to His Holiness the Pope from President Lyndon B. Johnson
Saturday, December 23, 1967

I come to you on the eve of Christmas to ~~explore~~ ^{discuss} the best route to peace in Vietnam, and to ~~receive~~ ^{explore} your counsel. *things to be discussed*

You have offered "unarmed cooperation in the reestablishment of true peace." I accept that offer with eagerness and an open heart.

His Holiness has eloquently expressed the yearning felt by all humanity for peace in Vietnam. My government and people share that yearning. We know it is shared, too, by the people of South Vietnam -- and indeed by all men, except a handful of fanatics in a few capitals.

Let me express my views on a course of action that has been frequently suggested in recent months. It is said that the United States should once again unilaterally stop the bombing of North Vietnam, with the hope that, somehow, that act of self-denial -- together with the pressure of men of good will around the world -- might bring the leaders of Hanoi to enter into serious negotiations for a peaceful settlement.

My country has tried this path before. I would not exclude the possibility that it may again appear wise at some point.

However, I am bound to say that two factors lead me to a position of the gravest doubt and reserve at the present time.

The first factor is, that such action would cost the lives of many men now fighting against aggression. In every case in the past, cessation of the bombing has been used by the other side to accelerate the movement

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By [signature] Date 7-17-85

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of supplies and men to the South.

For example, in the 37 day pause of 1965-66, I was told by representatives of the Soviet Union that if I could hold a pause for from 12 to 20 days, a serious move to negotiations might result.

Their judgment proved wrong. Nevertheless, I extended the pause to thrice 12 days. The United States received at the end what can only be described as a brutal diplomatic rebuff.

A year ago we worked for three months, through various diplomatic channels, to make the Tet season an occasion for the transition from war to peace.

The result was a massive exploitation of that pause by North Vietnam. The forces just above the demilitarized zone were re-supplied. This, in turn, laid the groundwork for a strategy of exerting pressure on the South by violating the demilitarized zone. We suffered great costs from their bad faith during 1967, and we have reason to believe that bad faith will be revived when the weather in that region improves.

Your Holiness, I have just ^{today} come from Vietnam. My responsible commanders in the field tell me that the North Vietnamese are at this

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moment taking steps to exploit even the very short pauses agreed to for Christmas, New Year's and Tet.

My first reason, then, for rejecting the road of unilateral action and hope for a measured response, is that our experience and current intelligence tell me an increased price will be paid in the blood of my men.

But the second factor is even more important. It is my fear that, if Hanoi is free to -- and believes it can -- improve its military position through a bombing cessation, any talks that might result would be

sterile and dilatory on Hanoi's part. The resulting ~~situation~~ might well ~~represent a cruel delusion~~^{be} and a step away from peace rather than toward it.

These judgments could change as a result of some new ^{other} sign from Hanoi along the lines I have suggested recently in ~~a speech at San Antonio~~^{on a San Antonio speech and several public addresses.} His Holiness should be aware, in confidence, that the suggestions made at that time have been diligently explored through authentic contacts with Hanoi. They have been rebuffed both privately and publicly, ~~and~~ I regret to report that Hanoi's present position only reinforces the concerns I have stated above.

~~These being my views on the prospects in this direction,~~ I have tried repeatedly to interest Hanoi in the possibility of talks, either without conditions, or with the kind of limited unilateral reduction in ^{bombing} ~~military~~ ^{activity} ~~action~~ that my government attempted from late December of 1966 through early April of 1967. But there has been no useful response to these suggestions, which indeed go back over a long period.

Thus, I have been inclined in the last few months to look increasingly ^{toward} ~~in the direction of~~ what might be achieved ^{in the search for} ~~toward~~ peace within South Vietnam itself, ~~and~~ ^{and} it is this in particular that I wish to discuss with His Holiness.

The question, of course, involves the so-called National Liberation Front and those individuals now associated with it. I am inclined to make a sharp distinction between these two.

On the one hand, we appear to be seeing today a subtle ~~and~~ ~~sophisticated~~ propaganda offensive designed to depict the Front as

independent of Hanoi, and as having a position that might contribute to an honorable peace.

As to the Front's independence, ^{a great deal of} voluminous evidence over many years has convinced me that, as an organization, it is, quite simply, an instrument of Hanoi.

As to the Front's program, including the new version issued in September and recently circulated at the United Nations, I find myself deeply skeptical that it offers a reasonable peace. ^P On the contrary, the program appears to call for a coalition government in South Vietnam, in which the Front would control the levers of power, and, in short order, the whole political structure. Documents captured recently in South Vietnam, and of ^{undoubted} unquestionable authenticity, contain instructions identical to those under which Communist Parties operated in certain Eastern European countries after the Second World War, with tragic results. Again in confidence, I must report that authentic contacts within the past month, ^{with} sources intimately familiar with Hanoi and the Front, ^{produced} have elicited frank statements that support this gloomy interpretation.

Yet, on the other hand, I believe a situation is evolving within South Vietnam that may, at some point, produce real possibilities of movement toward peace through political contacts, ^{not} with the Front as an organization, but with individuals now associated with the Front. ~~It~~ ^{to this possibility} ~~is this possibility to which~~ ^{Conversations} I referred in my television statements earlier this week. ^{TP} For every reason, I believe such contacts must be primarily the affair of the South Vietnamese government. And, without easy

immediate
optimism or hopes for ~~early~~ success, this is the path that I am inclined to pursue at the present time.

I believe many thoughtful South Vietnamese, including members of the government of South Vietnam, ~~are inclined to~~ take the same view. President Thieu and I discussed it in Canberra a few days ago. Although he is understandably ~~and properly~~ cautious, I believe he ~~is also prepared~~ *desires* to be constructive if real possibilities should open up.

The South Vietnamese are concerned,
~~One of the major reasons the South Vietnamese are anxious, as the world comes to talk about a solution between Saigon and the "NLF," is that the political life of the non-Communists in South Vietnam is so fragmented that they fear a highly organized Communist minority, operating as a popular front, might defeat the large, non-Communist majority in a political battle.~~
increases
-- and presently fragmented --

In the light of these views, I believe it important that our influence on the South Vietnamese be exercised in two directions.

First, ~~We~~ *Understanding* we should encourage the South Vietnamese to find a solution in South Vietnam, ~~recognizing~~ *"recognizing"* all the while the extreme delicacy of the question of the ~~"recognition"~~ of the NLF. I believe President Thieu's formula ~~to be good, that is, he will talk "informally" with "members" of the NLF.~~ *is useful. He has said that* Leading anti-Communist figures in South Vietnam, including President Thieu and the newly elected president of the South Vietnamese Senate, ~~for example,~~ *(to name one)* might be encouraged to look in this direction, ~~For~~ *will require* no other reason than this, peace must mean, among other things, some form of reconciliation among those who live their lives in that country.

NGUYEN VAN HUYEN

Peace can best be achieved by South Vietnamese, for South Vietnam, in South Vietnam.

Second -

~~I have traveled long and come here today, for a second reason,~~

I believe

~~because those who have some influence in South Vietnam must try to~~

encourage the South Vietnamese to organize the great anti-Communist

majority into some sort of effective national political coalition. *As I look*

ahead, it seems to me inevitable that some day, ~~in some form~~, the

Communists, having abandoned war, will seek ~~political~~ power in South

Vietnam through political *means. Those who have resisted Communism on the*

battlefield must be prepared to resist it at the polls. The
~~they are now being defeated on the battlefield.~~ Continued fragmentation

of the vast non-Communist majority could result in a tragedy which would

~~have rendered~~ *so far* ^{the} fruitless all ^{have} courage and suffering that ~~has~~ gone into the

struggle ~~for the independence of this people.~~

Holiness's
It would be good if your ^{influence} in South Vietnam, as well as mine and all others who can help, could continue to be used to help overcome the inherited factionalism of South Vietnamese political life. ~~so that this~~ gallant but suffering people could face their political future with confidence and with the knowledge that the Communists ~~will be incapable of defeating~~ *would not* them at the ballot box.

If these thoughts conform to your own knowledge and insight, you

could ~~may wish~~, in your New Year's statement for the Day of Peace, ~~to~~ speak

directly to the South Vietnamese, *You could urge* ~~urging~~ those now working with the

Viet Cong to abandon the dream of conquering their country, ~~with northern~~ *through terror*

and aggression. You could urge ~~help~~ *could call* ~~urging~~ them to turn to the path of national reconciliation; and you

calling ~~on~~ those who now fight in this little country, to turn their

thoughts and energies to the needs of the people. ~~and the independence, dignity, and progress of the whole region of which they are a part.~~

On the eve of Christmas, when Christians -- and men of other faiths -- are touched by a divine ^{spirit,} ~~spark,~~ I have come round the world to ask your help ~~and pledge my own capacity to struggle against all odds and passions~~ ^{-- to that I shall not cease to struggle} for a ~~true and~~ stable and honorable peace.