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January 28, 1966

BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Ambassador Vu Van Thai (pronounced "TIE")

You have agreed to see Ambassador Thai this afternoon. This will be your first meeting with him since he presented his credentials on December 16, 1965.

Thai was born in Hanoi in 1919. He received his university education in Paris. He was a member of the Resistance during the war. In the late 40's and early 50's he, as a left-wing, non-Communist nationalist, associated himself with Ho's Viet Minh. He served on Ho's staff during the negotiations for Indo-China's independence during this period. When this effort failed and fighting broke out with the French, Thai served with the Viet Minh forces. He left the Viet Minh when he became convinced of the Communist nature of the movement and the inability of any non-Communist to influence the course of events. He escaped capture and death by the skin of his teeth.

After the Geneva Conference of 1954, he joined the GVN which he served as Director General of the Budget until 1961. He broke with President Diem at this time and joined the Secretariat of the UN where he has held several positions in financial and technical fields.

Thai has done a great deal of public speaking and is especially effective with our liberal critics.

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Thai is going to Saigon next week for his first consultation since he assumed his post here. Two views he holds strongly are worth noting:

He feels our pause was wise, but that we should resume bombing at an early date. He feels, too, that we should have additional pauses at irregular intervals to keep open the possibility of a positive DRV response to our peace initiatives.

He believes strongly in the importance of preserving South Vietnam's image as an independent nation. For this reason he thinks his government should be kept closely informed of our political and diplomatic intentions and moves and, where possible, the GVN should be given the opportunity (or even pressed) to take the lead.

Chester L. Cooper

McGeorge Bundy

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