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Who Murdered “Marigold”

New Evidence on the Mysterious Failure of Poland’s Secret Initiative to Start U.S.-North Vietnamese Peace Talks, 1966

by

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Working Paper No. 27

Washington, D.C.

April 2000



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Of the many secret mediation efforts undertaken during the Vietnam War to initiate negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) from 1965 until April 1968 (when Hanoi and Washington openly agreed to start what became the Paris peace talks), historian George C. Herring has judged “Operation Marigold” to be “in many ways the most intriguing,” a seemingly promising chance for a diplomatic breakthrough whose “origins and denouement remain shrouded in mystery.”¹ A series of clandestine indirect contacts between the warring sides brokered by Polish intermediaries in the second half of 1966, Marigold climaxed in December with a tentative apparent agreement on a ten-point program to end the war, and the scheduling, and then delay and cancellation, of a direct secret meeting between U.S. and DRV diplomats that was originally set to occur in Warsaw on December 6. In his memoir *The Vantage Point*, Lyndon B. Johnson wearily consigned the entire affair to the realm of academic investigators, asserting that it comprised far more shadow than substance: “The day-to-day dialogue and maneuvering in the Marigold channel will probably interest diplomatic historians. They reveal more confusion than intrigue, but they do contain some interesting ingredients of secret diplomacy.”² By contrast, perhaps the most thorough scholarly analysis of all the secret diplomatic probing efforts during this period to open Vietnam peace talks, written after the declassification of a substantial portion of the U.S. record, concluded in 1980 that, “With the benefit of hindsight, it appears that the MARIGOLD contact offered the best opportunity for the Johnson Administration to negotiate a settlement of the conflict.”³

Probably the most obvious reason why this murky episode has fascinated and tantalized analysts is the controversy over whether “Marigold” constituted a missed, or blown, genuine opportunity to open direct peace talks between Washington and Hanoi almost a year-and-a-half, and many thousands of lives, earlier than actually was the case. Since its collapse and subsequent leaking to the press shortly thereafter, sometimes acrimonious arguments have persisted over why Marigold withered. Critics of the Johnson Administration, both American and foreign (including the Poles), blamed its failure on U.S. bungling or pressure tactics, especially what they label ill-timed and ill-conceived bombing raids on Hanoi on the eve of the scheduled talks (and then during efforts to re-schedule them). Senior U.S. officials such as President Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, however, voiced doubts whether the Poles had ever in fact obtained Hanoi’s consent for their diplomatic venture, and argue in any case that the North Vietnamese had no valid cause to break off the contacts if they indeed had genuinely approved them. Besides these unresolved disputes over who was to blame for Marigold’s failure, uncertainty has also remained as to who started it in the first place—the North Vietnamese, the Poles, or even the Italians, as the

¹ George C. Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1983), pp. xxiv, 211. See also Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. 104-106, where he describes Marigold as “mysterious and possibly promising.”

² Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969* (citations from paperback edition, New York: Popular Library, 1971), p. 251.

³ Wallace J. Thies, *When Governments Collide: Coercion and Diplomacy in the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1968* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), p. 341. Herring took a more skeptical view, noting the lack of evidence for such a conclusion. See *Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 213. For a more recent but far less detailed scholarly overview of U.S. handling various peace initiatives during this period, see Herring, “The Not-so-Secret Search for Peace,” in *LBJ and Vietnam*, pp. 89-120.

Italian ambassador, Giovanni D'Orlandi, was a key participant in the three-way discussions in Saigon with Polish International Control Commission (ICC) representative Janusz Lewandowski and U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge—and on what basis. Finally, the Polish efforts have also generated acute interest (both at the time among the handful of U.S. policy and intelligence officials aware of them, and subsequently for scholars) for the clues they presumably contained for deciphering the Soviet Union's attitude toward the war at a time when the Kremlin, stung by Beijing's charges of taking too soft a line toward the West, was refusing to play an explicit mediatory role in the Vietnam conflict; U.S. analysts presumed that Warsaw would not act without Moscow's approval, but the degree of coordination, and the extent to which the Poles were acting at their own initiative or on behalf of their superpower patron, remained a mystery.

In trying to address these and other riddles relating to Marigold and other Polish mediation efforts during the Vietnam War—not to mention analogous, if less ambitious, mediation attempts by communist states such as Hungary, Romania, and later the Soviet Union itself, that are beyond the scope of the immediate article—scholars have been severely constrained by their limited access to reliable evidence. From the late 1960s until the end of the 1970s, the only available accounts (other than terse official reactions once the episode became public) came from journalists piecing together information leaked by official sources on various sides (perhaps best represented by David Kraslow and Stuart Loory's *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*), which tended to criticize the Johnson Administration's conduct, and a few published memoirs by American officials who stoutly defended their handling of the affair (e.g., Johnson's *The Vantage Point* and Henry Cabot Lodge's *As It Was*) or rendered a mixed assessment (Chester L. Cooper's *The Lost Crusade*)—but in any case did so briefly without extensive reference to still-classified documents.⁴ A breakthrough came in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the declassification (under the pressure of a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit)⁵ and then publication of a sanitized version of the diplomatic volumes of the Pentagon Papers, including an extensive chronology and analysis of Marigold accompanied by texts and excerpts of many key formerly secret U.S. documents.⁶ These declassified materials formed the basis of an important scholarly analysis of Marigold and other abortive attempts to begin Vietnam peace negotiations, Wallace J. Thies' *When Governments Collide: Coercion and Diplomacy in the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1968*.⁷ In recent

⁴ David Kraslow and Stuart Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1968; citations from Vintage paperback edition), pp. 3-88; Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, pp. 251-252; Henry Cabot Lodge, *As It Was: An Inside View of Politics and Power in the '50s and '60s* (New York: Norton and Co., 1976), pp. 172-181; Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), pp. 322-323, 333-342.

⁵ Daniel Ellsberg had withheld the negotiating volumes of the Pentagon Papers when he leaked them to *The New York Times* and other newspapers in 1970-71, saying he did not want to imperil any ongoing diplomatic efforts to end the war. Portions of them emerged during the course of his trial, which was thrown out due to government misconduct in 1973. On the circumstances surrounding the declassification of the Pentagon Papers' negotiating, diplomatic, or "contact" volumes (as they were variously known), see Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. vii-xxvi, as well as accounts of Ellsberg case such as Peter Schrag, *Test of Loyalty: Daniel Ellsberg and the Rituals of Secret Government* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), and David Rudenstine, *The Day the Presses Stopped: A History of the Pentagon Papers Case* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

⁶ See Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 209-370; many of these declassified materials were also published four years earlier in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2 (Stanfordville, NY: Coleman Enterprises, Inc., 1979). For pinning down this source, I would like to thank L.W. Gluchowski, who in turn thanks Edwin Moise for his assistance.

⁷ Thies, *When Governments Collide*, see esp. pp. 138-153 and 338-342.

years, the available declassified U.S. documentation on Marigold has been significantly augmented by the opening of additional materials (especially in the National Security Files) at the Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas and the National Archives II at College Park, Maryland, as well as the publication of the Vietnam volume for 1966 in the State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series, whose editors were able to exploit access to White House records unavailable to the Pentagon Papers' compilers.⁸

Still, all of these materials necessarily presented a one-sided view—an American perspective—and thus did not allow researchers to glean much more about the process, dynamics, chronology, or basic substance of decisions or decision-making on the communist side, whether Polish, Soviet, or North Vietnamese.

This article marks part of an effort to go beyond this limited evidentiary base by presenting findings from the communist, and in particular the Polish and, to a lesser extent, (North) Vietnamese, side of "Operation Marigold." It grows out of the author's past and ongoing association with the Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), which in recent years has been working to bring to light new evidence from communist-side archives and sources on the Cold War in general and on the Vietnam War in particular in preparation for a forthcoming special issue of the *CWIHP Bulletin* on new evidence on the Cold War in Southeast Asia and the Indochina conflicts. As part of these efforts, the Project has not only begun to collect and publish Soviet (Russian) and Chinese materials,⁹ and become involved in efforts to obtain and encourage the release of Vietnamese sources,¹⁰ but has also (in part due to the difficulty of gaining access to the aforementioned archives) has made a special attempt to gather materials from East-Central European archives. As illustrated in a previous presentation by the current author, to a conference at the LBJ Library in October 1997, materials from the Polish, East German, and Hungarian archives, to take the examples of countries with relatively open archival access, can usefully supplement other sources and enrich our understanding of relationships, actions, and viewpoints within the communist world.¹¹

⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, vol. IV: Vietnam 1966* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), see index references under "Marigold peace initiative," p. 1004. (Hereafter abbreviated as *FRUS*.)

⁹ See, e.g., Ilya V. Gaiduk, "The Vietnam War and Soviet-American Relations, 1964-1973: New Evidence from Russian Archives," and Zhai Qiang, "Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1965: New Chinese Evidence," in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 6-7 (Winter 1995/1996), pp. 232, 250-258, and 233-50, respectively; Zhai Qiang, "Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-1968: New Evidence from Chinese Sources," CWIHP Working Paper no. 18 (Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 1997); and Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, Stein Tonnesson, Nguyen Vu Tung, and James G. Hershberg, eds., "77 Conversations Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977," CWIHP Working Paper no. 22 (Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 1998).

¹⁰ Although access to Vietnamese archives on the war remains limited, some progress has been made in establishing scholarly ties and organizing oral history workshops. For an early report, see Mark Bradley and Robert K. Brigham, "Vietnamese Archives and Scholarship on the Cold War Period: Two Reports," CWIHP Working Paper no. 7 (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, 1993); since then, CWIHP has brought a delegation of U.S., Russian, Chinese, and European historians to Hanoi for meetings with Vietnamese colleagues (January 1996); participated, along with the National Security Archive, in a project organized by Brown University involving oral history conferences and workshops (November 1995, June 1997, February 1998, June 1999, December 1999) gathering Vietnamese and U.S. scholars and former officials; and organized scholarly workshops at the Wilson Center (April 1997 and March 1998), and a visit to meet with colleagues in Hanoi in January 2000.

¹¹ James G. Hershberg, intro. and comp., "Central and East European Documents on the Vietnam War: Sample Materials from Polish, Hungarian, and East German Sources," October 1997.

The Michalowski Report

Undoubtedly the most fascinating and important document yet to emerge from this effort—and a focus of this article—is a formerly secret, 128-page, Polish-language manuscript¹² by one of the key Polish foreign ministry operatives involved in Vietnam-related negotiations, including Marigold: Jerzy Michalowski, then the ministry's director-general and leading expert on Asia and Vietnam to Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki.

Biographical data on Michalowski collected by U.S. officials depict a classic life story of a Polish leftist swept up in the tumultuous history of mid-century Europe.¹³ Born in Kiev, Ukraine, in 1909, the “son of a Polish nobleman and a Jewish mother,” Michalowski had moved to Poland with his family in his youth and, after graduating from Warsaw University in 1934, worked in social and housing organizations (and apparently joined the Polish Socialist Party) in the years leading up to World War II. Mobilized into the army as the Nazis invaded, he took part in the defense of Warsaw but was soon captured and spent the remainder of the war in a POW camp in Waldenburg, Germany, where fellow residents included Rapacki (the future foreign minister) and other Poles who emerged as prominent figures in the postwar government. (“Polish politicians who shared prison camp experiences have seemed to form a sort of society in which the members are not permitted to fail in later life,” a secret CIA profile of Michalowski later noted.)

Soon after the war, Michalowski joined the postwar government's foreign ministry (as well as the new Polish United Workers' Party, or PUWP, when the Socialist and Communist Parties merged in 1948) and served as Polish ambassador to England from 1946 to 1953. After brief stints in the foreign ministry bureaucracy and as vice minister of education, in 1955-56 Michalowski launched an association with Asian affairs as Poland's representative to the International Supervisory and Control Commission charged with monitoring the Indochina accords reached at the 1954 Geneva Conference, a position that put him in regular contact with Vietnamese communist leaders. Fluent in English, Russian, and French, he then served as Poland's delegate to the United Nations from 1956 to 1960 before being recalled to Warsaw to serve as the Foreign Ministry's Director-General and to take specific charge of Department II, “Communist Asia,” and the Department of International Political and Economic Organizations. In that capacity he headed the Polish delegation to the Geneva Conference on Laos in 1961-62, and during this period he emerged as one of Foreign Minister Rapacki's closest associates, described in late 1966 by the U.S. ambassador as “Rapacki's major adviser on [the] Vietnam war.”¹⁴ During the period of Poland's most active involvement in initiatives related to the Vietnam War, in 1965-67, he was heavily engaged on this issue as Rapacki's aide and undertook repeated missions in both the communist and non-communist world; in September 1967, less than a year after these

¹² Jerzy Michalowski, “Polskie tajne inicjatywy pokojowe w Wietnamie” [Polish Secret Peace Initiatives in Vietnam], courtesy of Stefan Michalowski.

¹³ Unless otherwise indicated, biographical data in this and succeeding paragraphs is taken from the profile of Michalowski, Biographic Register, Office of Central Reference, Central Intelligence Agency, 4 January 1967, secret/no foreign dissem, in folder “POL 17-1 POL-US 1/1/67,” in box 2436, Central Foreign Policy Files [hereafter CFPF], 1967-1969, General Records of the Department of State [hereafter DoS], Record Group 59 [hereafter RG 59], National Archives II [hereafter NA II], College Park, MD. See also “Confidential Biography, Jerzy MICHALOWSKI, Polish People's Republic,” attached to Katzenbach to Lyndon B. Johnson, 26 April 1967, in same folder.

¹⁴ See Warsaw Embtel 1412 (to SecState), 9 December 1966, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 295.

efforts climaxed in the Marigold affair, and with the war still raging, he became Warsaw's ambassador to the United States.

Michalowski's manuscript, entitled, "Polish Secret Peace Initiatives in Vietnam," covers several of these Polish efforts to promote a resolution of the Vietnam conflict during the period 1963-1966, and is based on both the author's own recollections as a senior envoy shuttling among the relevant capitals—Warsaw, Moscow, Beijing, Hanoi, Washington, et al.—and meeting many of the key principals (Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, Zhou Enlai, Brezhnev, Johnson, Rusk, Harriman, etc.), as well as on contemporaneous documents, including highly classified ciphred cables, from the Polish Foreign Ministry archives as well as materials of the PUWP.¹⁵ Writing in the late 1970s or early 1980s, after his retirement from the Foreign Ministry, Michalowski also used the opportunity to comment critically on accounts of U.S. officials, as well as declassified American documents,¹⁶ that had by then emerged. In essence, then, especially in combination with the contemporaneous then-secret Polish documentation to which he refers, his report constitutes a Polish analogue to the diplomatic volume of the Pentagon Papers, describing many of the same Polish-American meetings from the opposite side, but also, and far more interestingly and revealingly, picking up where the American documents leave off, recounting contacts and exchanges on the communist side about which U.S. officials could only speculate.

As his son, Stefan, related in a summary of his father's report printed in the *CWIHP Bulletin* in early 1996, Jerzy Michalowski wrote the post-mortem despite having "found himself out of favor" with the Gierek Government and ultimately being expelled from the party, and the manuscript "was brought to the United States shortly before his death in March of 1993."¹⁷ In spring 1997, Michalowski's family kindly made the full manuscript available to CWIHP for scholarly analysis. Currently, the present author and a Polish-Canadian colleague, Leszek W. Gluchowski, are collaborating on a project to publish English translations (by Gluchowski) of the entire text and supporting documents from Polish and U.S. archives, along with introductory essays and annotations by both co-editors, as part of the CWIHP Book Series of volumes co-published by the Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press. In addition to completing the draft English translation of the Michalowski report on which this article is based, in summer 1997 Gluchowski successfully used the manuscript to gain access to, and photocopies of, many of the ciphred telegrams in the Polish Foreign Ministry archives referred to by Michalowski, and is now preparing translations of them.¹⁸

The Michalowski report begins by briefly reviewing Polish peace initiatives in Southeast Asia in 1963-64, short-lived efforts to try to persuade both sides to consider neutralization along the lines agreed to resolve the Laotian Crisis at the conclusion of the Geneva Conference of 1961-62, and perhaps to reconvene the conference to deal with continuing violence in Laos and the region.¹⁹

¹⁵ "Secret Polish Peace Initiatives in Vietnam: A Memoir by Ambassador Jerzy Michalowski," unofficial draft English translation by Leszek W. Gluchowski (hereafter referred to as Michalowski report).

¹⁶ Michalowski used a one-volume abridgement of the Porter documentary collection published in 1979 and cited above.

¹⁷ For the summary of the report, see Jerzy Michalowski (prepared by Stefan Michalowski), "Polish Secret Peace Initiatives in Vietnam," *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 6/7 (Winter 1995/1996), pp. 241, 258-259.

¹⁸ Unfortunately, some other documents cited by Michalowski have not been obtained—they are either still classified or simply not yet located—and a post-mortem by the key Polish figure in the talks in Saigon, Janusz Lewandowski, reportedly remains classified in Polish military intelligence archives.

¹⁹ Michalowski report, pp. 1-6. For a Polish perspective on events during this period, see the memoir by the then-Polish representative during the ICC, Mieczyslaw Maneli, *War of the Vanquished* (New York: Harper &

Dec. 1965-Jan. 1966: Operation Lumbago: A Secret Travelogue

But perhaps the most interesting portion, aside from that covering Marigold, deals with Poland's diplomatic activities during Johnson's so-called "Christmas Bombing Pause" of December 1965-January 1966. Michalowski recounts how, in response to a personal appeal from LBJ envoy Averell Harriman to Polish leaders in Warsaw, he was dispatched by the Polish leadership on a secret mission to transmit the U.S. "Fourteen points" proposals directly to the North Vietnamese leadership. (The Poles code-named the trip "Operation Lumbago," since Michalowski faked an attack of the painful back condition and told colleagues he was going off to recuperate in a spa in the mountain resort of Zakopane.) In both his report and contemporaneous ciphered telegrams to Rapacki, Michalowski describes his visits to, first, Moscow, where Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko welcomed and approved the Polish action; second, Beijing, which vehemently condemned and even attempted to sabotage the mission; and finally Hanoi, where he not only faithfully relayed the U.S. proposals to such figures as Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, Premier Pham Van Dong, military commander Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, and President Ho Chi Minh, but argued forcefully (with the full support of the PUWP Politburo, which expressed its view in a written aide-memoire which Michalowski delivered to Pham Van Dong) in favor of accepting the American proposal at least as a basis for beginning discussions.²⁰

Although U.S. officials later received broadly accurate reports that Michalowski had traveled to Hanoi and sought vainly to convince DRV leaders to open peace talks, this portion of the Michalowski report not only confirms and considerably fleshes out that vague story but adds valuably to the record in several respects. First, it provides a vivid snapshot of

Row, 1971). For a recent argument that North Vietnam was in fact ready to consider seriously a Laotian-type neutrality formula for South Vietnam (with a substantial period prior to eventual national unification) during this period—but that the United States was not—see Frederik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), chap. 1.

²⁰ Michalowski report, pp. 16-34. The Polish response to Harriman's mission, and Michalowski's trip in particular, is also described by Hungarian diplomat (and later defector to the United States) Janos Radvanyi, whose account is generally consistent with that of the Michalowski report, although with some differences in details and emphasis; however, the Pole's report provides important information left out in the Hungarian's. See Janos Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality: Gambits, Hoaxes, and Diplomatic One-Upmanship in Vietnam* (South Bend, IN: Gateway Editions, Ltd., 1978), pp. 119-129; Michalowski's odyssey is briefly noted in Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p. 142, and Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), pp. 83-84. See also the account secretly transmitted to UN Secretary General U Thant by Warsaw via its UN ambassador in February 1966, and Michalowski's own version a year later: U Thant, "Note on Vietnam situation," entry for 7 February 1966, secret, folder "Vietnam War (confidential papers), 1965-1966," and U Thant, "The Question of Vietnam," entry for 15 January 1967, both in DAG-1, 5.2.2.3.2, box 1, Rest. Strictly Confidential, UN archives, New York City, NY. In recounting the trip in September 1967 to Harriman (as recorded by the latter), Michalowski recalled that in Moscow he learned "that the Russians would not take too much initiative for fear of Peking's accusation that they were working for the Americans," described his experience in Beijing as "most disagreeable," and said the North Vietnamese discussed the idea of negotiations "very seriously" but, having "been burned twice on negotiations, . . . the authorities are fearful of undertaking another discussion for fear they would be 'sold out' again." See Harriman-Michalowski memorandum of conversation, 26 September 1967, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress (LC), box FCL 33, folder: September 1967. Michalowski gave a roughly similar, albeit more detailed, account to Harriman in early 1969. See Memorandum of Conversation, Governor Harriman's Home, Wednesday, February 19, 1969, Amb. Michalowski, Gov. Harriman, and Daniel I. Davidson (NSC Staff), secret/nodis/Marigold, in folder "POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1969," box 2739, CFPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

Sino-Soviet differences and tensions over the issue of peace negotiations at this juncture of the war—particularly in the vignette Michalowski relates of the Chinese delaying his mission to Hanoi by a day (on the false pretext of fears of U.S. bombing) in order to send an emissary ahead of him to pressure the North Vietnamese to reject his entreaties—and of Hanoi’s delicate balancing act as it tried to retain the support of both communist patrons, but (to both Soviet-bloc and U.S. analysts) evidently tilted toward the Chinese view. “God damn those Chinese,” Michalowski reportedly said on his return to Warsaw after visiting Hanoi²¹—and his report (and contemporaneous cables) explains his frustration: The Vietnamese, apparently alerted by the Beijing envoy, rejected his arguments in almost exactly the same words as the Chinese, albeit more graciously.²² Indeed, to his evident relief, the Hanoi leaders explicitly approved of the Pole’s mission and his argument, which the Chinese had rejected, that only those shedding blood, the North Vietnamese, had the right to decide how to react to the Americans’ proposals. (According to Michalowski, a “visibly angry” Pham Van Dong, after being informed that Chinese Foreign Minister had criticized the Pole for carrying American proposals to Hanoi instead of rejecting them out of hand, had said “it was not Chen Yi’s business to make such an observation and added that he (Michalowski) was quite right in coming to Hanoi to convey Harriman’s message.”²³)

Second, Michalowski also detected tensions between the Hanoi leadership and that of the National Liberation Front (NLF), which favored a more decisive rejection of any peace talks. The Polish emissary noted that in addition to expressing confidence in ultimate military victory, Gen. Giap “also said—which was very telling—that the beginning of talks by the DRV with the USA could provoke objections within the NLF in the South and accusations of ‘selling’ their interests in return for the ending of the bombing in the North.”²⁴ According to a secret Polish account of the trip given afterward to UN Secretary General U Thant, Michalowski also met with NLF representatives during his stay in Hanoi who were “very militant,” sure of a battlefield triumph and in “no mood to negotiate,” in contrast to the “not so belligerent” DRV leaders. “When Michalowski told the Front representatives that if they persisted in fighting it might even lead to world war 3,” Warsaw’s UN delegate related, “they replied that they were aware of it but since they have been fighting for liberation of their country for 20 years world war 3 would not make any difference to them. If their objective of complete independence is not achieved they will continue to fight.”²⁵ Such comments further corroborate scholarly reports of divergences between the NLF and DRV approaches to the war at this stage, with the Front and Beijing taking a strong stand against opening negotiations while Hanoi took a more ambivalent position and was willing to listen to advice from Moscow and some of its East European allies to explore a political/diplomatic solution to the war.²⁶ As deputy premier Nguyen Duy Trinh put it in a farewell conversation with Michalowski, his visit “improves the proportion between the military and political struggle,” and DRV leaders promised to “think about planning a transition to peace initiatives.”²⁷

²¹ Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p.149.

²² Michalowski report, pp. 27, 30, 33.

²³ U Thant, “The Question of Vietnam,” 15 January 1967.

²⁴ Michalowski report, p. 34.

²⁵ U Thant, “Note on Vietnam situation,” entry for 7 February 1966, secret, folder “Vietnam War (confidential papers), 1965-1966,” DAG-1, 5.2.2.3.2, UN archives.

²⁶ See Robert K. Brigham, *Guerrilla Diplomacy: The NLF’s Foreign Relations and the Viet Nam War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), which makes this argument.

²⁷ Michalowski report, p. 34.

Third, in his detailed recounting of conversations with the North Vietnamese leadership,²⁸ Michalowski offers one of the clearest pictures yet of Hanoi's rationales at that time for rejecting U.S. attempts to start peace negotiations, largely on the grounds that the military situation had not sufficiently ripened; Vietnam first needed to inflict a military defeat upon the Americans akin, it seemed clear, to that inflicted upon the French at Dien Bien Phu on the eve of the 1954 Geneva Conference. While Michalowski was still in Hanoi, the Polish ambassador in East Berlin relayed the substance of his conversations to the communist leader of East Germany, Erich Honecker. The memorandum of conversation, found in the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) archives, crisply expresses the outcome: "Comrade Michailowsky is of the opinion that the Vietnamese comrades underestimate the enemy and overestimate the public opinion pressure of the world and the American population; they are still under the influence of the Dien Bien Phu military victory. The Vietnamese comrades proceed under the assumption that the DRV is not yet strong enough to be able to enter negotiations. To a conference, the Vietnamese comrades think, one can only come as a victor and for this more military successes must be gained."²⁹ Michalowski repeatedly tried different arguments to shake the Vietnamese from their refusal to engage the Americans, urging them to open contacts to at least probe the seriousness of the U.S. initiative and expose it as false if in fact that proved to be the case, and his dialogues evidently came as close as any to constituting a top level consideration by Hanoi of the Johnson Administration's case for negotiations at that time in the best possible light (far more substantively, for example, than the relatively low-level US-DRV "Pinta" contacts in Rangoon in mid-January³⁰).

A fourth noteworthy aspect of this section of the report is the light it sheds, particularly in combination with recently-obtained Hungarian documents, on coordination among Warsaw, Moscow, and Budapest at the time in trying to bring about the opening of peace talks. The report shows that Michalowski, and Warsaw, closely (even daily) coordinated with two other mystery-shrouded communist initiatives that attracted much interest in Washington during the December 1965-January 1966 bombing pause—contacts with Hanoi undertaken by the Hungarian leadership, in particular Foreign Minister Janos Peter, and a Soviet mission to Hanoi shortly after Michalowski's departure (the two briefly crossed tracks in Vientiane) led by KGB chief Alexander Shelepin.³¹ (Michalowski also discloses that Warsaw vainly tried to dissuade East German and Bulgarian authorities from trying to prod Hanoi into entering peace talks, in order to avoid "the impression of organized action and pressure with a tone expressly anti-Chinese in character."³²) Neither Peter nor Shelepin had any more success than Michalowski in convincing the North Vietnamese to consider political-diplomatic rather than military measures to end the war, but the Hungarian record of a secret gathering of Polish, Hungarian, and Soviet foreign ministers in Moscow in late January 1966 corroborates speculation³³ that Shelepin, like the

²⁸ Michalowski report, pp. 27-34.

²⁹ Memorandum of Conversation between Honecker and Polish Ambassador to the GDR Baranowski, 6 January 1966, Stiftung der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR (Berlin), obtained and translated by Christian Ostermann in Hershberg, intro. and comp., "Central and East European Documents on the Vietnam War."

³⁰ For records of PINTA, see Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 116-158.

³¹ Michalowski report, pp. 34-36

³² Michalowski report, p. 36.

³³ The Polish and Hungarian documents cited here are consistent, for example, with a contemporaneous CIA memorandum stating that it "seems likely" that Shelepin "encouraged the North Vietnamese to give more serious consideration to recent US moves toward a political solution" but "was unable to persuade them to

Pole, in Hanoi “drew attention to the need to reach a political solution” (at the same time as he signed an agreement for “further large-scale supply of [Soviet] aid” to the DRV). The Hungarian foreign minister’s report of the January 24 meeting in Moscow concisely sums up the Kremlin’s perception of Washington’s stance at that time: “Comrade Gromyko assessed the situation as follows: the American proposals have honest elements to them, and they are looking for a way out, but for us the last word is with our Vietnamese comrades.”³⁴ Michalowski’s account does not confirm Rusk’s later conclusion that the Hungarian initiative had been entirely “fraudulent”³⁵—Peter is quoted as having told the Poles on January 7 that the North Vietnamese had indeed indicated a willingness to “make contact with everyone—including the USA—if the other side comes out with such an initiative.”³⁶ But the report also contains evidence that after Hanoi privately made clear by mid-January that it was not seriously interested in talks with the Americans, both the Hungarians and the Poles continued to string Washington along in the hopes of forestalling a resumption of bombing. In the case of the Poles, this consisted of the so-called “translation controversy” in connection with an effort by *Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins (an associate of LBJ’s) to establish contact with the North Vietnamese. Michalowski discloses Warsaw’s efforts to promote Cousins as a potential direct link to Johnson, in personal discussions with top level DRV leaders, and its attempts to stage a meeting in the Polish capital in the final days of the “pause,” including sleepless nights as diplomats awaited final word from Hanoi under the gun, as it were, of the imminent end of the bombing suspension (as related by Cousins on the 28th citing “the highest authority”). Michalowski relates that Foreign Minister Rapacki, “[s]triving at all cost to prevent the resumption of bombing,” the next day called in a U.S. official to claim—without any evidence from Hanoi—that a confusion in the translation of Ho Chi Minh’s January 28 open letter insisting that the United States “accept” or “recognize” the DRV’s “Four Points” for a settlement actually masked the “signal” which the United States was waiting for and on which it was insisting as a legitimate basis to extend the pause. It was only a matter of days before Hanoi authoritatively rejected (via the Pinta contact and elsewhere) the more conciliatory interpretation of the translation (a development

modify their tactics.” See Intelligence Memorandum (prepared by the CIA Office of Current Intelligence), “Communist Reaction to the US Peace Offensive,” 20 January 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:92-94 (quotation on 94).

³⁴ “Diplomatic steps concerning the Vietnam conflict,” report of Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Peter to the Politburo of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP), 31 January 1966, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Orszagos Levaltar [MOL]), Budapest, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, XIX-J-1-j, Box 111, obtained by Gergo Bendeguz Cseh, trans. David Evans, reproduced in Hershberg, intro. and comp., “Central and East European Documents on the Vietnam War,” and obtained by CWIHP/National Security Archive. Interestingly, this report contradicts the account of Hungarian diplomat (and later defector) Janos Radvanyi, who wrote that Michalowski’s “vacillating hopes” of convincing the North Vietnamese to move toward a political solution had been “dashed” on January 11 when he learned from the Soviet ambassador in Hanoi, Shcherbakov, “that Shelepin had offered substantial new military aid to Hanoi and had abstained from recommending negotiations.” Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality*, p. 128. For his part, Michalowski does not detail his coordination with Shelepin, noting only that on his way back from Hanoi to Poland, he stopped in Moscow on January 14-15 and discussed both his and Shelepin’s missions with USSR Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov and CPSU ideology secretary Leonid Ilyichev. Kuznetsov is quoted as reporting that Shelepin’s findings “overlap with ours,” and stating that Hanoi’s “stronger acceptance this time of the necessity to conduct military action in parallel with the political [action] as well as the need of the DRV to take up peace initiative was undoubtedly the result of our action.” Michalowski report, pp. 34-35.

³⁵ Dean Rusk as told to Richard Rusk, ed. Daniel S. Papp, *As I Saw It* (New York: Norton, 1990), pp. 464-466.

³⁶ Michalowski report, p. 35.

which hardly improved Rapacki's credibility in Washington³⁷), and the 37-day bombing pause came to a close at the end of January.³⁸

Finally, in his accounts of the mission to Hanoi, Michalowski offers some rare glimpses, from the perspectives of a fraternal emissary rather than a Western journalist or diplomat, of the personalities at the top of the wartime North Vietnamese leadership. He came away deeply impressed with Pham Van Dong, who received him in an "exceptionally cordial atmosphere," later telling U Thant that the premier was "the real master of North Viet-Nam...very much in control of the situation," and describing him to Harriman as "one of the best statesmen he had ever met," the "leader of the doves" with a "humanistic approach."³⁹ Giap reminded him of a "Polish cavalryman, full of fantasy, very brilliant, very temperamental and very enthusiastic" — while the general seemed confident, "in very gay spirits," and even "relishing the fight with the Americans," he reputedly had had "several changes of heart," sometimes "certain of military victory," at others on "bad terms with the Chinese faction."⁴⁰ After an unproductive meeting with Ho Chi Minh, Michalowski described the revered leader, now evidently something of a figurehead, as "stubborn", "growing old, obstinate, sermonizing," and even somewhat "incoherent" and "getting a bit senile."⁴¹ In successive meetings with his Polish visitor, Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh acted alternately "stiff" and formal, and then "friendly...flexible" and open to Michalowski's arguments.⁴² In assessing their readiness for negotiations, Michalowski judged Le Duan "very rigid and definitely pro-Peking" and Le Duc Tho "reasonable, not a hawk," but emphasized that despite a "shifting" "Chinese faction" that favored military over diplomatic options, "All of the North Vietnamese are first of all Vietnamese nationalists."⁴³

³⁷ Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs William Bundy later told a Soviet diplomat that Rapacki's claim contributed to the impression of doubt in Polish reliability in sensitive diplomatic matters. Memorandum of conversation between William P. Bundy and Alexander Zinchuk, Soviet Charge, 22 December 1966, folder: "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," NSF-Country File, Vietnam, Box 139,143,147,148. Similarly, upon receiving the initial account of Lewandowski's report of progress in obtaining Hanoi's consent to a U.S.-DRV direct contact in Warsaw, Bundy and Amb. Llewellyn E. Thompson noted that they were "not at all clear that our Polish friend in Saigon has not embroidered his text in a rather free-wheeling fashion, either to us, to Hanoi, or both. His past record, notably with Norman Cousins last January, leads to a strong suspicion of exaggeration." William P. Bundy to Secretary of State, 2 December 1966, secret/eyes only/Marigold, in folder "POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1966," box 2739, CFPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

³⁸ Michalowski report, pp. 40-44; see also Rangoon 394 (to SecState), 31 January 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 141-142.

³⁹ "exceptionally cordial": Michalowski report, p. 31, and ciphergram 159 from Hanoi, 6 January 1966, translation from Polish by L.W. Gluchowski; "real master...situation": U Thant, "The Question of Viet-Nam," 15 January 1967; "best statesman", "humanistic approach", "leader of the doves": Michalowski-Harriman conversation, 19 February 1969. The DRV premier similarly impressed another East European diplomat and would-be mediator who visited Hanoi in late 1967. Romanian First Deputy Foreign Minister Gheorghe Macovescu told U.S. officials that Pham Van Dong had "made an outstanding impression, calm, reasonable, knowing what he was speaking about. A man you can have a dialogue with." See Harriman-Macovescu memorandum of conversation, 5 January 1968, p. 7, folder "Romania 1964-1968," box FCL 16, Harriman Papers, LC.

⁴⁰ "gay spirits", "relishing": U Thant, "The Question of Viet-Nam, 15 January 1967; "Polish cavalryman...changes of heart": Michalowski-Harriman conversation, 19 February 1969.

⁴¹ "stubborn": Michalowski Report, p. 33: "stubborn" and "old...unrealistic": ciphergram 209 from Hanoi, 6 January 1966, translation from Polish by L.W. Gluchowski; "senile": U Thant, "The Question of Viet-Nam, 15 January 1967, and Michalowski-Harriman conversation, 19 February 1969.

⁴² Michalowski report, pp. 27-30 and contemporaneous ciphergrams.

⁴³ Le Duan: U Thant, "The Question of Viet-Nam," 15 January 1967; Le Duc Tho, "Chinese faction...nationalists": Harriman-Michalowski conversation, 19 February 1969.

Summer 1966: The Origins of Marigold

The bulk of Michalowski's report, however, concerns the development of Marigold and the welter of conflicting claims and charges it generated after collapsing.⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, Michalowski portrays Poland's role in the Marigold affair as a sincere, earnest effort to bring the warring sides together in order to end the conflict, consistent with the Warsaw government's general support of the justice of the North Vietnamese cause, coordination with the Soviet Union, and opposition to what it regarded as bellicose Chinese opposition to a peaceful resolution to the fighting. Beyond this, however, the report cites specific dates, contemporaneous documents (some of which have been obtained from archives), and contents of meetings between Polish and senior North Vietnamese authorities at both the onset and, especially, in the climactic (Nov.-Dec. 1966) phases of Marigold. These contacts, in which the North Vietnamese authorities appeared to authorize Polish statements expressing Hanoi's interest in opening talks on the basis of the ten-point Lodge-Lewandowski understandings, seem at least to refute the most extreme U.S. suspicions about whether the Poles had even been in contact with authoritative figures in Hanoi and whether they had devised the initiative out of thin air simply to probe the limits of American concessions. While the report adds relatively little to the existing understanding of Marigold's first phase—the Lodge-Lewandowski-Orlandi discussions in Saigon in late June and early—its account of communist-side contacts undertaken in the second phase yields the most important new information on Polish actions in Marigold, the extent and substance of Polish-North Vietnamese exchanges, and Warsaw's coordination of the initiative with Moscow.

Some words, first, about what the report adds to the question of Marigold's origins. In contrast to U.S. sources, Michalowski credits the Italian ambassador in Saigon, D'Orlandi (prodded by Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro and Foreign Minister Amintore Fanfani, who had seen the collapse of an earlier Italian initiative, the La Pira mission), with the "principal role" in setting in train the motion of events which became Marigold. The story starts, in the Pole's rendition, with a conversation between D'Orlandi and Lewandowski on 29 June 1966 (this contradicts Lodge's cable of that day of a discussion with D'Orlandi quoting the Italian as reporting that he had received the Pole's report two days earlier⁴⁵) at which the two discussed their understanding of the political-military situation in Vietnam and the DRV leadership's attitude towards opening talks with Washington.⁴⁶ Michalowski discloses that Lewandowski's basis for believing that Hanoi was ready to begin peace negotiations with the United States if the Americans stopped the bombing was a conversation with Premier Pham Van Dong on June 6.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Michalowski writes that Lewandowski "did not

⁴⁴ Michalowski report, pp. 46-128.

⁴⁵ Saigon Embtel 5840, 29 June 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:468, and in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 237.

⁴⁶ Michalowski report, p. 46. State Department cables dealing with the first phase of Marigold (June-Nov. 1966) can also be found in folder "POL 27-14 VIET/XYZ 11-1-65" [apparently misfiled from folder in same box entitled "POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD"], box 22, Formerly Top Secret Central Policy Files, 1964-1966, box 22, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

⁴⁷ Michalowski report, p. 47. The reference to Lewandowski's talk with Pham Van Dong on 6 June 1966 would appear to contradict reports that later surfaced that the "origin of Lewandowski's initiative lay in a conversation he claimed to have had with Ho Chi Minh in late June 1966," as stated in Allan E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p. 39.

report” the “very specific peace offer” from Hanoi attributed to him by D’Orlandi and reported to Washington by Lodge.⁴⁸ Nor did Lewandowski report relaying the specific terms supposedly agreeable to the North Vietnamese leadership—such as not insisting on reunification, on the establishment of a “socialist” system in the South, on a change in Saigon’s relations with other countries or other interference in the South’s government, or on the South’s “neutralization”—that provoked so much excitement (and skepticism) among U.S. officials, who noted (as Lodge put it) that, “as a package, [they] go far beyond anything we have heard mentioned before. In fact,” he added, “they appear so forthcoming as to arouse suspicion concerning the credibility of the Polish intermediary.”⁴⁹

Michalowski’s response to this discrepancy, which he discusses in his report, is to cast doubt on Lodge’s credibility, and to suggest that the American, more than Lewandowski, had taken the initiative.⁵⁰ (Similarly, in the autumn of 1966 (prior to the second phase of Marigold beginning in mid-November), the Michalowski report depicts the Italians and Americans as driving events, while citing instructions to Lewandowski “not to avoid talks but not to undertake the initiative himself”⁵¹—in contrast to American sources implying that the Pole (via D’Orlandi) was pushing during this period (Sept.-Oct.) for a “package” or “global” settlement.⁵²) So the mystery remains as to where the reported proposals came from—Hanoi, Lewandowski, D’Orlandi, or Lodge?—and whether they emerged from deliberate distortion, wishful thinking, hard information, or some combination of the three.

Fall 1966: Marigold, Phase II

New Vietnamese Evidence

Michalowski’s report does not answer conclusively the question of whether or not Marigold really represented a “missed opportunity” to end the war, or at least open direct U.S.-North Vietnamese talks, as early as December 1966—access to Vietnamese archives is clearly a prerequisite for an informed conclusion. “Whether the U.S. bombing actually prevented serious negotiations will probably never be known,” George Herring has judged.⁵³ But highly suggestive, albeit fragmentary, Vietnamese evidence that at least the possibility of direct US-DRV contacts (if not necessarily “serious,” let alone successful, negotiations) then existed has now emerged, both from still-inaccessible archives and from oral history testimony from a key DRV diplomatic participant in the events.

One potentially important new piece of evidence from Vietnamese sources to bolster the argument that Hanoi was genuinely ready for direct talks with Washington by December 1966 appeared in a 1998 article analyzing DRV strategy during the war by the Vietnamese scholar Nguyen Vu Tung of Hanoi’s Institute for International Relations. In the article, Tung quoted a November 1966 Vietnamese Workers’ Party (VWP, or Lao Dong) Politburo resolution as stating:

⁴⁸ “did not report”: Michalowski report, p. 47; “very specific peace offer”: Saigon Embtel 5840, 29 June 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:468, and in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 237

⁴⁹ Saigon Embtel 5855, 30 June 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:472, and in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 240-242.

⁵⁰ Michalowski report, pp. 47, 94, 98.

⁵¹ Michalowski report, p. 53.

⁵² See documents in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 251-254, 256-259, 263-264.

⁵³ Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, p. 106.

In the meantime, while we are stepping up the political and military struggles at home, [we should] open a new struggle by attacking the enemies by internationally political and diplomatic means. Supporting the political and military struggles, we should take the initiative to carry out the tactics of “fighting while negotiating” in order to win world public opinion, isolate the American imperialists, cause more difficulties and internal controversy among them and push them into a more defensive posture.⁵⁴

While hardly indicating that the VWP leadership genuinely foresaw rapid progress toward ending the war, this resolution suggests, significantly, that the Hanoi leadership had, nevertheless, concluded that the conflict had reached a new stage, requiring diplomatic as well as military and political struggles that could be waged simultaneously. That Hanoi had reached such a conclusion became publicly evident only in a 28 January 1967 interview (by the Australian communist journalist Wilfred Burchett) with Foreign Minister Nguyen Dinh Trinh which stated the DRV’s readiness for talks with the United States once it ceased bombing and all other acts of war against North Vietnam; what is important here is that the Politburo had evidently approved this step more than two months earlier, which would be consistent with a decision to authorize the direct meeting with U.S. officials in Warsaw entailed in the Marigold initiative.

The second new Vietnamese piece of the puzzle comes in the form of testimony from a former North Vietnamese foreign ministry official who appears to have played a key supporting part in Hanoi’s preparations for secret talks with the Americans. First in sketchy form at a June 1997 “critical oral history conference” in Hanoi, and then in a far more detailed interview with the present author in the Vietnamese capital two years later, former DRV foreign ministry aide Nguyen Dinh Phuong has disclosed, as evidence of the seriousness with which his government treated Marigold, that he was secretly dispatched from Hanoi to Warsaw in early December 1966 with instructions to brief the DRV ambassador in Poland and to take part in the scheduled meeting with the U.S. ambassador.⁵⁵ However, Nguyen Dinh Phuong recounts, he and the DRV ambassador waited in vain on December 6 for a U.S. representative to show up—a flat contradiction to the U.S. and Polish records which give no indication that the Americans were ever informed that the North Vietnamese were actually ready on that day to receive them—and waited more than a week

⁵⁴ Quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung, “Hanoi’s Search for an Effective Strategy,” p. 52, in Peter Lowe, ed., *The Vietnam War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998). Unfortunately the extract from the resolution quoted here is all that is now available; nor is the specific date in November 1966 of the Politburo’s action currently known. The citation Vu Tung gives for the excerpt is “*Party Documents* (vol. 11), p. 237,” which he describes as an internally-circulated collection that to date has not become generally available.

⁵⁵ Phuong’s initial account came during an oral history conference in Hanoi on 20-23 June 1997 (afternoon session of June 22) organized by James G. Blight of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University in collaboration with the Institute for International Relations (IIR) in Hanoi, CWIHP, and the National Security Archive. See working transcript of June 1997 Hanoi oral history conference, pp. 182-183. (For an account of that project and conference, see Robert S. McNamara, James G. Blight, and Robert K. Brigham, with Thomas Biersteker and Col. Herbert Schandler, *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999); the book does not, however, cover the Marigold episode.) The present author questioned Phuong briefly on that occasion, and passed along translated summaries of the Michalowski report as well as photocopies of materials on Marigold from Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*; additional U.S. and translated Polish materials were conveyed to Phuong in July 1998 by former CWIHP director David Wolff. The more detailed information presented here is based on Nguyen Dinh Phuong, “The ‘Marigold’ drive,” a nine-page manuscript, n.d., presented to the author in Hanoi, 8 June 1998, as well as a two-hour interview on that date at the IIR, and a 4 January 2000 letter to the author.

in the Polish capital before being recalled following the December 13-14 American bombing raids on Hanoi. Though not yet corroborated by contemporaneous documentary evidence, Phuong's story—presented in more detail below—may ultimately corroborate, in more concrete and dramatic fashion, Burchett's rather hazy December 1967 claim to U.S. officials that the “North Vietnamese had agreed to talk at Warsaw last December and even had [an] official en route when US resumed bombing Hanoi”⁵⁶—an assertion that scholars have greeted with skepticism and which U.S. officials found no evidence to support.⁵⁷ (Mysteriously, Michalowski's report makes no mention of a North Vietnamese emissary being sent to Warsaw.)

Nov. 15-30, 1966: Communist Consultations

The significance of the Michalowski report's information as well as the Nguyen Dinh Phuong mission and the Politburo resolution cited above become evident only in the context of a close recounting of the chronology of events in the last two months of 1966. Though its significance was not immediately evident, Marigold's second phase opened on November 2 at the “elegant Villa Madama outside Rome” where Italian Foreign Minister Fanfani hosted a lunch for Harriman, who was making a round-the-world tour to explain current administration policy in Vietnam in the wake of the late October summit in Manila of pro-Western countries in the Pacific region. By coincidence, the visit coincided with a home leave by D'Orlandi, who amid the wine and pasta importuned Harriman's aide, adviser on Asian affairs, and traveling companion, Chester L. Cooper, about an opportunity he thought the Americans should not miss. In a couple of days he would be returning to Saigon, he explained, where he would see Lewandowski before the Pole, “a reliable channel and an accurate reporter,” left for his next visit to Hanoi. Could not the Americans provide him with some fresh proposals to give to the Pole to relay to the DRV leadership, to try to make some progress toward getting talks started, and envisioned the outlines of a eventual settlement?⁵⁸ When Harriman and Cooper reported on their travels to State Department colleagues in Washington a week later, they found most attention focussed on sending a message to Hanoi via Moscow—British Foreign Minister George Brown planned to be in the Soviet capital in late November, and to give him something for a probe US officials came up with a “Phase A-Phase B” package in which the U.S. would first halt bombing and only later, after an interval, would mutual “agreed de-escalatory actions” take place. At a key State Department meeting on November 10—ironically, the same day that, separately, decisions were being made to authorize new bombing raids on North Vietnam—Cooper and Harriman did not dissent from arguments around the table that Moscow offered a “better immediate possibilities than the D'Orlandi channel. Nevertheless, they pressed for some “morsels” to give the Italian as well, with Harriman repeating that he had been “personally impressed by D'Orlandi and believed that we should give him some encouragement.”⁵⁹ State decided to authorize Lodge to give the Pole to take to Hanoi the same “Phase A-Phase B”

⁵⁶ See Paris Embtel 7540 (to SecState), 6 December 1967, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 370.

⁵⁷ See Thies, *When Governments Collide*, p. 340 fn 83, noting that “Burchett's claim...should be treated with skepticism, since he was obviously not an impartial observer,” and quoting William Bundy (in a 4 March 1977 interview) as saying that he knew of no data supporting Burchett's statement that Hanoi had actually sent an emissary to Warsaw.

⁵⁸ Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, pp. 322-323; *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:821 n 5.

⁵⁹ Memorandum of Meeting, 10 November 1966, 3 p.m., Washington, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:820-824.

package concept that Brown would be carrying to Moscow, as well as what were intended to be firm but moderate descriptions of US views of an eventual outcome to the conflict—including willingness to withdraw forces within six months of a peace settlement, and accept South Vietnam's neutrality and even unification with the North so long as this occurred as the result of free, democratic elections without outside interference, in accord with the Geneva agreements. In two three-way meetings at D'Orlandi's apartment on November 14-15, Lodge presented these ideas, not in written form but by prolonged discussion and clarification, and by slowly reading twice, as his colleagues took notes, the precise language of his instructions, on the eve of the Pole's planned departure.⁶⁰

From that point, until the end of the month, the American side the chronology is blank (other than British-Soviet discussions in Moscow on November 23-24 during which London's foreign minister, George Brown, presented the still-secret Phase A-Phase B proposals simultaneously being passed to Lewandowski but without knowledge of the Marigold channel⁶¹) until Lewandowski's return to Saigon from Hanoi on November 30 and his meeting with Lodge the next day. However, the Michalowski report fills in this blank by describing a series of extraordinary communist-side consultations triggered by Lewandowski's report of his talks with Lodge.

As Michalowski relates, Lewandowski's cables "awakened great hopes" in Warsaw concerning the possibility of starting talks. In particular, they prompted Foreign Minister Rapacki to use the coincidental occasion of a congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in Sofia to undertake secret consultations with key Soviet and North Vietnamese officials.⁶² On November 18—the same day Lewandowski departed Saigon for Hanoi by ICC plane⁶³—Rapacki (accompanied by Michalowski) flew to the Bulgarian capital by special plane and that day filled in Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev on the details of the Lodge-Lewandowski conversations.⁶⁴ Brezhnev replied that he had already discussed them with DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh—also in Sofia for the BCP Congress—"and found out that the [Hanoi] leadership had already examined Lodge's proposals but not taken any decisions." However, in what the Poles took as an indication of the seriousness with

⁶⁰ For U.S. documentation of the proposals relayed by Lodge, see documents in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 263-270, and *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4: 838-841, 843-845, especially Rusk to Lodge, Deptel 83786, 13 November 1966, from which "agreed de-escalatory actions" is quoted, and Deptel 84238, 14 November 1966. Michalowski's account of the November 14-15 meetings, citing Lewandowski's contemporaneous cables, is not identical to, but seems more or less consistent with, Lodge's version cited above. See Michalowski report, pp. 53-56, and ciphergram no. 14596 (Lewandowski to Michalowski), 14 November 1966, obtained from Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski.

⁶¹ Brown discussed Vietnam with Gromyko on November 23, handed him an unsigned piece of paper containing the "Phase A-Phase B" formula on November 24, and received the tepid reaction of Gromyko and Premier Alexei Kosygin on November 25. For records of Brown's discussions see materials (especially "Visit of the Foreign Secretary to the Soviet Union, 22-25 November, 1966, ANNEX," Secret-Guard) in Foreign Office (FO) 371/188928, Public Record Office (PRO), Kew Gardens, England.

⁶² The 9th BCP Congress took place in Sofia on 14-19 November 1966.

⁶³ Lewandowski was originally scheduled to depart on November 15 but the flight was delayed after an incident four days earlier in which an ICC plane was shot at near the DRV-Laotian border. See Ciphergram 14629, Lewandowski to Spasowski, 16 November 1966, obtained from Polish Foreign Ministry Archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski.

⁶⁴ Michalowski report, p. 57. In addition, three days later, on November 21, the Polish ambassador in Moscow, Edmund Pszczolkowski, briefed Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on the Lodge-Lewandowski discussions, indicating that the Americans had implied a willingness to cease bombing North Vietnam "provided there was reciprocity from Hanoi." See Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, p. 92, 270 fn. 55. Whether, or how, this briefing was directly linked to any Soviet-DRV discussions that apparently occurred in Moscow at about the same time (see below) is unclear.

which the Vietnamese leadership was considering the matter, Trinh had decided to skip a scheduled stop in Budapest (where he was scheduled to go from Sofia to attend a Hungarian communist party congress⁶⁵) and to “proceed to Moscow where he will join other leadership members specially sent from Hanoi.”⁶⁶ (Vietnamese communist party leader Le Duan, who

⁶⁵ The 9th Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP) took place in Budapest on 28 November-3 December 1966.

⁶⁶ The revelation that Trinh canceled his planned trip to Budapest in order to join other North Vietnamese leaders in Moscow for urgent consultations related to Marigold adds significantly to the record. In a conversation with U.S. ambassador to the UN Arthur J. Goldberg on 3 January 1967, UN Secretary General U Thant quoted Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Peter as having told him during a visit to the UN that Trinh had been forced to cancel his visit to Budapest “because of urgent problems at home. In his place Hanoi dispatched the Syg [Secretary General] of the Communist Party [Le Duan] who visited Budapest early last month and who has since returned to Hanoi. Hungarians reported that [Le Duan] took a very hard line about settlement of the Vietnamese conflict - - a harder line than they believe would have been taken by North Vietnamese FM.” USUN 3458 (to SecState), 3 January 1967, in Herring, ed., *Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 323. In his 1980 study, clearly basing his statement on U Thant’s hearsay account, Wallace J. Thies noted the temptation “to speculate on the possible links between the MARIGOLD contact and the travel plans of various Politburo members,” noting in particular that Trinh had been unable to visit Hungary “because of urgent problems at home.” (For reasons that are not clear, Peter is cited by Thant as dating Trinh’s scheduled visit to Hungary to “early December”—an assertion repeated by Thies—rather than late November, as Michalowski’s report suggests.) Thies writes that Trinh’s place in Budapest was taken by Le Duan, who had a reputation as a hardliner. Unaware of the secret Moscow consultations, Thies asked: “Was it by chance that Trinh stayed in Hanoi while Le Duan (a consistent opponent of negotiations) visited Hungary, thus conveniently removing him from the scene while the Warsaw talks were being considered in Hanoi? Unfortunately, the data available do not permit us to answer this question with any certainty.” Thies, *When Governments Collide*, p. 340 fn. 82.

It seems, although the dates are not specified, that Trinh visited Moscow in late November (evidently between his November 18-19 discussions in Sofia with Brezhnev and Rapacki but before Pham Van Dong indicated his assent to Lewandowski on November 25 for a Warsaw meeting with the Americans to confirm the Lodge proposals). What meetings he held there, however, are not known. Michalowski told U Thant in January 1967 that he understood that, after the Bulgarian Party Congress, Trinh (misidentified as “Foreign Minister Thiem”), whom he described as “very reserved” and “reluctant” to discuss peace talks, “on his way back to Hanoi...stopped for one day in Moscow and he even refused to see Brezhnev.” U Thant, “The Question of Viet-Nam,” 15 January 1967. On December 10, Trinh was reported by the Swedish ambassador to Beijing, Lennart Petri, as being at a “communist party meeting [in] Budapest and not expected [in] Hanoi till [December] 19th.” Embtel 707, Stockholm (Parsons) to Secretary of State, 10 December 1966, ts, folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD, 12-3-66,” Top Secret Central Policy Files, 1964-1966, box 22, RG 59, NA II.

It appears that Le Duan (and others in the delegation to Budapest) also stopped in Moscow in late November and/or early December, perhaps engaging in discussions with Soviet (and other North Vietnamese) officials regarding the envisioned Warsaw contacts. (*Pravda* noted on 27 November 1966 that delegations from the DRV, as well as from Mongolia and North Korea, had visited Moscow en route to the Hungarian meeting.) Radvanyi notes (*Delusion and Reality*, pp. 227-228) the presence in Budapest of Le Duc Tho, also known as a hardliner compared to Trinh, at the HSWP Congress in the foreign minister’s place. On December 15-17, Le Duc Tho also met in Moscow with Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders. See Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, p. 271 fn 62, and below.

On December 22, the charge d’affaires at the USSR embassy in Washington, Alexander Zinchuk, alluded to this succession of North Vietnamese visitors to the Soviet capital in a conversation about Marigold with U.S. State Department official William Bundy. Zinchuk told Bundy (according to the latter’s account) that, while in Moscow in late November, he “had gained the impression that Hanoi (or elements in it) were seriously interested in starting something. They had been encouraged by the apparent slackening in the pace of our bombing during this period. I [Bundy] at once asked whether this was just a general impression or whether it had something more specific behind it. He replied that it was ‘more than a general sense.’ Then, following the bombings of December 2nd and 4th, some Hanoi leaders (un-named) had been in Moscow on the way back from Budapest, and had met with top Soviet leaders. (I think he mentioned Kosygin and Brezhnev

also met with the Poles in Sofia, was said by Brezhnev to have left for Beijing, evidently before going on to Budapest to attend the congress.⁶⁷) The next day, November 19, Rapacki met with Trinh, not only passing along a French text of Lodge's proposals, but commenting favorably on them as showing flexibility and progress compared to past American positions. Trinh, for his part, "listened very carefully." Hanoi's foreign minister "backed away from a discussion on whether the time has come to move to the diplomatic phase, but he did not repeat the usual share of phrases."⁶⁸

Michalowski's report does not provide details of the Soviet-North Vietnamese discussions that presumably ensued—we hope to get records of them eventually from Russian archives—but does supply substantial information on the Polish Government's analysis of the new U.S. proposals relayed by Lodge, its instructions to Lewandowski, and Lewandowski's conversations with North Vietnamese leaders during his late November visit to Hanoi. Warsaw assessed the latest American ideas as "interesting and worth serious consideration," containing "new elements" that represented progress from previous positions. These new elements were seen as including the "unconditional" bombing halt, an interval between the bombing halt and agreed-upon actions that would remove the appearance of a quid pro quo or ultimatum, implicit recognition of the NLF as a party to the negotiations, a backing off from insistence on neutralization of all of Vietnam (as opposed to accepting it for the south), suggestions that Washington would not give the Saigon regime a veto in negotiations, the absence of a requirement that the North admit to the presence of and withdraw its forces from the South, and the fact that negotiations would not only not weaken the North but permit a "continuation of the battles in the South under better conditions until securing profitable conditions in the package-deal." This estimate (apparently prepared by the Polish Foreign Ministry, although Michalowski does not explicitly say so) attributed Washington's "much more flexible position" to the Johnson Administration's "sober estimation" of the military situation; concerns about the war's impact on the 1968 presidential election and consequent desire to achieve a peace settlement before then; fear that the war might widen; apprehension about "hawkish" pressure for escalation (strengthened by Republican gains in the just-held Congressional mid-term vote);

specifically). In the face of our bombings, the Soviet leaders had been unable to clarify U.S. thinking or (by clear implication) to encourage Hanoi to pursue the Lewandowski avenue...." Zinchuk-Bundy MemCon, 22 December 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 314-316, quotation on p. 315. In light of the chronology of events supplemented by Michalowski report, Zinchuk appears to have been alluding first, to the discussions in Moscow in late November attended by Trinh, and second, after the December 2 and 4 bombings, to visits by one or more of the members of the delegation to the Hungarian party congress such as Le Duan, Le Duc Tho, or both.

⁶⁷ Michalowski told U Thant two months later that he had met Le Duan in Sofia in November. See U Thant, "The Question of Vietnam," 15 January 1967. Brezhnev told Rapacki in Sofia on November 18 that Le Duan had left for Beijing.

⁶⁸ Michalowski report, pp. 57-58. This is evidently the meeting to which Michalowski vaguely alluded in a conversation with a British diplomat five months later, during a secret British-Polish post-mortem of Marigold. Asked by London's ambassador in Warsaw, Thomas Brimelow, whether the Polish Foreign Ministry had been in "regular contact" with Hanoi during the November-December talks, Michalowski affirmed that "they had, and not only by telegram. They had also discussed the progress of the talks with the North Viet-Nameese Foreign Minister in a third country (he did not give me any details of this)." See Brimelow, Record of Conversation with Michalowski, 4 April 1967, ts, and other documents in Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 15/646, PRO. In a conversation with Averell Harriman in September 1967, Michalowski disclosed that he himself had made a special trip to Sofia "to see the Foreign Minister for this subject alone," but the record of conversation does not make clear whether Michalowski was stating that he had gone to see Rapacki or the DRV foreign minister. See Michalowski-Harriman memorandum of conversation, 26 September 1967, secret, folder: September 1967, box FCL 33, Harriman Papers, LC.

calculation that Hanoi might have greater freedom of action from Chinese pressure due to Beijing's preoccupation with the Cultural Revolution; and, finally, the "possib[ility] that the USA government wants to profit from a foreseen pause in the bombings during the holiday period to execute at the same time a deep probe of the possibilities for a peaceful resolution of the conflict."⁶⁹

Lewandowski in Hanoi: Late November

Warsaw sent this analysis to Lewandowski, along with instructions to present it to the North Vietnamese leaders along with the proposals related by Lodge.⁷⁰ Upon reaching Hanoi, Lewandowski first presented the proposals, on November 20, to North Vietnamese Col. Ha Van Lau, the veteran DRV liaison officer to the ICC, and, as Michalowski writes, "waited for the results of the long discussions inside the Politburo where, as we knew, opposing views clashed, in large measure" due to Chinese pressure.⁷¹ The degree of Beijing's influence on Hanoi's attitude toward entering negotiations was believed to be of crucial importance, of course, and provoked intense speculation in Washington. Materials released from Chinese and other East-bloc sources (including Michalowski's own account of "Operation Lumbago," cited above) tend to corroborate Western analysis at the time (as well as public Beijing statements) that the PRC strongly advised North Vietnamese leaders against entering peace talks on the ground that the military situation had not sufficiently developed, and that what was not won on the battlefield could not be won at the negotiating table.⁷² The Michalowski report discloses that at about this juncture,⁷³ the Hanoi leadership sent one of its key figures (then little-known in the West), Le Duan, the VWP First Secretary and a southerner, to Beijing to consult with the Chinese. According to information later obtained by the Poles, Le Duan told Zhou Enlai that "after arduous military effort" the North intended "at present to accede to peace talks," and after the Chinese Premier argued

⁶⁹ Michalowski report, pp. 58-60.

⁷⁰ Michalowski report, p. 58.

⁷¹ Michalowski report, p. 61. The November 20 date for Lewandowski's meeting with Ha Van Lau is not given in the Michalowski report, but supplied by Nguyen Dinh Phuong (who served as English-language translator for meeting) in "The 'Marigold' Drive," p. 3, and interview with the author, Hanoi, 8 June 1999.

⁷² See, e.g., Zhai Qiang, "Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-1968," CWIHP Working Paper no. 18 (and Zhai Qiang's forthcoming book on China and the Vietnam War from the University of North Carolina Press), and various conversations between Beijing and Hanoi's leaders during 1965-1968 in Westad et al., eds., "77 Conversations Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977," CWIHP Working Paper no. 22. For an important contemporary Western analysis of the complex inter-communist relations on the war, see Donald S. Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle: Moscow/Peking/Hanoi* (New York: Pegasus, 1967).

⁷³ The precise dates of Le Duan's talks with Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong described here, identified in the Michalowski Report only as taking place "in November," are uncertain, but crucial, since Hanoi learned of the Lodge-Lewandowski proposals only in mid-November (November 18 at the latest) and Pham Van Dong informed Lewandowski on November 25 of the VWP's agreement for a meeting with the Americans in Warsaw. Known Chinese sources—as kindly related by Chen Jian—only indicate one meeting between Le Duan and Zhou Enlai in Beijing that month, on November 9, at which Zhou is described as informing the visiting VWP Central Committee delegation headed by Le Duan about the Cultural Revolution. *Zhou Enlai Nianpu [Zhou Enlai Chronology]*, vol. 3 (Beijing: Central Press of Historical Documents, 1997), p. 88. If this is indeed the meeting learned of by the Poles, it suggests that Hanoi had decided to "accede to" peace discussions with Washington even before learning of the "ten points" presented by Lewandowski. However, as Chen Jian notes, it is also possible that other, more Sino-Vietnamese exchanges involving Le Duan took place that month, and were not recorded in the publications thus far made available. We are seeking to clarify the matter in further research in Chinese sources.

that the time was still “not ripe” for negotiations insisted that “the Vietnamese themselves know best” when to negotiate. Mao Zedong reportedly received the delegation next, and in a “surprising” conversation, “disavowed” Zhou and agreed that Hanoi was in the best position to make the determination when to enter talks—“It is their war,” he was later reported to have said, even promising that China would “help the Vietnamese in these negotiations.”⁷⁴

After five days of waiting—punctuated by a conversation on November 22 in which DRV Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach “declared himself categorically against accepting” the U.S. proposals⁷⁵—Lewandowski was “finally received” on November 25 by Premier Pham Van Dong to hear the outcome of the Politburo’s deliberations. After preliminary exchanges in which the North Vietnamese leader indicated appreciation for Poland’s role and concurrence with its analysis of the latest American plan, Pham Van Dong is quoted as having requested his visitor to schedule another meeting with Lodge and to “deliver to him, without making reference to the Premier, the following declaration: ‘If the USA is ready to confirm the views expressed in the talks between Ambassador Lodge and Ambassador Lewandowski then it can do it through the DRV ambassador in Warsaw.’” Dong emphasized the importance of secrecy and the “self-evident” importance of stopping the bombing—notably, the U.S. air raids had abated in late November, which may have been misread as a positive signal, since US officials later attributed the slackening in bombing simply to bad weather—yet in a second session with Lewandowski, at which he reaffirmed Hanoi’s readiness to attend a meeting in Warsaw, the Premier noted explicitly that a cessation of bombing was “not a necessary condition” for the contact but a step the Americans should take in any case. At this second meeting three days later, according to Polish documents, Pham Van Dong also relayed a personal message of reassurance to Polish leader Wladyslaw Gomulka that if in the envisioned discussions Washington “takes a position of promise then the DRV will take a positive attitude to a political resolution of the conflict.”

“The Vietnamese do not desire to humiliate the USA,” he assured Lewandowski. At the same time, the Premier also expressed a certain ambivalence. North Vietnamese leaders, he said, were “not apprehensive” about negotiations if indeed a basis for them existed. Still, they “do not want to construct an ice-castle” as it could “not be ruled out that in the USA the pro-war wing will prevail.” “A lot depends on whether the Americans come to the meeting and what they say there,” he added. Thanking the Poles for their technical help in arranging the meeting, the premier said the precise manner of the contact would depend on “who the USA—if it decides to come to the meeting—delegates.” At that point, the “Vietnamese comrades” would consider the issue, noting that if the Americans were “serious then surely they will not delegate a minor official.” He asked Lewandowski (in his own name) to sound out Lodge on the American attitude toward talking with the NLF, and for Warsaw to “place pressure on the question of bombings at the talks,” and again stressed the “necessity of maintaining absolute secrecy.” Having bemoaned that “not everyone from the

⁷⁴ The Poles only learned the results of these conversations in late December 1966 and early January 1967. Reportedly distrustful of Mao’s assurance, a majority of VWP politburo was reported to have favored conducting contacts with the U.S. in Rangoon rather than Warsaw, arguing that the Chinese would have “greater opportunities to hinder the talks” in the Polish capital. See Michalowski report, p. 61, and Hanoi ciphergram 16274, 25 December 1966, obtained from Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski. Unfortunately, no records of these discussions were obtained for inclusion in the “77 Conversations” collected noted above.

⁷⁵ Michalowski report, pp. 62-63.

socialist countries” displayed the same understanding toward Vietnam, Pham Van Dong ended the meeting by embracing and kissing Lewandowski. In his report to Warsaw after the November 28 session, Lewandowski added three observations—the decision relayed by Pham Van Dong for the Warsaw contact clearly represented a “collective decision of the leadership,” albeit over some opposition; only after the Americans confirmed the position he relayed to Hanoi would the North Vietnamese raise the condition of a total bombing halt, since they knew “that ceasing bombing right now would not allow the fact of the contact to be kept secret and would engender massive pressure of public opinion on both sides”; and finally, he judged that the new proposals had “aroused serious interest and a definite chance has arisen for the initiation of progress.”⁷⁶

If Michalowski’s account and the contemporaneous cables on which it is based are accurate, when Lewandowski returned to Saigon at the end of November, then, the Poles indeed had reason to believe that they possessed a genuine, authoritative commitment from Hanoi not only to meet with the Americans in Warsaw to confirm Washington’s acceptance of the ten-point formulation, but a promise upon receiving it of a “positive attitude to a political resolution of the conflict” despite evident Chinese opposition. On its face, then, the chronology of high-level contacts and conversations between November 15 and 30 described or at least alluded to by Michalowski—Polish-Vietnamese, Polish-Soviet, Soviet-Vietnamese, Vietnamese-Chinese—strongly suggest the seriousness with which the Marigold initiative was considered, the bona fides of Warsaw’s claims to be speaking authoritatively for Hanoi, and the degree of top-level Soviet approval for (if not direct prompting or detailed manipulation of) the Polish initiative to get talks started. Thus, the more extreme expressions of skepticism from some of the Americans about whether the Poles had *ever* been in contact with authoritative DRV figures, received their approval for a contact in Warsaw, or perhaps made up the whole thing in order to mislead Washington or probe its position, would seem to be undermined.⁷⁷ “The real enigma in the whole affair,” observed one British official in early 1967, after the initiative had collapsed, “is the degree of North Vietnamese support for what the Poles were doing.”⁷⁸ The new evidence seems to dispel that particular mystery, but, as will be seen, only while creating others.

Dec. 1-5: Marigold Seems to Bloom—Setting the Meeting in Warsaw

“Something big has happened,” D’Orlandi told Lodge in the hall of the Italian ambassador’s residence in Saigon when his American counterpart arrived at 6:15, Thursday,

⁷⁶ Michalowski report, pp. 61-63, and ciphergrams 15023, 25 November 1966 (Lewandowski to Michalowski), and 15133, 28 November 1966 (Lewandowski to Rapacki), obtained from Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated from Polish by L.W. Gluchowski. The Michalowski report’s description of Lewandowski’s conversations with Pham Van Dong accords with accounts by Lewandowski to Lodge on December 1 (see below), and later (after Marigold collapsed) leaked by Polish officials to Western journalists that the DRV premier had authoritatively confirmed Hanoi’s willingness for a direct contact with U.S. officials. See, e.g., Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p. 34.

⁷⁷ Michalowski’s report thus seems to confirm Thies’ crediting of Rapacki’s sincerity in trying to achieve the U.S.-DRV contact: Regarding Johnson Administration “skepticism over whether the Poles had in fact secured Hanoi’s consent to go through with the meeting in Warsaw,” Thies writes that “it seems likely” that they had in fact done so, “even though we have only Polish assurances in this respect. The Poles, after all, would only have looked foolish by stretching the truth on this matter, especially since the Italians (and very likely the Soviets) had been informed of the initiative from the start.” See Thies, *When Governments Collide*, p. 148, esp. fn. 11.

⁷⁸ P.H. Gore-Booth to T. Brimelow, 20 March 1967, ts/personal, FCO 15/646, PRO.

December 1.⁷⁹ As they entered the room where Lewandowski waited, D’Orlandi stressed the “imperative” importance of maintaining total secrecy regarding what he was about to hear, noting that this had been explicitly demanded by Hanoi, which would deny and discontinue the diplomatic exchanges if they were leaked. Lodge agreed. Then Lewandowski began. “My trip to Hanoi was very important,” he started. As a result of his conversations in Saigon and Hanoi he went on, they had reached a “decisive” point, a judgment, he noted, which Rapacki and Gomulka shared. Lewandowski then explained that he had presented in Hanoi his understanding of the American position, which consisted of ten points—based on his talks with Lodge before Saigon, but formulated in his own language.⁸⁰ He then read them aloud (and, given their importance to the story, they are included in full below):

1. I have insisted that the United States is interested in a peaceful solution through negotiations.
2. Negotiations should not be interpreted as a way to negotiated surrender by those opposing the United States in Viet-Nam. A political negotiation would be aimed at finding an acceptable solution to all the problems, having in mind that the present status quo in South Viet-Nam must be changed in order to take into account the interests of the parties presently opposing the United States in South Viet-Nam, and that such a solution may be reached in an honorable and dignified way not detrimental to national pride and prestige.
3. That the United States are not interested from a point of view of its national interests in having a permanent or long term military presence in South Viet-Nam once a peaceful solution to the conflict has been reached. That is why the offer made in Manila⁸¹ regarding the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the liquidation of American bases should be considered in all seriousness.
4. The United States would be ready, should other parties show a constructive interest in a negotiated settlement, to work out and to discuss with them proposals of such a settlement covering all important problems from a cease-fire to a final solution and withdrawal of U.S. troops.

⁷⁹ The following account of the 1 December 1966 Lewandowski-Lodge-D’Orlandi meeting is based primarily on Lodge’s cable, Saigon Embtel 12247, 1 December 1966, ts/immediate/nodis/Marigold; reproduced in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:890-894, and available in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL. (Declassified State Department cables dealing with Marigold from 1 December 1966 on can also be found in folders “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD” [as well as misfiled in the folder “POL 27-14 VIET/XYZ”] in box 22, Formerly Top Secret Central Policy Files, 1964-1966, DoS, RG 59, NA II.) As Michalowski notes (p. 105), this cable is misdated as November 30 in the Pentagon Papers Marigold Chronology in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 272-273. Allowing for minor differences in translation, Michalowski’s account of the December 1 three-way meeting in Saigon (Lodge-Lewandowski-D’Orlandi), including the ten points, seems generally consistent with the version cabled by Lodge. See Michalowski report, pp. 63-65.

⁸⁰ In his cable to Rapacki on this meeting—Saigon Ciphergram 15313, 2 December 1966 (Lewandowski to Rapacki)—Lewandowski states that at this point he “presented the formulation as per Your [ciphergram] 12158.” The referenced Rapacki cable has not as yet been obtained, but presumably exists in Warsaw Foreign Ministry archives. The reference suggests, however, that Lewandowski had Rapacki’s approval for his “ten points” rather than presenting them on his own authority.

⁸¹ A reference to the 25 October 1966 declaration at a summit involving LBJ and pro-American leaders in the region that after an acceptable and effective peace settlement in South Vietnam the United States would be willing to withdraw its military forces from that country within six months. For the full text, see Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 595-599 (six-month pledge on p. 599).

5. That the United States, within a general solution, would not oppose the formation of a South Vietnamese Government based on the true will of the Vietnamese people with participation of all through free democratic elections, and that the United States would be prepared to accept the necessary control machinery to secure the democratic and free character of such elections and to respect the results of such elections.
6. The United States held the view that unification of Viet-Nam must be decided by the Vietnamese themselves for which the restoration of peace and the formation of proper representative organs of the people in South Viet-Nam is a necessary condition.
7. The United States are ready to accept and respect a true and complete neutrality of South Viet-Nam.
8. The United States are prepared to stop the bombing of the territory of North Viet-Nam if this will facilitate such a peaceful solution. In doing so, the United States are ready to avoid any appearance that North Viet-Nam is forced to negotiate by bombings or that North Viet-Nam have [sic] negotiated in exchange for cessation of bombing. Stopping of bombings would not involve recognition or confirmation by North Viet-Nam that its armed forces are or were infiltrating into South Vietnam.
9. I have informed the proper governmental sources that at the same time, the United States, while not excluding the unification of Viet-Nam, would not agree to unification under military pressure.
10. While the United States are seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict, it would be unrealistic to expect that the United States will declare now or in the future its acceptance of North Vietnam's four or five points.⁸²

At that point the Pole concluded his statement and asked Lodge, "I ask you whether this is a correct statement of the United States point of view." According to Lodge's account of the conversation, he responded "that obviously on a matter of such importance, I would have to refer to my government for a definitive reply, but I could say off hand that much of what he cited was in keeping with the spirit of our policy." His cable states that he mentioned that "personally," he would like a "closer definition" of the language in paragraph 2, prompting Lewandowski to agree to changing "must" to "would"; and that the first sentence in paragraph 8—on the bombing halt—"might need some clarification," although it is unclear

⁸² A reference to North Vietnam's four points for a settlement, issued by Pham Van Dong in April 1965, and the NLF's five points, announced the previous month. Though publicly promulgated, texts of both plans are conveniently available in Brigham, *Guerrilla Diplomacy*, pp. 43, 159-60. The more important of these, Hanoi's, essentially called for: 1. "Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people—peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity," which required the US to withdraw all of its military from South Vietnam and cease all acts of war on North Vietnam. 2. Respecting the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Accords, which included, inter alia, tight restrictions on the presence of foreign military personnel which the US had long since surpassed. 3. "The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the NLFV [NLF]." 4. Vietnam's "peaceful reunification" should likewise "be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference."

In late November 1966, while Lewandowski was in Hanoi, Gromyko had told British foreign secretary Brown that Hanoi could accept making the four and five points as "a basis for discussion" rather than rigidly insisting on Washington's full acceptance of them as a precondition for talks. Deptel 91787 (to Amembassy London), 20 November 1966 (relaying text of message from Brown to Rusk), eyes only for ambassador from secretary, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 271.

whether he said this to the Pole. (Lewandowski's cable to Rapacki reporting the meeting, however, while generally consistent with Lodge's, notes simply that the "pleasantly surprised" American had given a "positive" reply regarding confirmation of the ten points, "however, he will contact the President immediately."⁸³ The question of whether Lodge had hedged his approval of the ten-point formula would later emerge as a sticking point between US and Polish versions of the affair.)

After hearing the American's generally favorable reaction, Lewandowski, asserting that what he said was "very firmly based on conversations with the most respectable government sources in Hanoi" and "vouched for by Mr. Rapacki," and stated: "I am authorized to say that if the United States are really of the views which I have presented, it would be advisable to confirm them directly by conversation with the North Vietnamese Ambassador in Warsaw." The Pole then reaffirmed the need for total secrecy, tossed in a plea to halt the bombing of North Vietnam "apart from all other things," urged speedy action to preclude leaks or action by opponents of a solution, noted that Moscow had been informed of the initiative, and, after some prodding from Lodge, acknowledged "with some hesitation" that his authoritative source in Hanoi had been Pham Van Dong, who spoke after "collective debate among all the proper authorities," meaning he had "the Presidium behind it."

Lodge's cable relating his December 1 meeting with Lewandowski and D'Orlandi piqued the interest of the small circle of U.S. officials authorized to follow the highly classified diplomatic initiative. Hanoi's apparent readiness for a direct meeting on the basis of the ten-point formula described by Lewandowski impressed National Security Adviser Walt W. Rostow—who forwarded Lodge's cable to Johnson at the LBJ Ranch in Texas that Thursday evening—along with Rusk and senior State Department official Llewellyn E. Thompson, Jr., as serious and potentially important. Rostow seemed particularly struck by Hanoi's insistence on secrecy and selection of Warsaw as a venue ("to keep Peiping and the NLF out of the act") as well as Lodge's report that Lewandowski had stressed that talks should begin "as 'fast as possible'"—"As you know," Rostow told the president, "I have felt that if Hanoi was ever serious they would want a quick complete deal, not a slow negotiation."⁸⁴ On the other hand, Rostow cautioned that there were "possible booby-traps here we'll have to watch." In addition to ambiguity about some of the language of the ten points and uncertainty about what exchanges had taken place between Lewandowski and Hanoi, U.S. officials were also disconcerted by the lack of concrete reference to the "Phase A-Phase B" two-stage US proposal that Lodge had given the Pole (and that Rusk had concurrently given Brown to pass to the Soviets). On December 3, senior State Department officials Thompson and William P. Bundy also expressed a "strong suspicion of exaggeration," speculating that Lewandowski had "embroidered his text in a rather free-wheeling fashion, either to us, to Hanoi, or both," given Polish conduct in the Norman Cousins episode in the final days of the January 1966 bombing pause, and warned that the ten points as the Pole had relayed them "contain quite a number of bugs." While agreeing

⁸³ Saigon Ciphergram 15313, 2 December 1966 (Lewandowski to Rapacki), obtained from Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski

⁸⁴ See Rostow to LBJ, 1 December 1966, folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL. Word of the latest Marigold development also coincided with the arrival of an analysis of "The View from Hanoi" by the CIA's Sherman Kent, Chairman of the Board of National Estimates, which concluded that "for the first time in the last two years, there is a chance of a serious political move from the Communist side." Kent's memorandum was sent to CIA director Richard Helms on November 30 and forwarded by Rostow to LBJ on December 5. See editorial note, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:904.

that “we must for action purposes interpret [Lewandowski’s message] as indicating a real interest in Hanoi (or some elements in Hanoi) in opening up the quietest kind of discussion,” Thompson and Bundy stressed that they saw “no assurance” that talks would really occur—Thompson, for his part, “doubt[ed] it,” sensing “just too much uncertainty in both the message and the channel”—and urged Rusk to alert Johnson “to the possibility that it may well just blow away next week.”⁸⁵

At 6:15 p.m. on Friday, December 2, Washington time (Saturday morning in Saigon), in a cable drafted by Thompson and cleared by Under Secretary of State Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, the State Department cautiously but positively replied to Lodge, telling the envoy that he could inform Lewandowski that Washington was “instructing our Embassy in Warsaw to contact North Vietnamese representative there on December 6. (This date will give time for Hanoi to instruct their Ambassador if they have not already done so.)” The U.S. Embassy officer, Lodge could say, “will be able to confirm that the ten points outlined by Lewandowski broadly represent our position.” But the officer would have to say, Lodge was instructed to tell the Pole, “that several specific points are subject to important differences of interpretation.” Should a North Vietnamese representative be “prepared to engage in a discussion,” the State Department would then “brief [an] appropriate officer in order that he may be able to explain directly our position.”⁸⁶

At exactly the same time, secret instructions were sent to the U.S. Ambassador in Poland, John A. Gronouski, alerting him to the possibility of such a meeting “on December 6 or as soon thereafter as possible.”⁸⁷ The American envoy greeted the news enthusiastically enough to suggest that he—not DCM Walter E. Jenkins as State had proposed in the interests of minimizing the danger of a leak—make the contact, since the risk of exposure seemed no greater and it struck him as more “suitable” for the highest-ranking U.S. officer, the DRV representative’s counterpart, to act as interlocutor. Perhaps fatefully, given later confusion on this score, Gronouski also proposed, in light of the “considerable risk of detection and publicity” involved in “an attempt by any officer this embassy to make direct contact with North Vietnam ambassador,” that he ask Rapacki “to serve as intermediary in arranging initial contact as well as any subsequent meetings,” beginning with a first encounter in the Polish foreign minister’s office. State quickly approved these suggested arrangements.⁸⁸

On Saturday afternoon, December 3, Lodge met with Lewandowski and D’Orlandi at the Italian’s apartment in Saigon and relayed the State Department text agreeing to a December 6 encounter in Warsaw.⁸⁹ According to his cabled report of the meeting, Lodge stated: “I am instructed to tell you that the United States Government is instructing the American Embassy in Warsaw to contact the North Vietnamese representative there on

⁸⁵ William P. Bundy to Secretary, 2 December 1962, secret/eyes only/Marigold, in folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1966,” box 2739, CFPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

⁸⁶ Deptel 95709 to Lodge, 2 December 1966, in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

⁸⁷ Deptel 95711 (to Amembassy Warsaw), 2 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:898-899.

⁸⁸ See Warsaw embtel 1359, 2 December 1966, and deptel 96255 (to Amembassy Warsaw), 3 December 1966, both ts/nodis/immediate/priority/Marigold, and both in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

⁸⁹ This account of the December 3 Lodge-Lewandowski-D’Orlandi meeting is from Lodge cable, Embtel 12428 (to SecState), 3 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:900-901, and folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL; Michalowski report, pp. 65-67; and ciphergram no. 15388 from Lewandowski to Michalowski, cabled 3 December 1966, 23:30, obtained from Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski.

December 6. Our Embassy will be able to confirm that the ten points outlined by you broadly represent our position. We will have to say, however, that several specific points are subject to important differences of interpretation.”⁹⁰ The three diplomats also discussed a new potential complication for their sensitive diplomatic initiative: the heaviest American bombing of Hanoi in several months had taken place the previous day, and the Pole, citing the views of his foreign minister, warned Lodge that “on the brink of such a delicate undertaking, it is wise to avoid anything which would create the impression that the United States interprets anything in Hanoi as a sign of weakness. To do this would be a most unhappy interpretation.” As Lewandowski himself reported to Warsaw, he had warned Lodge “that all attempts to interpret the DRV agreement for Warsaw contact as a result of bombing or an expression of weakness could lead to a tragic mistake.” (Polish sources indicate that Lewandowski also expressed “disappointment” about the “interpretation” clause, and that the Italian diplomat supported him throughout the discussion, though this is not reflected in Lodge’s report.) At the same time, according to Lodge’s report of the meeting, Lewandowski confirmed U.S. readiness for the December 6 meeting in Warsaw and added, “Probably for the first meeting we will extend to you some help in getting in touch with the North Vietnamese. Someone from the Ministry will be in touch with the Embassy and will effectuate a contact.”

To his account of the session Lewandowski—a rather mysterious figure in the Marigold story⁹¹—appended his own comments, which seem to reflect a mixture of optimism that talks could really begin and concern that belligerent forces within the US government and military might try to sabotage the initiative. On the optimistic side, the Pole speculated that the December 6 date given by Lodge for the first contact might be the date for the start of a planned bombing halt—as events were to show, that was hardly the case. Yet, Lewandowski also underlined that LBJ “dreads counter-action by the [political] right,” and warned Warsaw that despite Lodge’s assurance that only Johnson and Rusk knew of the initiative, McNamara also undoubtedly knew, and it was “possible therefore to expect opposition”⁹²—a misreading of the Defense Secretary, already losing faith in a military victory and privately sympathetic to a halt to bombing the north in order to promote negotiations⁹³, but not of the hawkish U.S. military, which favored intensified bombing.

At 11:30 p.m. Saturday night, Saigon time, on December 3, Lewandowski cabled a ciphered telegram of his account of the talk with Lodge and D’Orlandi to Warsaw, where it arrived shortly before noon on Sunday, December 4 (Warsaw time).⁹⁴ At the same time,

⁹⁰ Oddly, Lewandowski’s cable reporting the meeting stated that Lodge had said that several points were the “subject of important differences of interpretation” (in English) rather than the correct English wording, which was that several points were “subject *to* important differences of interpretation.” Compare Deptel 95711 with Lewandowski ciphergram 15388. Whether this seemingly minor error, apparently in transcription, influenced events is unclear.

⁹¹ Several US officials, at the time and later, wondered whether Lewandowski was freelancing during Marigold or acting on official instructions during Marigold—the evidence presented here tends to support the latter view.

⁹² Lewandowski ciphergram 15388, 3 December 1966.

⁹³ See, e.g., McNamara’s conversation with Johnson on 19 September 1966, in which he told the president that he was “more and more convinced that we ought definitely to plan on termination of the bombing in the north” after the November elections, although he said he hadn’t told associates in the Pentagon yet. *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:649.

⁹⁴ Whether he simultaneously sent a copy of the cable to Hanoi, as the Polish ICC delegate had at times done in the past, or otherwise transmitted to the DRV the news that the Americans had agreed to a meeting in Warsaw on December 6, is unclear. According to one of Lewandowski’s predecessors as Polish ICC delegate in Saigon, such reports were transmitted “[a]lmost automatically” to the Soviet embassy in Hanoi and (via Ha Van Lau) to the DRV government. See Maneli, *War of the Vanquished*, pp. 126, 134, 142, 147.

unbeknownst to both the Poles and the Americans, as news of the possibly imminent contact between representatives of the warring parties wound its way to the Polish capital, so too did a secret North Vietnamese emissary bearing special instructions for the DRV ambassador. For this is when the story of Nguyen Dinh Phuong's clandestine mission to Poland enters the narrative.⁹⁵

A Secret DRV Emissary: Nguyen Dinh Phuong's Mission to Warsaw

According to Nguyen Dinh Phuong's recollections, he was urgently summoned on the late afternoon of Saturday, December 3, from the DRV Foreign Ministry in Hanoi to the residence of Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. He believes he reached Thach's villa in the Chon Fu district in the center of the capital, near the Foreign Ministry, at 4 or 5 p.m. on the 3rd, but acknowledges that it is remotely possible that the meeting with Thach occurred the following afternoon (Sunday the 4th) instead.⁹⁶

Whether it happened place on Saturday or Sunday afternoon, Phuong's memory of the contents of his conversation with Thach in the drawing room of his home appears clear: the deputy foreign minister informed him that as part of a "very secret initiative" he was to fly to Warsaw and hand-carry a one-and-a-half page typed document to the North Vietnamese ambassador in Poland, Do Phat Quang, containing instructions for the proposed meeting with his U.S. counterpart. "You must not let the contents of the document become known to anyone [else]," Thach implored Phuong (according to the latter), even adding that if the plane carrying him were to crash, the emissary was expected to dispose of the document before impact. During the meeting, which Phuong recalls lasted 15-20 minutes, Thach did not betray any emotions and "appeared to be very indifferent." In "very cold and calm tones," the deputy foreign minister told him: "You have to go to Warsaw. It is a very secret mission. You must take this document. Don't show it to anybody. If the plane crashes, you must destroy it before you die."

As Phuong recalls them, the typed instructions—a copy of which has not yet surfaced—directed the DRV representatives to explain to the American that the best and

(Warsaw had been discussed as a venue at the three-way Lodge-Lewandowski-D'Orlandi meeting on December 1, but according to detailed records of the session no specific date for the proposed initial U.S.-DRV contact had been mentioned.) Precisely when and how the Poles informed the North Vietnamese of the substance of the December 3 meeting, including the three-part statement with the "interpretation" clause, is unclear (see below).

⁹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the account that follows in succeeding paragraphs is based on the author's interview with Nguyen Dinh Phuong, Hanoi, 8 June 1999, and his written account, "The Marigold 'Drive,'" in author's possession. Some minor additional clarifications were provided in a letter from Nguyen Dinh Phuong to the author dated 4 January 2000 and kindly delivered by Luu Doan Huynh.

⁹⁶ It appears that if the meeting between Thach and Phuong occurred on December 3, it took place before Hanoi received a report of the Lewandowski-Lodge-D'Orlandi conversation taking place almost simultaneously on that Saturday afternoon in Saigon at which Lodge conveyed U.S. agreement to a meeting between the American and North Vietnamese ambassadors in Warsaw on December 6. According to Lewandowski's ciphered reporting cable (no. 15388, obtained from the Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated from Polish by L.W. Gluchowski), the Saigon conversation started at 3:20 p.m. Had Phuong known before leaving Hanoi for Warsaw of the date of the proposed meeting, the timing of the December 3 Saigon meeting would have constituted evidence that Phuong left Hanoi on the 4th rather than the 3rd (and reached Warsaw on evening of the 5th rather than of the 4th); a more discussion of this question appears in an earlier version of this paper delivered at the CWIHP/Hong Kong University Conference on "China, Southeast Asia, and the Vietnam War," HKU, 11-12 January 2000. However, Nguyen Dinh Phuong clarified in a letter to the author dated 4 January 2000 that during their 3 December 1966 talk Thach did not inform him of the date of the proposed U.S.-DRV meeting, and that he only learned of it after reaching Warsaw.

most reasonable basis for a settlement would be Hanoi's "Four Points." However—crucially—they also specified that only the first point (a halt to the U.S. bombing of, and all other acts of war against, North Vietnam) constituted a prerequisite to starting negotiations. In addition to the formal instructions, Thach elaborated that the DRV diplomats could decide on the spot whether to continue the discussion on the basis of whether or not their American visitor acted in a "favorable" manner: "I think if his [Gronouski's] attitude, appearance, and tone were polite and not arrogant then...it is favorable," Phuong explained. "If he shows himself [to be] arrogant, then that would cut off the discussion." Of course, Phuong remembered, the diplomats were also expected to report back to Hanoi the results of any conversation and to await further instructions.

This was not the first word that Phuong, then in his mid-forties and in charge of the Foreign Ministry's English-language section, had heard of the Polish mediation effort. On November 20, two weeks earlier, he had served as translator for Lewandowski's meeting with ICC liaison Col. Ha Van Lau when the Pole had first transmitted the points he described as stemming from the conversations with Lodge. At the time, listening to Lewandowski's description of Washington's positions, Phuong had reacted with cautious optimism. "I [thought] that is good news. The proposal of the US side appears to be reasonable...It is worth probing whether the intention of the US is really good or a deception for propaganda." Phuong recalled that it would be too strong to describe his initial reaction as excited or hopeful, and that he doubted they could lead to a rapid end to the war, especially as the Americans considered troops and bombing their "trump cards" in any negotiations. At the same time, he (and Ha Van Lau as well) viewed the ideas as "interesting enough to hear more about" and "worthwhile to consider."

Despite the deputy foreign minister's outward coolness, Phuong sensed that Thach, too, on December 3rd (or 4th) was "persuaded" that the U.S. proposals merited exploration—"I think his reaction was...skeptical yet interested." Following his conversation with the deputy foreign minister, Phuong recalls that he immediately returned home with the secret instructions, whereupon his wife, Le Thi Yen, sewed them into the vest of his coat for added security. Phuong reports that that same evening, the Foreign Ministry secretariat arranged for him to be driven to Hanoi's Noi Ba airport; there, carrying a diplomatic passport, he boarded a regularly scheduled Aeroflot flight to Moscow, reaching the Soviet capital (after one or two stops—Phuong is not sure which) the following morning.⁹⁷ Upon reaching Moscow, Phuong reports, he was taken to the DRV embassy until the early afternoon, when he was returned to the airport to take a regularly scheduled LOT (Polish airline) flight to Warsaw. While in the Soviet capital, he reports, he did not discuss the purpose of his mission with DRV diplomats, nor did he have any contact with Soviet officials. Finally, he recalls, more than 24 hours after his departure from Hanoi, Phuong reached the Polish capital on the evening of Sunday, December 4.

During the long journey, the North Vietnamese emissary says he pondered his scheduled encounter with Washington's representative, and could not resist a sense of rising hope that his secret mission might indeed contribute to an end to the war. "I felt a little bit more optimism [than on November 20] because the proposal at that time appeared more

⁹⁷ A DRV foreign ministry colleague has raised questions about Nguyen Dinh Phuong's account of his travels, suggesting that it was customary to transit Beijing on the way from North Vietnam to Europe during the war. Interview with former DRV official (then serving at Hanoi's embassy in Beijing), White Oak, Florida, December 1999. However, Nguyen Dinh Phuong specifically recalled that the Aeroflot plane made "one or two stops," but not in China while en route from Hanoi to Moscow. Interview with author, Hanoi, 8 June 1999.

reasonable but for the same reason I was disappointed when I heard about the bombing [of Hanoi],” Phuong remembered. “. . . I thought about how the meeting would happen, how I should behave, how I [would] talk to the American.” In recalling the episode more than three decades later, Phuong noted that as a professional diplomat and as a Vietnamese he was slow to feel or display excitement: “The humor of the Vietnamese is calm, or at least to show calmness . . . we did not express our mood very easily.” Yet, at the same time, he entertained the possibility that the Warsaw meeting might herald a genuine breakthrough: “Inside I felt it was important—if successful, it might change the situation . . . may end the war, may open substantial negotiations. . . . It might lead to substantial negotiations, that was my personal thinking.”

From Warsaw airport, Nguyen Dinh Phuong was immediately taken to the DRV embassy to brief Ambassador Do Phat Quang on his mission. Finally, he handed Hanoi’s envoy in Poland the written instructions from Nguyen Co Thach and was able to read them himself. As Phuong recalls, the two discussed the background and details of the peace initiative well into the evening. They spoke “as two diplomats” in the embassy dining room from about 8 p.m. until almost midnight, Phuong remembered. It seemed clear to Phuong that the ambassador, a southerner in his ‘50s, had not heard previously about the initiative or the proposed meeting with an American (although he had apparently been involved in recent peace feelers with Swedish diplomats that had been conveyed to Rusk on November 11 and which the Americans had given the code-name “ASPEN”⁹⁸). Do Phat Quang “received my explanation very calmly and took notes,” Phuong recalls, and “studiously listened to my explanations and recommendations.” While not voicing “any specific attitude” about the prospects for the initiative’s success, Quang “agreed with me about the answer” to the U.S. representative which would be given at the meeting—that it would not take the form of a written statement, that a report would be immediately sent to Hanoi, but that meetings could continue so long as the American adopted a respectful attitude.

According to Phuong, the following morning in Warsaw was Monday, December 5th, and after a Vietnamese breakfast he spent the morning continuing his conversations with Ambassador Quang and then rested during the afternoon—staying all the while within the confines of the embassy compound, and without having any contacts or communications while in Warsaw, then or later, with Polish (or any other nation’s) officials.

But Nguyen Dinh Phuong’s chronology raises puzzling questions. It has long been known from declassified U.S. sources—now corroborated by the Michalowski Report—that shortly before noon on December 5, the U.S. ambassador in Warsaw, John Gronouski, was summoned to the Polish foreign ministry. Once there, Michalowski determined that the American was aware of plans for the meeting with his North Vietnamese counterpart, and ushered him in to see Foreign Minister Rapacki. In the first of what would be many secret talks between the two over the coming weeks, Rapacki proceeded to recount the sequence of events that had taken place in Saigon since mid-November, including Lodge’s three-part statement to Lewandowski on December 3, and complained both about the U.S. bombings of Hanoi in recent days (on both December 2 and 4) and about the “interpretation” clause, expressing “grave concern” at how Hanoi would interpret this apparent sign of “equivocation” about the ten points. According to Gronouski’s account of their conversation, Rapacki stated that Warsaw was “holding up” transmitting Lodge’s December 3rd statement to Hanoi “in hopes of obtaining [an] improved version, but observed that they have no right to delay too long conveying information to Hanoi.” He urged Washington to

⁹⁸ See documentation on ASPEN in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 654-715.

delete or soften the “interpretation clause” lest it (in combination with the bombings) cause the North Vietnamese to postpone or cancel the contact. In Michalowski’s rendering of the conversation, Rapacki “declared that these formulations put a question mark on the whole American position and will undoubtedly be read in Hanoi as a retraction by the USA. Therefore, it would be better if we could deliver the whole thing to Hanoi without these reservations.”⁹⁹

Michalowski’s report, however, discloses that in addition to displeasure over the “interpretation clause,” which Rapacki had stressed to Gronouski, an entirely different reason lay behind Warsaw’s failure to arrange an immediate Vietnamese-American contact: “The need to defer the USA-DRV meeting was also prompted by the fact that the DRV ambassador [Do Phat Quang], called to see me [Michalowski] in the same manner as Gronouski, declared to me with astonishment that he had not received any instructions nor information.”¹⁰⁰ This means that the communication between the Poles and the DRV ambassador must have preceded Phuong’s arrival in Warsaw, since it would have made no sense for Quang to express ignorance of the affair after having received a special briefing from an emissary who had traveled half-way around the world for that express purpose. The Michalowski Report implies, though it does not explicitly state, that Quang was summoned, prior to Gronouski, on the morning of December 5th. If that indeed were the case, it would suggest that Phuong arrived in Poland only that evening (consistent with having departed Hanoi on December 4), since if he had reached Warsaw the night before (consistent with leaving Hanoi on the 3rd) then Quang would already have been “in the loop” on the proposed meeting. Another possibility is that the Poles conferred with Do Phat Quang on the 4th, before Nguyen Dinh Phuong’s arrival later in the day. Further Polish records might resolve this particular question.

⁹⁹ On the December 5 Gronouski-Rapacki meeting, see Warsaw embtel 1363, 5 December 1966, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL, and *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:902-904; Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 275-277; and Michalowski Report, pp. 68-69. Rapacki’s statements to Gronouski that the Poles were holding up transmitting the “interpretations clause” to Hanoi would appear to be contradicted by a statement made five months later by Michalowski to British ambassador to Warsaw Thomas Brimelow. At a 6 April 1967 reception following a long conversation about Marigold, Michalowski was quoted as saying that “[t]he North Vietnamese had known from 3 December that the Americans had reservations about Lewandowski’s ten points,” and that, “Knowing this, they had nonetheless instructed their Ambassador in Warsaw to prepare for talks with the United States Ambassador.” See Warsaw to FO, telno 215, 7 April 1967, dedip/ts, FCO 15/646, PRO. Whether Brimelow accurately reported Michalowski’s comments is impossible to tell, of course, nor did the Pole apparently give any further details.

¹⁰⁰ Michalowski Report, p. 69. Michalowski’s statement here suggests that he spoke incorrectly to Harriman when reconstructing the Marigold episode in February 1969. According to Harriman’s account of their conversation, Michalowski said “that about the second or third of November [sic; clearly December] the North Vietnamese Ambassador to Warsaw was informed about the agreement on meetings in Warsaw and told that he would receive further instructions. The Poles began to discuss with the North Vietnamese such procedural details as where the meetings would be held, whether in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in a small palace, whether the Poles would make the introductions or let the North Vietnamese and U.S. introduce themselves, etc. These procedural matters were also discussed with Gronouski.” Given the absence in the Michalowski Report of any indication of such conversations or contacts with the North Vietnamese ambassador in Warsaw—and indeed, a statement indicating the opposite—one must wonder whether Michalowski was fabricating and/or embellishing these details in order to make more convincing his argument to Harriman that the talks had been on the verge of taking place had not the U.S. bombings of Hanoi sabotaged them. See Memorandum of Conversation, 19 February 1969, Michalowski, Harriman, and Davidson, secret/nodis/Marigold, in folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1969,” box 2739, CFPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

Rapacki's statements to Gronouski and Phuong's recollections raise another problem. Although the foreign minister told Gronouski on the 5th that Poland had not yet informed Hanoi of Lodge's statement in Saigon to Lewandowski two days earlier agreeing to a U.S.-DRV meeting in Warsaw on the 6th, Phuong's account—indicating that he was instructed on the 3rd or 4th to proceed from Hanoi to the Polish capital to brief the ambassador for a meeting with his U.S. counterpart on the 6th—suggests otherwise. Unfortunately, the Michalowski Report is frustratingly ambiguous on the precise timing and contents of Polish-DRV communications at this juncture. Michalowski relates that after receiving Lewandowski's report of his December 3 discussion with Lodge, "we prepared ourselves in Warsaw to establish contact between the USA and DRV embassies. Upon informing Pham Van Dong that we are waiting for Ambassador Gronouski to turn to us on 6 December in this matter, we asked for a reply to a series of questions; namely, on what level will the contact be most likely[?] We judged that actually sending someone [on the U.S. side] to Warsaw would make it difficult to maintain secrecy. The best person, it would appear to us is Gronouski, who is a person trusted by the President. Next, we asked what time-limit will be the most reliable for the DRV as well as when the DRV ambassador in Warsaw will be informed about the matter and receive the appropriate instructions. Finally, we asked in what manner we could assist the Vietnamese with regard to this contact."

This summary could be consistent with both Rapacki's and Phuong's versions, since it indicates that the Poles immediately informed Hanoi of the date of a potential contact ("...we are waiting for Ambassador Gronouski to turn to us on 6 December in this matter"), but does not explicitly state that the DRV prime minister was given the text of the three-part statement which Lodge had related to Lewandowski on the 3rd. Evidently this Polish communication to Pham Van Dong (probably through the ambassador in Hanoi, Sidelecki) took place between midday on December 4, Warsaw time (or that evening in Hanoi)—since Lewandowski's ciphergram of his Saturday, December 3 talk with Lodge reached the Polish capital only at 11 a.m. Sunday, and the deciphering section a half-hour later¹⁰¹—and the following morning (Warsaw time)—i.e., afternoon of December 5th, Hanoi time—since Michalowski goes on to say that "Not waiting for Hanoi's reply," Rapacki "decided to take the initiative" and set up the meeting with Gronouski for the late morning of December 5th in Warsaw.¹⁰²

Nguyen Dinh Phuong's account suggests that, whether or not they knew the exact contents of Lodge's December 3rd statement (including the disputed "interpretation clause"), the North Vietnamese had already been informed of the U.S. willingness to confirm the ten-point formula in Warsaw on December 6, and were in fact ready to meet with the Americans in that city on that date. Phuong also stated that so far as he knew, the "interpretation" clause to which the Poles objected and which appeared such a sticking point, had not been a matter of concern—although it is not clear whether this is because as of the 6th the Poles had not yet conveyed it to them, or because Hanoi had already been taken it into consideration. It also appears that the North Vietnamese failed to notify the Poles of their special emissary's

¹⁰¹ This extraordinarily long transmission time—more than 18 hours—may have reflected what Michalowski told Gronouski on December 6 were "technical difficulties of communicating with Hanoi," since according to Maneli, Lewandowski's predecessor, even urgent ("flash") Polish ICC communications from Saigon were sent to Warsaw via Hanoi. See Warsaw Embtel 1376, 7 December 1966 (describing Gronouski's conversation with Michalowski the previous evening), folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL; and Maneli, *War of the Vanquished*, p. 142.

¹⁰² Michalowski Report, p. 68.

presence in Warsaw,¹⁰³ or their ambassador's readiness, on December 6th, to receive an American visitor. (Of course, as noted below, Hanoi had obvious reasons to conceal the extent of its interest in the Warsaw contact, above all concern that it might be interpreted by Washington as revealing weakness, and also because the apparent agreement to a direct contact occurred at a time when Beijing and the NLF opposed peace talks, and when the US continued its bombing of North Vietnam.)

In any case, after his December 5 meeting with Rapacki, Gronouski had cabled an account and sought instructions from Washington on how to respond to the request to delete the "interpretation clause." Passing the cable on to LBJ, Rostow scribbled a handwritten note: "Herewith the Poles throw a block across the Warsaw contact."¹⁰⁴ Sensing a probing maneuver by the Poles and/or North Vietnamese, Rostow and Acting Secretary of State Katzenbach—Rusk, accompanied by William Bundy, had left for Tokyo on December 4—hastily drafted a cable to Gronouski (copied to Lodge in Saigon) instructing him politely to stand by the December 3rd statement despite Rapacki's objections.¹⁰⁵

Dec. 6—The Meeting That Didn't Happen

What happened on the 6th between the Americans and the Poles has long been known from declassified U.S. documents. At 1 p.m., taking extreme precautions to preserve secrecy, Gronouski met again with Rapacki at the Foreign Ministry, and conveyed the State Department's negative response to the Pole's plea for a retraction or reformulation of the "interpretation clause" that Lodge had given to Lewandowski. In accord with a cable sent by State the previous evening, Gronouski explained that Washington had used the clause merely to preclude North Vietnamese accusations of "charges of bad faith in any subsequent negotiations if we did not make clear that there is a wide latitude for interpretation of the general language used by Lewandowski," and reaffirmed that Lewandowski's ten points "broadly reflects the position of the US Government on the issues covered and we would be prepared to accept it as the basis for direct discussions with the North Vietnamese if they are in fact interested in pursuing the matter, and if they are informed that latitude for interpretation of such general language is inevitable." In response to Gronouski's exposition, Rapacki again expressed "doubts and misgivings" with the "interpretation clause" but said the Poles would transmit the U.S. position to Hanoi. Turning to the question of the first meeting between the U.S. and North Vietnamese ambassadors in Warsaw "in the event it takes place," Rapacki said he expected that at that first encounter the American would convey his government's "precise and official position" regarding the ten points, assuming

¹⁰³ Evidently Hanoi never informed Warsaw that it had sent an emissary (Phuong), since had they known of it Polish officials (and Michalowski in particular) would assuredly have cited that fact as a powerful argument that North Vietnam had really been serious about the initiative. Yet they never made such a claim—rather the opposite. In February 1969, according to his memorandum of a conversation reconstructing Marigold, "Harriman asked [Michalowski] whether the North Vietnamese delegation ever arrived in Warsaw. Michalowski said that it had not...." See Memorandum of Conversation, 19 February 1969, Michalowski, Harriman, and Davidson, secret/nodis/Marigold, in folder "POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1969," box 2739, CFPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA II. Nor does Michalowski make any mention in his report of a North Vietnam emissary being sent to Warsaw in December 1966.

¹⁰⁴ Rostow to LBJ, n.d. [5 December 1966], doc. 59, folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

¹⁰⁵ For the instructions to Gronouski, see deptel 97016, State Department to U.S. Embassy in Poland, 5 December 1966, 8:58 p.m., *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:905. Rusk and Bundy's departure is from Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p. 66.

that this would include a confirmation of U.S. readiness for an agreement on that basis, as well as an explanation of what points about which Washington believed there existed a difference of interpretation.¹⁰⁶ (As instructed by Rapacki, Lewandowski made similar arguments to Lodge in a meeting in Saigon the same day, stressing that the offending clause might “be understood in Hanoi as diminishing the importance of the whole American statement” and warning that the bombings of the DRV capital were casting a shadow on the delicate overture; Lodge, for his report, responded by restating the same arguments as Gronouski did in Warsaw defending the clause, and in a personal comment appended to his report of the meeting judged that the objections were “picayune” noting that they were, in Michalowski’s paraphrase, “waiting for confirmation by us of the most advantageous conditions for the Warsaw contact.”¹⁰⁷)

In sum, it appears from both the declassified cables from the U.S. ambassadors in Saigon and Warsaw describing their conversations with, respectively, Lewandowski and Rapacki—and from the Michalowski Report’s summary of both discussions—that on December 6 senior Polish officials gave the Americans the clear impression that the conditions for the first encounter between the ambassadors had not yet been achieved, and that the Poles would continue to work with the North Vietnamese to facilitate it, but that further progress depended on Hanoi’s response; Rapacki, it appears, did not explicitly urge Gronouski to act on his own to directly contact his DRV counterpart, nor did he urge him *not* to do so. And, at the same time, it seems that Washington, after initially implying in Saigon that the first bilateral contact would be made by the U.S. Embassy directly to the DRV Embassy, had entrusted the Polish mediators with the task of bringing the two sides together. From the U.S. standpoint, in other words, it appeared that Hanoi was not yet ready to meet—and it was not clear whether the Polish complaints about the “interpretation clause” and the latest bombings reflected a good-faith attempt to hurdle a genuine obstacle or a cynical maneuver to probe and press for a softening of the U.S. terms for talks and the maximum constraints on military actions.

Missing, until now, has been any word of what was happening on December 6th from the North Vietnamese perspective—and that is what Nguyen Dinh Phuong’s account appears to provide. Phuong states that on that Tuesday morning, he and ambassador Quang were, in fact, prepared to receive a U.S. representative, and spent the entire day wondering where their guest was.

“We were just waiting at the embassy, Do Phat Quang and myself in the drawing room, talking about Vietnam, the world, Poland, work at the embassy, various subjects.” Their mood, he recalled, was “a little impatient and a little anxious...we had many questions.”

When the morning passed with no visitor, he recalls, the two men adjourned to lunch, after first carefully instructing the embassy guard to inform them immediately should anyone appear at the front gate seeking entry. In the afternoon the diplomats resumed waiting, with the same result. Having started the day filled with anticipation ended it feeling stood up, Nguyen Dinh Phuong remembers that he grew first puzzled and finally, by evening, “a little bit disappointed,” even somewhat “angry.”

¹⁰⁶ On the December 6 Gronouski-Rapacki meeting, see Warsaw embtel 1375, 6 December 1966, in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL, and Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 277-279; and Michalowski report, pp. 69-70.

¹⁰⁷ On the December 6 Lodge-Lewandowski-D’Orlandi meeting in Saigon, see Saigon Embtel 12601, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL; and Michalowski report, p. 67.

“In view of these facts,” Phuong writes, “the Vietnamese side could only understand that the US side did not want the meeting in Warsaw between the two ambassadors.”

Only more than three decades later, after receiving declassified U.S. documents and other materials provided by the present author, did Nguyen Dinh Phuong begin to alter this view, and consider the possibility that Washington (and Gronouski in particular) had actually been ready, even eager, to have the December 6 meeting take place. (In fact, as recounted below, Gronouski, who died in 1996, quickly emerged as one of Marigold’s biggest supporters, ardently opposed further U.S. bombing of Hanoi or other belligerent actions that threatened to demolish whatever prospects existed for a U.S.-DRV meeting in Warsaw to take place, and defended Polish actions and motivations in the affair.¹⁰⁸)

The possibility that miscommunication or misunderstanding, rather than a deliberate U.S. decision, kept Gronouski from showing up at the DRV embassy in Warsaw on December 6 has caused Nguyen Dinh Phuong to wonder whether, in retrospect, he and Ambassador Do Phat Quang also did all they could to achieve the contact. During an interview in Hanoi in June 1999, after recalling the long day of waiting, Nguyen Dinh Phuong stated with evident emotion: “I wonder, why we did not call the US embassy and say, ‘Why don’t you come to our embassy?’ Why so?” Later in the interview, the question arose of why the DRV diplomats failed to contact the Americans or Poles on December 6 when Gronouski failed to appear: “I wonder how, why, we did not discuss this question. Possibly it is because of our pride”—that is, as a smaller, weaker power, Hanoi did not want to seem too eager for talks, especially when the Americans had not ceased their bombing. “[We thought,] ‘This showed that they are not willing to talk to us.’”

“It is pity, it is pity.”

“They had promised to come ... We would have preferred if the Americans called us, apologized for not being able to come, rather than not to call. We were ready on the 6th.”

It is tantalizing to juxtapose Phuong’s story with a cryptic exchange that took place during a rehashing of Marigold in early January 1967 between Rusk and Soviet ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin. At one point, according to Rusk’s memorandum of the conversation, Dobrynin remarked that “his information was that Rapacki had told us in Gronouski’s first meeting [on December 5] that we [Americans] should go ahead and establish our own direct contact with the North Vietnamese. This surprised me and I called in [State Department official] Ben Read to check the record carefully and could find no record of any such remark. Indeed, the record shows that the entire exercise was related to a Polish role in actually arranging the first meeting. Dobrynin seemed to accept this and said there might have been some misunderstanding.”¹⁰⁹

Actually, Gronouski’s cabled account of the conversation leaves some slight room for (pardon the phrase) differences of interpretation. As noted above, Rapacki indeed complained about the interpretation clause and indicated that he was holding up relaying information to Hanoi on the U.S. position in hope that the Americans would withdraw it, saying that as formulated it would doubtless trigger a “reexamination of the whole matter again” by Hanoi and “would mean, he added, that the contact in Warsaw would have to be

¹⁰⁸ After reading Gronouski’s cables after they were declassified in the late 1970s, particularly his 15 December 1966 warning that the renewed bombing of Hanoi over the previous days would kill Marigold and constituted a “tragic mistake,” Michalowski praised his “positive role” in the affair. See Michalowski report, pp. 107-108, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Rusk, Memorandum of [4 January 1967] Conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin, Subject: Viet-Nam – MARIGOLD,” folder: “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” document #2, NSF-Country File, Boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL.

postponed.” On the other hand, at that meeting, Rapacki read aloud Lodge’s statement to Lewandowski on December 3 that “A. The President [Johnson] will instruct the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw to contact the North Vietnamese Ambassador in Warsaw on Dec. 6 or as soon as possible thereafter. B. The U.S. Embassy in Warsaw will be in a position on Dec. 6 to confirm to the North Vietnamese Ambassador that the Lewandowski Dec. 1 resume of the Lodge-Lewandowski conversations broadly reflects the position of the USG. C. We must add that several specific points are subject to important differences of interpretation.” This language could be read as implying that the Americans were expected to take the initiative in contacting Hanoi’s representative directly, without a final go-ahead from the Poles.

Still, the thrust of Rapacki’s presentation implied that Hanoi was not yet prepared for a face-to-face meeting, especially as it had not received Lodge’s statement.¹¹⁰ Michalowski’s account of the same conversation also recounts the Foreign Minister’s reading of Lodge’s statements and the Pole’s warning that the “interpretation clause” would inspire Hanoi’s distrust, but, like Gronouski’s, does not show Rapacki either encouraging or discouraging the American from going ahead on his own to initiate the contact.¹¹¹

Where and how Dobrynin got the impression he conveyed to Rusk—that Rapacki told the Americans to “go ahead and establish [their] own direct contact with the North Vietnamese”—remains unclear: Did the Poles deliberately mislead the Soviets as to what had happened? Was the Kremlin (in cahoots with Warsaw) maliciously seeking to transfer blame for Marigold’s failure onto Washington? Or did the statements of Moscow’s envoy to Washington hint at genuine puzzlement and confusion on the Polish as well as the Soviet side as to what had gone awry?

Dec. 7-13: Waiting Game

Whatever the cause of the failure to achieve a direct U.S.-DRV contact in Warsaw on December 6th, the Michalowski Report indicates that following the American refusal (communicated that day both by Lodge to Lewandowski in Saigon and by Gronouski to Rapacki in Warsaw) to drop the “interpretation clause,” the Poles officially communicated the three-point U.S. statement to the North Vietnamese. “After we delivered to Hanoi the results of Lewandowski’s last talk with Lodge [on 6 December], and in particular his clarification that the bombings had been pre-planned considerably earlier and had merely awaited convenient weather conditions as well as that there was no opportunity to recall them without awakening surprise among the military and disturbing the secrecy of the talks,” Michalowski reports, “the DRV instructed their ambassador in Warsaw that he not begin the talks for the moment.”¹¹² (Michalowski provides no source or details for the assertion that Hanoi instructed Do Phat Quang to refrain from talks “for the moment,” and indeed that report seems to be contradicted by Nguyen Dinh Phuong’s recollection that—as will be described below—he remained in Warsaw and ready for a meeting with the Americans for a more than a week, until after the second wave of U.S. bombings of Hanoi on December 13-14.¹¹³ Of course, it is possible that an instruction reached the ambassador, but that Phuong was not informed.)

Although the Michalowski Report does not explicitly state when or how the results of the Lodge-Lewandowski talk were transmitted to Hanoi, this evidently took place on the

¹¹⁰ Gronouski cable, Warsaw Embtel 1363, 5 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:902-904.

¹¹¹ Michalowski report, pp. 68-69.

¹¹² Michalowski report, p. 71.

¹¹³ Nguyen Dinh Phuong interview, Hanoi, 8 June 1999.

afternoon or evening on December 6, Vietnam time, for that same evening, Warsaw time, Michalowski told Gronouski at a diplomatic reception that “Rapacki had conveyed USG position to Hanoi shortly after my [Gronouski’s] meeting with him.” Interestingly—in view of the apparent DRV impression, according to Nguyen Dinh Phuong, that the first contact would take place at Hanoi’s embassy in Warsaw—Gronouski and Michalowski informally agreed that it would be a “good idea,” in the interests of preserving secrecy, to hold the first U.S.-DRV meeting at the Polish Foreign Ministry building. While pledging his government’s cooperation and relating that the “Poles have been in frequent contact with Hanoi and are hopeful that things are on track,” Michalowski noted ominously that (as Gronouski paraphrased his remarks to Washington) the “NVN Govt. and even some in Polish Govt. are suspicious that recently stepped up bombing outside Hanoi is the work of some elements in the USG who are trying to undercut President’s peace move.” Finding unpersuasive Washington’s explanation that canceling the long-scheduled raids would have threatened the secrecy of the proposed talks, Michalowski “expressed fervent hope that we can avoid future highly sensitive bombing raids in vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong,” and also reaffirmed Rapacki’s plea that at the first U.S.-DRV meeting Gronouski be authorized to present a “direct statement” of the official American position, not merely an affirmation of Lewandowski’s points.¹¹⁴

Hanoi gave Warsaw a more authoritative reaction to the latest U.S. actions later on Wednesday, December 7, when Premier Pham Van Dong received the Polish ambassador, Jerzy Siedlecki. The Pole reported the DRV leader as “in much better form than before” and “quite lively” yet controlled when reacting to word of the latest meetings with the Americans. As Michalowski and Siedlecki’s contemporaneous cable indicate, he angrily denounced the most recent American conduct, both the increasingly vague commitments by both Lodge and Gronouski to the ten-point formula (a clear allusion to the “interpretation clause”) and, especially, the fact that the latest conversations had taken place while U.S. planes were bombing Hanoi. “The USA talks, talks and then swallows their words,” Pham Van Dong is quoted as saying. “This is insolent and deceitful behavior. We are not blind to it.” (He also accused the Americans of trying to insinuate that Hanoi rather than Washington had initiated the contact, prompting Siedlecki to interrupt him to cite evidence that that was not in fact the case.) In conclusion, the DRV premier stated that the recent events compelled the leadership to reassess its position on the proposed Warsaw contact, but at the same time gave a tantalizingly ambiguous hint that, literally, the door was not closed to a direct meeting:

Under these circumstances, Pham Van Dong continued, the talks are [intended] to probe if we are ready to talk under the pressure of intensive bombing. This is unworthy behavior and does not engender trust. It induces us to examine again our position.

If the USA ambassador knocks on the door of our embassy he will be received. But if the USA wants to establish contact of a coordinating character then, in the face of newly existing circumstances, the DRV must once again examine the matter.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Warsaw Embtel 1376, Gronouski to Secstate, 7 December 1966, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL; see also excerpts in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 280-281, and also *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:912 n 2.

¹¹⁵ This account of the Pham Van Dong-Siedlecki meeting is from Michalowski Report, p. 71, and Siedlecki ciphergram no. 15529, 7 December 1966, Polish Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by L.W.

In response to Siedlecki's inquiry, the premier assured that Hanoi would not publicly disclose the existence of the secret contacts about the proposed US-DRV talks, but that they would be broken off if Washington did so. Later, he told Siedlecki that Hanoi had sent "appropriate instructions" to its envoy in Warsaw reflecting the decision to re-examine the matter of the proposed contact.¹¹⁶

Siedlecki's dispatched his ciphered telegram to Rapacki describing this conversation at 3 p.m., Hanoi time, and it reached the decoding section in Warsaw shortly after noon the same day, Warsaw time.¹¹⁷ Evidently in response to a report of this meeting—as well as more detailed reports streaming in of the second U.S. bombing raid on Hanoi on December 4—Rapacki summoned Gronouski to the Foreign Ministry at 6 p.m., Warsaw time, on Wednesday, December 7, for their third meeting in as many days, but now in a far more agitated mood.

According to both U.S. and Polish versions of the meeting—Gronouski's contemporaneous cable and Michalowski's later summary—Rapacki sharply criticized the U.S. bombings of Hanoi and warned that in combination with the "interpretation clause" the actions had been understood as a pressure tactic, perhaps a deliberate effort to sabotage the talks. Bluntly stating that "in these circumstances I wouldn't see a possibility of fulfilling by Poland of its role in a fruitful way," the foreign minister said Warsaw could not continue trying to arrange the U.S.-DRV contact unless Washington halted the bombing. When Gronouski again attempted to argue that the raids had been previously scheduled and merely delayed until good weather conditions permitted them, Rapacki dismissed the point with the flat statement that "policy is more important than weather."

After Rapacki again implored Gronouski to avoid provocative actions, like the renewed bombing of Hanoi, that could be construed by DRV leaders as pressure tactics, the American inquired directly whether the Pole's comments reflected the reaction of the North Vietnamese Government. Rapacki "emphatically" denied that this was the case, but Gronouski nevertheless shrewdly—and correctly—inferred from his summons "at an unusually late hour to express a much tougher position than he did yesterday could very well reflect Hanoi's response to the message transmitted by Rapacki to Hanoi yesterday."¹¹⁸

The conjunction of U.S. and Polish records puts this Gronouski-Rapacki conversation in a new light. The foreign minister's deceptive comments about the source of his anger could be explained as due to diplomatic protocol, since Rapacki could only take responsibility for speaking for himself and for Poland, rather than serving as a messenger in a U.S.-DRV dialogue. Harder to explain or justify, however, is his failure to relay, in any form, Pham Van Dong's comment that if Gronouski "knocks at the door of our embassy, he will be received." Was Rapacki calculating that he should try to obtain a U.S. commitment for a bombing halt and/or retraction of the "interpretation clause" prior to a first direct contact? Did he believe, not unreasonably, that given Hanoi's anger even a face-to-face U.S.-DRV encounter would prove fruitless? That may well have been so. Nevertheless, as events

Gluchowski. The version of the quotation here from the Michalowski Report omits some extra words in Siedlecki's cable which do not alter the meaning.

¹¹⁶ Michalowski Report, p. 91, describing conversation between Siedlecki and Pham Van Dong on 29 December 1966.

¹¹⁷ Ciphered telegram number 15529, obtained from the Polish Foreign Ministry archives in Warsaw and translated by L.W. Gluchowski.

¹¹⁸ Warsaw Embtel 1394, Gronouski to SecState, 7 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:912-913; Michalowski report, p. 70.

were to show, Rapacki's apparent delaying tactic proved a fatal miscalculation. It is difficult to avoid the thought that far better would have been for the Pole to urge Gronouski to go ahead and at least break the ice by meeting with his North Vietnamese counterpart—at least to establish the contact. As it was, however, the December 7 conversation between the U.S. ambassador and the foreign minister ended with the American believing that Hanoi had still not authorized any direct encounter, and he cabled Rapacki's criticisms back to Washington for reaction.

That reaction was encapsulated by Walt Rostow's brief "literally eyes only" comment to Johnson as he relayed Gronouski's cable to the LBJ Ranch shortly before 9 p.m. on Wednesday evening: "This is the latest from Warsaw. They are trying to get us to de-escalate bombing in order merely to see a North Vietnamese. We shall take counsel together and make recommendations to you."¹¹⁹ Of course, from Warsaw's perspective, Rapacki's pleas to U.S. officials (echoing those of Lewandowski and Michalowski) were merely to avoid an escalation (like hitting Hanoi) at this sensitive juncture, rather than to "de-escalate" bombing, but the important point is they hardened the administration's already skeptical attitude toward the Polish mediation initiative into suspicion that the whole endeavor was designed to maneuver Washington into a bombing halt or reduction in exchange for the mere dangled prospect of direct talks.

That same Wednesday—as Marigold faltered amid intensive diplomatic contacts with North Vietnamese and U.S. officials—Warsaw also continued to consult closely with its superpower ally. Michalowski reports that the Polish Government kept Moscow informed "precisely about every stage of the Saigon talks" through its ambassador to the Soviet Union, Edmund Pszczolkowski. On December 7, the envoy discussed the latest developments with Brezhnev, and their ominous implications for the proposed US-DRV contact. According to Michalowski, citing a contemporaneous ciphered telegram, Brezhnev expressed approval for Polish actions and "sorrow that the [North] Vietnamese had not turned to the USSR for help on the matter of talks with the USA: 'We could have helped, having the opportunity to apply pressure.'¹²⁰ (In an apparent effort at this juncture to apply such pressure on Washington, a Soviet diplomat reportedly called on outgoing US ambassador to Moscow, now Deputy Under Secretary of State, Foy D. Kohler on December 9, "to convey a clear message against continued intensification of the bombing."¹²¹) In general, it appears, the Soviet leadership warmly welcomed and endorsed, but did not directly instigate or control, the Polish diplomatic foray. "The nature of the relationship between the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies was such that the Europeans were unlikely to take any important step in the area of foreign policy without at least tacit approval from Moscow," writes

¹¹⁹ Rostow to LBJ (covering Embtel 1394), 7 December 1966, in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL. A notation indicates that it was "sent [to the LBJ Ranch] 8:54 pm, Wed, 7 Dec 1966."

¹²⁰ Michalowski report, pp. 67-68. It is unclear whether Brezhnev was referring specifically to the situation in early December, after the Americans had resumed bombing Hanoi, or intended to imply a broader lack of coordination or collaboration extending back earlier.

¹²¹ Soviet embassy counsellor in Washington Aleksandr Zinchuk recalled making such a statement to Kohler (on December 9), during a December 22 conversation with William P. Bundy. See Memorandum of conversation between William P. Bundy and Alexander Zinchuk, Soviet Charge, 22 December 1966, folder: "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," NSF-CO, Vietnam, Box 139,143,147,148, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 314-316, quotation on p. 315. However, no contemporaneous documentation of this meeting has emerged in the voluminous declassified U.S. record on Marigold, nor is it clear whether both participants referred to the Polish initiative during their conversation, or even knew of it by that time.

Russian historian Ilya V. Gaiduk. “But they might propose such a step on their own initiative.”¹²² Further clarification of the Kremlin’s role in Marigold, however, must await the release of more detailed materials on its dealings with both Hanoi and Warsaw.

While keeping a close eye on Marigold, the Johnson Administration was also simultaneously directly soliciting Soviet assistance. On December 7, in Washington, Llewellyn Thompson (about to replace Kohler) handed Dobrynin a letter from LBJ to Premier Aleksei Kosygin for the ambassador (about to return home for consultations) to deliver. Johnson’s letter, dated the previous day, dwelt in non-polemical language on the need for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam, stressing that the US and USSR, despite divergent interpretations of the conflict’s sources, shared a common interest in rapidly ending it. Promising (as before) to respect Soviet interest in North Vietnam’s security and sympathizing with Hanoi’s difficulty in starting negotiations in light of Chinese pressure, LBJ expressed a willingness to begin negotiations “either directly or through an intermediary” and expressed gratitude for “any efforts you may be able to make” that would help “find a way to stop the fighting and let any outstanding question be settled by peaceful means.” He closed with a delicate reference to Marigold, alluding to having received, since writing the above, via Lodge “an important message from the Polish representative, Mr. Lewandowski, about which I am told you have been informed. We shall be giving this urgent consideration.”¹²³

As U.S. officials pondered their response to Rapacki’s fervent December 7 warnings to avoid further bombing escalation, the desire to hang tough and avoid falling into a Polish trap mingled with concern over the risks of blowing the only possibility for diplomatic progress on the horizon and exposing Washington to international condemnation once the affair became public. After “tak[ing] counsel together” with other senior officials—Rostow, McNamara, and Thompson—Katzenbach relayed a memo for Johnson to the LBJ Ranch shortly after midnight on the early morning of December 8. It proposed a mixed reply to Rapacki. On one hand, the U.S. should “deny escalation and take steps to discourage further meddling” on the bombing issue by Rapacki; however, he recognized that any additional bombing of the Hanoi area would be viewed as an escalation by the North Vietnamese, who “might get their backs up and refuse to negotiate at this time. Even if this were not true,” he added, “it could be used by the Poles as an excuse for their failure to deliver the North Vietnamese for negotiations in Warsaw, thus leading to another U Thant-type ‘revelation’ at some future time”—an allusion to the UN Secretary-General’s assertion in early 1965 that the American people were not being told the truth about Vietnam, and that Washington had failed to respond to peace feelers from Ho Chi Minh. While recommending against making any explicit promises about targeting—a view backed up by Rusk, who cabled from Taipei that “I do not believe we should be drawn into commitments about our own military operations without some indication from the other side as to what they are going to do about their military operations”—Katzenbach urged LBJ to consider a “review of current bombing schedules with a view to avoiding targets close in to Hanoi.” He gave the president a range of alternatives to consider regarding bombing, from sticking to current plans to agreeing to exclude Hanoi from bombing in the immediate future—an option that he revealingly described as one that would curry favor with Rapacki “but could be interpreted by him or North Vietnam as a sign of weakness and whet their appetites for cessation or at least more concessions.” Stating that McNamara, Rostow, and Thompson

¹²² Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, pp. 89-94.

¹²³ LBJ to Kosygin, 6 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:906-908.

concluded (Lodge is also reported to have urged holding off on any further bombing of Hanoi¹²⁴), Katzenbach concluded that “all of us are skeptical as to exactly what Warsaw can and will produce, but there is still enough possibility to warrant serious action on our side. There is no better negotiating possibility currently in the works and a failure with respect to this possibility would probably prejudice other feelers in the near future.”¹²⁵ Enclosed with the memorandum was a draft cable to Gronouski instructing him to “assure [Rapacki] that we had no intention in carrying out our bombing pattern to bring pressure on North Vietnam in relation to the projected talks with them.” The draft cable eschewing any promises of a major change in bombing plans, which it noted are set well in advance and could not be changed without attracting attention. However, it also included language—strongly endorsed by Katzenbach, McNamara, and Thompson¹²⁶—enabling Gronouski to say that there had been “no change in the types of target which have been attacked” and that steps would be taken, within the limits of secrecy, “to avoid what might appear as a further intensification.” Implicitly dropping the matter of the offending “interpretation clause,” they proposed to have the envoy state that Washington was prepared to take up the issue of bombing and other matters dealt with in Lewandowski’s ten-points formula “in the same terms which we affirmed to him.” But they also included a stern warning that reflected growing U.S. impatience with the Polish mediation effort: “If Rapacki attempt[s] to nail us to anything on bombing beyond our first contact with the North Vietnamese, or again threatens to break off the operation, you should inform him in no uncertain terms that if he maintains this position he will have to accept the full responsibility for the breakdown of what appears to us to be a promising possibility for peace.”¹²⁷

Before being dispatched to Gronouski on the afternoon of December 8, however, the cable’s language was considerably hardened by Rostow after a telephone conversation that morning with Johnson. (An unidentified official, possibly LBJ, wrote “soft” and “mushy” on the initial draft.) Gone was any promise to avoid “further intensification” of bombing or the claim that there had been “no change” in targeting. “It’s clean as a whistle now,” Rostow assured LBJ—who, it appears, played the key role in rejecting any suspension or reduction of

¹²⁴ See Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and his Times, 1961-1973* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 389, and Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, p. 106.

¹²⁵ “To the President from Katzenbach,” nodis/Marigold, marked “sent to Ranch 1:22 AM, 8 Dec 66, CAP661211, Marigold,” folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL. For Rusk’s view, see embtel 1717, U.S. Embassy (Taipei) to SecState (Rusk for Katzenbach), 8 December 1966, nodis/Marigold, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL. Rusk’s cable indicates that it was received at 1:32 AM, ten minutes after Katzenbach’s memorandum was sent to the LBJ Ranch, so it is not clear whether Katzenbach then knew Rusk’s position.

¹²⁶ Katzenbach to LBJ, 8 December 1966 (see above), notes that it was the “strong recommendation” of Katzenbach, McNamara, and Thompson to retain the language described here, while “Rostow believes it wise because inclusion here is essential to the linking of phases A and B.” This memorandum accords with the subsequent account of Chester L. Cooper that Katzenbach, McNamara, and Thompson expressed “strong objections” to additional bombings of Hanoi, though it is not clear whether they voiced their opposition on other occasions during the process leading to the December 9 decision to approve a second round. See Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, pp. 338-339.

¹²⁷ “Proposed Message to Gronouski,” n.d., ts/nodis, with “To the President from Katzenbach,” nodis/Marigold, marked “sent to Ranch 1:22 AM, 8 Dec 66, CAP661211, Marigold,” folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL.

bombing for the sake of Marigold—after seeing the redraft before it was flashed to Warsaw.¹²⁸

As the U.S. position was being transmitted to Warsaw, Secretary of State Rusk, in Saigon, received a first-hand evaluation of the state-of-play in Marigold from D'Orlandi, who saw Rusk and Lodge following a reception for the visiting VIP. The Italian ambassador told Rusk that the evening before, Lewandowski had “urgently” expressed “grave concern” at the “heavy bombing attacks” on Hanoi on December 2 and 4, conveying “lurid reports” of civilian casualties from the Polish attache stationed in the North Vietnamese capital. Imputing more coherence and coordination to American military and diplomatic approaches than in fact existed, Lewandowski reported that the DRV leaders had believed in late November that by not bombing the Hanoi area while he was visiting, Washington had sent a “tacit signal of U.S. support” for his mission when in fact such raids had been approved but delayed by bad weather; consequently, the latest attacks were seen as also being linked to secret diplomatic developments.¹²⁹ Lewandowski had warned D'Orlandi—much as Rapacki had cautioned Gronouski—that “such attacks could only threaten or destroy possibility of contact in Warsaw,” since “Hanoi could not be expected to enter discussions in face of such escalation.” According to the U.S. record of conversation, D'Orlandi said he had replied that the U.S.-North Vietnamese contact had failed to occur because of Rapacki's “apparent

¹²⁸ Walt Rostow to Jake Jacobsen for the President, CAP661214, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL. This message, attaching the redrafted cable for Gronouski, was received by the LBJ Ranch at 10:50 a.m. on December 8. For the cable as sent, see Deptel 98924, State Department to U.S. Embassy, Warsaw, 8 December 1966, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 288-289; this cable is misdated as December 2 in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:917 n 2. LBJ's role in hardening the language in the cable to Gronouski, thereby rejecting the joint position of Katzenbach, McNamara, and Thompson (and perhaps Rostow), as described here, corroborates the other accounts (while different in particulars) which have ascribed the decisive role in continuing the bombings to Johnson. See, e.g., Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 838 fn 20, and Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, pp. 63-65, which states that the key decision to reconsider the bombing raids on Hanoi took place at the LBJ Ranch on December 6 and that, over opposition by Katzenbach and Chester Cooper, LBJ, supported by Rostow, opted to continue the raids. “Thus, by December 6,” Kraslow and Loory conclude, “the Administration appears to have decided (a) that Marigold had little chance of succeeding, and (b) that if it were going to succeed, the continued bombing of Hanoi would not hurt it.” The present narrative describes a process that culminates in the same conclusion, but on December 8-9 (with Gronouski informed on the 10th) rather than December 6. No records were located in at LBJL, or printed in *FRUS*, documenting the December 6 session at the LBJ Ranch described by Kraslow and Loory. This chronology is also consistent with the account presented in the official declassified JCS history, which indicates that the decision was made on December 8-9 and does not mention any December 6 meeting. See Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 July 1970, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Part II, p. 36-19, and Part III, p. 40-6, declassified 1994 under Freedom of Information Act, National Security Archive, Washington, DC. See also Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, pp. 205-206 n 54, which cites a 30 December 1966 column by Joseph Kraft to the effect that the bombing decisions represented a compromise between the JCS, who sought a “major expansion,” and McNamara and Rusk, who opposed such a move. Nevertheless, LBJ is said to have “tossed the Chiefs a few bones in the form of targets around Hanoi.” Herring writes that relevant documentation remains classified.

¹²⁹ As a JCS internal history notes, “adverse flying conditions had in fact created the operational pattern that Rapacki claimed the North Vietnamese had noticed and attributed to political motivation.” However, the military were forbidden from striking several additional proposed targets in the Haiphong area in an effort to avoid undermining British foreign secretary Brown's visit to Moscow on November 22-25, a prohibition which remained in force through December. See Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 July 1970, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Part II, p. 36-18, 36-19, Part III, p. 40-6, declassified 1994 under Freedom of Information Act, National Security Archive, Washington, DC

refusal” to convey American readiness for talks and an initial contact on December 6, rather than because of the U.S. air raids on Hanoi; he also stressed “his [D’Orlandi’s] hope had been to make contact in any event.” D’Orlandi also reported that his foreign minister, Fanfani, after receiving a similar appeal from Rapacki, had likewise urged the Poles to proceed nevertheless in trying to arrange the U.S.-DRV contact despite the bombings. (D’Orlandi did not however, give any indication that Fanfani agreed with Rapacki, contrary to Polish sources indicating that the Italian foreign minister had told Warsaw’s envoy to Rome, Adam Willman, on December 9 that he shared the Polish view on both the bombing and the interpretation clause and would “intervene on both these matters through D’Orlandi.”¹³⁰) D’Orlandi also, according to Rusk, “surmised that Rapacki had ‘tried to be clever’ and get U.S. to withdraw all reservations before contact [was] made”—exactly what had indeed occurred, in Washington’s view. While failing to endorse the Polish interpretation of events, however, D’Orlandi rejected Rusk’s suggestion that Rapacki’s tactics had been “dictated from Moscow,” and, most importantly, rebutted Rusk’s doubts whether Lewandowski had ever really obtained Hanoi’s consent to the ten-points he had given to Lodge. “One had to have a little faith in Lewandowski,” Rusk quoted the Italian diplomat as saying, “and he appeared to credit completely Lewandowski claim that he had finally got Pham Van Dong to obtain Presidium agreement to Warsaw contact.”¹³¹ There is an apparent contradiction between Rusk’s account of his conversation with D’Orlandi, and what the Poles believed had occurred: Lewandowski cabled Warsaw the next day that the Italian had told Rusk that (in Michalowski’s paraphrase) “the USA has done everything to wipe out the possibility for negotiations,” and urged him to order an immediate bombing halt. “On his own initiative,” Lewandowski cabled Warsaw, “O. [D’Orlandi] let R. [Rusk] understand that the Italians cannot avoid the conclusion that the Americans are sabotaging the possibility of a peaceful resolution to the conflict.” From his conversation with D’Orlandi, Lewandowski also gathered that Lodge had supported the Italian, urging Rusk to “do ‘something’” about the bombing.¹³² There is no indication, however, that D’Orlandi, who reviewed the entire history of Marigold contacts for Rusk, managed to overcome the American’s essential skepticism regarding Polish motives or handling of the matter.

With both parties unaware that further bombing raids on Hanoi would momentarily be under consideration in Washington, the conversation between Gronouski and foreign minister Rapacki on Friday afternoon, December 9—their fourth talk in five days—seemed to go fairly well.¹³³ Per his instructions, the U.S. envoy gave assurances that at an initial meeting with a North Vietnamese representative he would be ready to confirm that the American position was “consistent” with Lewandowski’s ten-point formula (dropping any reference to the offending “interpretation clause”), and, while denying any connection

¹³⁰ Michalowski report, p. 72, and ciphergram 15648 of 9 December 1966 from Willman in Rome, obtained from the Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski. Of course, it is possible that Fanfani gave Willman one impression but relayed a different viewpoint to D’Orlandi.

¹³¹ Saigon Embtel 12953, rec’d 9 December 1966, 1:34 p.m., folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL.

¹³² Michalowski Report, p. 72, and ciphergram 15698 of 10 December 1966 from Lewandowski in Saigon, obtained from the Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski.

¹³³ This account of the December 9 Gronouski-Rapacki meeting is based on Gronouski’s two ts/nodis/Marigold reporting cables: embtel 1421, 9 December 1966, and embtel 1422, [rec’d 8:04 a.m., 10 December 1966], both in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL; see also Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 293-295, and *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:917-921. The brief summary by Michalowski, who attended the meeting, is consistent with Gronouski’s account: Michalowski report, pp. 71-72.

between the current bombing and the possible start of talks, said that a “de-escalation” “package” could be considered once discussions started. As Rapacki did not threaten to break off discussions, and in general took a “much less intransigent” posture than in his previous meeting, Gronouski did not use the menacing language about responsibility for ruining the “promising possibility for peace.” Rapacki, for his part, expressed disappointment that the U.S. still had not “achieved clarity” on its planned presentation at the first meeting with a Hanoi representative, and at the explanation that Washington had taken only military factors into consideration in bombing Hanoi at such a sensitive juncture. Gronouski responded with an impassioned defense of American good faith and desire for diplomatic progress, praising Rapacki’s efforts and emphasizing the importance of direct U.S.-North Vietnamese discussions to address understandable mutual distrust and doubts.

“It would be criminal,” the American said, “if after having reached this point their efforts and ours to get the two parties together failed. I hoped and trusted that the Poles would do their best to bring about a commencement of negotiations.”

Hearing this earnest plea, Michalowski nodded affirmatively several times and Rapacki seemed to soften, observing that it was clear the Americans placed great value on making the contact. “It looked as if we could move forward,” the foreign minister said, according to Gronouski’s report. “You know the reasons for our concern: what basis do I have in our conversations to dispel suspicions of other side arising out of intensified bombing, bombing of Hanoi, the ‘important differences of interpretation’ clause? In such circumstances it is difficult for me to get a reply, to move the matter forward. There is not much material for this. It is not easy and we will have to wait and see what happens.”

According to the Michalowski Report, Rapacki indeed interpreted the December 9 encounter with Gronouski as a “definite change for the better in [U.S.] behavior,” and immediately relayed an account of the conversation to Hanoi. On December 10, according to Michalowski Report and Siedlecki’s contemporaneous ciphered cable, Pham Van Dong, “in a more cheerful mood than before,” while thanking the Poles for their efforts, repeated almost verbatim the cautious statements he had made in his previous meeting with Siedlecki three days earlier, but promised to “re-think the matter once again” and get back with a response. He still indicated that if Washington wished to confirm Lodge’s message it could “get in touch with” the DRV ambassador in Warsaw. “We will not withdraw from the contact [with the Americans in Warsaw] if we see beneficial points for ourselves,” Siedlecki quoted the DRV premier as saying. “However, we cannot take a position which the USA might understand as a sign of weakness. We have to be very careful.”¹³⁴ At least one precondition for a rapid contact still existed: according to Nguyen Dinh Phuong, despite the disappointment of December 6 he remained in Warsaw, with no countermanning instructions—keeping mostly within the grounds of the DRV embassy, venturing out occasionally (once to tour the capital’s old city), but not communicating with or making any contact with Polish officials. Once he asked Do Phat Quang whether he should leave, but the ambassador told him to stay.¹³⁵

By the time Pham Van Dong informed the Polish ambassador on December 10 that the North Vietnamese leadership would reconsider its position on authorizing the Warsaw contact, however, Washington had already approved further bombing raids on Hanoi that critics would blame for extinguishing any further prospects for direct talks. On Friday

¹³⁴ Michalowski Report, p. 72, and ciphergrams 15697 and 15700 from Siedlecki in Hanoi, 10 December 1966, obtained from the Polish Foreign Ministry and translated by L.W. Gluchowski.

¹³⁵ Nguyen Dinh Phuong, interview, Hanoi, 8 June 1999, and letter to author, 4 January 2000.

afternoon, December 9, from 4:35 to 5:02 p.m. Washington time (i.e., after Gronouski had spoken with Rapacki in Warsaw, but before his cabled account reached the State Department), Johnson met in the Cabinet Room with senior civilian and military advisors, “considered the problem of next steps in hitting targets in North Vietnam,” and approved a decision to “carry forward with what was necessary but at this particular moment not to expand our targeting.”¹³⁶ This meant, in other words, proceeding with the Rolling Thunder-52 bombing campaign approved a month earlier which included targets in the Hanoi area.¹³⁷ As Chester L. Cooper later wrote, “The President would not be persuaded or diverted from his conviction that more pressure was the right prescription for Hanoi.”¹³⁸

On the weekend of December 10-11, as the Polish-DRV consultations progressed in Hanoi, U.S. officials braced for the consequences of the imminent explosions they were preparing to deliver to the North Vietnamese capital. On Saturday morning, passing Johnson Gronouski’s account of his conversation the previous afternoon with the Polish foreign minister, Rostow calculated that “Rapacki has about exhausted his interim ploy”—of trying to get Washington to commit to a bombing halt and unequivocally endorse Lewandowski’s plan—and expressed confidence “in my bones” that the Pole had been “in close touch with both Moscow and Hanoi. It is their move and we shall soon see whether, after all the noise on the staircase, anyone comes into the room.” “In any case,” he assured the president, the Administration stood in a good position both diplomatically and in public relations terms—“if it fails, we have a straight story to tell, should they pull a U Thant; and we have the virtue of the Italians on the record as backing us in urging that direct talks should begin, since we have taken what must be objectively judged a forthcoming position.”¹³⁹ That afternoon, Katzenbach (in a cable cleared by Rostow) warned Gronouski that the RT-52 bombing plans remained “unchanged” and “may well involve some targets which Rapacki will insist represent further escalation, just as in the past he took to be escalation certain variations in our bombing pattern which in fact represented no real departures in the pattern as a whole... Present bombing pattern has been authorized for some time and we do not wish to withdraw this authorization at this time.” That being the case, Gronouski should avoid implying that “we are escalating or de-escalating at present.”¹⁴⁰ In other words, dismissing the Polish warnings as a probing maneuver to extract concessions merely to get to the bargaining table, U.S. officials had taken a deliberate decision *not* to avoid hitting Hanoi.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, Lodge and Rusk, still in Saigon, helpfully relayed

¹³⁶ See Editorial Note, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:916, and Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, pp. 389-390. At the same time, LBJ rejected military requests to reinstate additional RT 52 targets struck from the original target list as too “politically sensitive” when the program was approved on November 11. See Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 July 1970, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Part II, p. 36-19, Part III, p. 40-6, declassified 1994 under Freedom of Information Act, National Security Archive, Washington, DC.

¹³⁷ For targeting for Rolling Thunder-52 approved by LBJ on 10-11 November 1966, see Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 July 1970, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Part II, p. 36-17, 36-18, 36-19, declassified 1994 under Freedom of Information Act, National Security Archive, Washington, DC, and documents in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:817-819, and Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 261-263.

¹³⁸ Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 339.

¹³⁹ W.W. Rostow to Johnson, 10 December 1966, 8:55 a.m., ts/Marigold/literally eyes only for the president, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL.

¹⁴⁰ See Deptel 100627, 10 December 1966, 2:30 p.m., ts/nodis/Marigold, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL.

¹⁴¹ As Katzenbach told Rusk, then in Saigon, underlying the Americans’ thinking was their belief that d’Orlandi’s analysis (as described by Rusk) may have been “close to the mark and we can only hope that

evidence of recent “terroristic VC acts in South Viet-Nam,” including an alleged attempt to plant plastic explosives on a building housing the Italian embassy where the Lodge-Lewandowski-D’Orlandi conversations had taken place—for Gronouski’s use as “debating point[s]” and “useful arguments” should the Poles again complain about U.S. bombing.¹⁴²

For two more days Marigold essentially remained in suspense, as Warsaw awaited a considered response from Hanoi, Nguyen Dinh Phuong (according to his own account) remained in the Polish capital, and (unbeknownst both to the Poles and North Vietnamese) the U.S. Air Force geared up to continue its bombing program.¹⁴³ On Monday, December 12, Michalowski telephoned Gronouski and said that “while there was nothing urgent,” Rapacki would like to see him the following afternoon.¹⁴⁴ Accordingly, the next day, December 13, Gronouski traveled to the foreign minister’s office for the sixth time in a week. According to the American, the foreign minister, in a “relaxed and reflective mood” throughout their discussion, explained his invitation by observing that the situation was “not urgent but he felt it was good for us to meet frequently to transmit information and recapitulate attitudes.”¹⁴⁵ After informing Gronouski that Warsaw had, indeed, transmitted to Hanoi the latest U.S. stance (as relayed by the envoy in their previous meeting, on December 9), Rapacki reviewed events since mid-November. He observed that the Poles had been “generally hopeful” that U.S.-DRV talks could begin soon but the North Vietnamese leadership had “negatively assessed” the early December bombing. The raids, he said, had prompted Hanoi to postpone and reconsider the idea of direct conversations. Rapacki then took the opportunity to summarize Poland’s role in Marigold and his analysis—which the new evidence, fragmentary as it is, appears to bear out—of the impact of recent U.S. military actions:

5. Rapacki said he was not insensitive to USG’s expression of appreciation for role Poles were playing; however he was afraid US does not understand nature of Poland’s role. He said he feels we are assuming that all of his words come from Hanoi and everything we say to him goes to Hanoi. He said this is not the case; “True, we have our own views and we are friends of Hanoi, but our role is

Rapacki has finished this ‘clever’ game and is now making a real effort to get Hanoi aboard for direct US-NVN conversations.” See Katzenbach to Rusk, Deptel 100624, 10 December 1966, 2.10 p.m., ts/nodis/Marigold, in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL.

¹⁴² See Saigon Embtel 13059, 10 December 1966, 9:43 p.m.; W.W. Rostow to LBJ, 11 December 1966, 12:35 p.m.; Deptel 100700 to US Embassy, Warsaw, 11 December 1966; all in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL.

¹⁴³ According to a declassified JCS history, only “bad weather” prevented further RT-52 strikes on North Vietnam during the period 5-12 December. See Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 July 1970, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Part III, p. 40-7, declassified 1994 under Freedom of Information Act, National Security Archive, Washington, DC.

¹⁴⁴ Warsaw Embtel 1429, 12 December 1966, folder “Pol 27-14 Viet/MARIGOLD, 12-3-66,” Formerly Top Secret Central Policy Files, 1964-1966, box 22, RG 59, NA.

¹⁴⁵ This account of the December 13 Gronouski-Rapacki conversation is based on Warsaw Embtel 1458, 13 December 1966, ts/immediate/nodis/Marigold, in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL; see also *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:933-935, and Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 296-297. The summary presented by Michalowski (who attended the meeting) is largely consistent with Gronouski’s cable, with one important exception: It implies that by the time of the meeting, Rapacki knew of the U.S. bombing raids that day on Hanoi, which seems unlikely given Gronouski’s description of the foreign minister’s demeanor and the substance of his remarks, and his opening remarks the following day. See Michalowski report, p. 74.

neither that of postman nor advocate; what we want is peace.” He said that having knowledge of views of both sides, which neither of participants have, “we think we can play a contributing role.”

6. Rapacki continued, saying that Poles are sincere and in this sincerity they must say that they are not sure what USG wants: talks, or to get soundings as to how far DRNVN is ready to yield under pressure. He added that Poles assume that prevailing intention of USG is to bring about talks. He said this is why they are engaged; they are acting on this working hypothesis.
7. He continued that if this working hypothesis reflects reality then he must say that USG did great harm to its own objectives in December. The USG cannot afford a repetition in future, especially at time when this matter is reassessed. He added that if we want peace then we must realize that the carrot-and-stick approach does not work with DRNVN.
8. Rapacki added that we should realize leadership of DRNVN does not want to and cannot yield under pressure; every step from our side that evokes impression that NVN is acting under pressure would be interpreted as sign of weakness and utilized by all those who have a different vision of this peace move than we have here in Warsaw. (Comment: Rapacki repeated this point with emphasis and was, I believe, making a clear reference to Communist China.)

Citing statements by U.S. Navy spokesmen and by Rusk that he considered belligerent at such a sensitive juncture, Rapacki concluded by stressing above all that Washington had “done a lot of harm in December [by bombing Hanoi] and it would be good if no more harm is done in future.” While not challenging Gronouski’s response that both sides continued to commit violent acts so long as no armistice had been reached, the Pole insisted nevertheless that bombing North Vietnam was “the really sensitive point.”

Dec. 13/14-18: Bombing Hanoi (Again), Breaking Off Marigold

Even as Rapacki reaffirmed Polish warnings that further raids might tilt the North Vietnamese against entering talks, however, U.S. bombers were hitting Hanoi—and when Gronouski learned about the latest attacks from a cable, his immediate reaction reportedly was “despair. He thought it should not have happened.”¹⁴⁶ Yet, authorized by Johnson in full awareness of Warsaw’s repeated cautioning about Marigold (in contrast to the bombings on December 2 and 4), heavy B-52 strikes dropped ordinance on targets including rail yards, vehicle depots, and surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites within five miles of the center of the capital on December 13-14, and graphic reports from Hanoi (first by TASS and East-bloc outlets, later corroborated by Western sources) also described heavy damage and casualties to residential areas in the city and its outskirts. Diplomatically sensitive locations hit in the raids included the Chinese and Romanian embassies, with debris striking the Polish embassy and the Canadian ICC mission, and, ironically, a “Polish-Vietnamese Friendship School.”¹⁴⁷

By Wednesday morning, December 14, international press reports featured the latest bombings of Hanoi, and Rapacki summoned Gronouski for a 6 p.m. meeting at the foreign ministry. This time, in contrast to the previous afternoon, the mood was somber: “Rapacki entered the room unsmiling, and during entire meeting maintained a calm, serious and

¹⁴⁶ Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁷ See accounts in *New York Times*, Dec. 14-17, and in Salisbury, *Behind the Lines—Hanoi*, pp. 60-71.

matter-of-fact attitude.” The foreign minister began by remarking that had he known the day before about the latest bombings, “then our conversation of course would have had [a] different character than it did.” He proceeded to condemn the United States for launching “a new and particularly brutal raid on the residential area in Hanoi precisely at the moment when the USG knew that the matter of a Warsaw contact with Hanoi was being actively considered. This was the last drop that spilled over the cup.” There no longer being any doubt about the American government’s intentions, he continued, the North Vietnamese government had decided to break off consideration of the proposed contact in Warsaw. Rapacki made it clear that the Polish Government completely shared Hanoi’s view that held Washington fully responsible for ruining this chance to open talks to end the war.¹⁴⁸

The December 13-14 strikes, Michalowski later recounted, dispelled any remaining uncertainty in Hanoi as well as Warsaw as to Washington’s intentions. Until then, the Poles had not received a firm response to the report Siedlecki had given Pham Van Dong on December 10 of the latest, seemingly more positive, American position. But on December 14, Michalowski states in his report, a “very serious and solemn” DRV premier summoned the Polish ambassador and informed him that “under existing conditions it is necessary to put an end to the talks begun by the USA in Saigon.” The latest strikes on Hanoi had caused a “serious deterioration” in the situation, showing the “highest cynicism and effrontery” when seen in combination with the talks with Lodge in Saigon and Gronouski in Warsaw. Pham Van Dong thanked Poland for its efforts but reiterated that “from our side we consider it necessary to discontinue all contacts with the USA.”¹⁴⁹ (Hanoi informed the Soviet Foreign Ministry of its decision to break off the Warsaw initiative the following day, December 15, via the DRV charge d’affaires in Moscow, Dobrynin later told Rusk.¹⁵⁰)

This Polish account fits well with the recollections of Nguyen Dinh Phuong, who says that only after the December 13-14 raids did he receive instructions from Hanoi (relayed by Do Phat Quang) informing him that the proposed talks in Warsaw would not take place, and instructing him to fly to Moscow to rendezvous with a DRV delegation on its way to Paris for a French Communist Party Congress. Until then, he says, “as long as I was in Warsaw there was still the possibility [for the U.S. ambassador] to contact the Vietnamese ambassador.” (Of course, it is possible that Do Phat Quang received instructions from Hanoi of which Nguyen Dinh Phuong was not informed.) When he heard about the latest wave of bombings, however, Nguyen Dinh Phuong recalls feeling “disappointed, angry” and concluding, “We cannot continue to wait for contact... [the Americans] will apply pressure, [and were using] a double-faced policy... I knew their intention is to have the contact from a position of strength: ‘If you do not agree to our position, we will intensify the bombing.’”¹⁵¹

The Soviets, closely following the Marigold developments, were likewise outraged and puzzled by the latest U.S. bombings. When he returned to Washington later in December, Dobrynin told the State Department’s Thompson “completely off the record”

¹⁴⁸ Warsaw Embtel 1471, 15 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:936-938. Gronouski’s cable is consistent with Michalowski’s shorter account of this meeting in Michalowski report, pp. 75-76.

¹⁴⁹ Michalowski report, pp. 74-75.

¹⁵⁰ See Deptel 143101 (to Amembassy Moscow), 24 February 1967, describing conversation the previous day between Rusk and Dobrynin, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 493-495.

¹⁵¹ Nguyen Dinh Phuong interview, Hanoi, 8 June 1999. Nguyen Dinh Phuong recalls that the cable from Hanoi reached him on December 15 or 16, and that he then left for Moscow to join a North Vietnamese delegation on its way to Paris to attend a congress of the French Communist Party. The 18th Parti Communiste Francais (PCF) Congress took place 4-8 January 1967 in Lavallois near Paris.

that Kosygin's reply to Johnson's December 6 letter had "nearly been completed and that it was one we [Americans] would have liked" but that after news of the second round of attacks on Hanoi arrived in Moscow in the midst of a CPSU Central Committee plenum—including vivid reports from the Soviet embassy in the DRV capital describing the heavy damage—"this draft had been torn up and another one of quite a different character started."¹⁵²

Newly-released communist sources disclose that at precisely that moment, Soviet leaders received first-hand, authoritative evidence of Hanoi's interest in diplomatic contacts with Washington. Earlier, as noted above, Brezhnev had voiced "sorrow" that the North Vietnamese had not turned to Moscow for help in opening talks with Washington—now they did. In mid-December, VWP Politburo member Le Duc Tho (later to become famous for his negotiating role opposite Henry Kissinger) stopped in Moscow for consultations with Kremlin officials after attending the Bulgarian and Hungarian communist party congresses. During his first meeting with the senior DRV official, on December 15, Brezhnev later recounted to Polish leaders, he had "patiently" listened to a routine "lecture about the retreat of American imperialism and about the victory of the Vietnamese nation," then suggested Le Duc Tho "move to concrete matters." Then, according to Brezhnev, the DRV official, stating that he was speaking on VWP Politburo instructions, was practically "begging us" to take "an initiative in establishing contact with the USA in the matter of a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese problem." In response to Soviet probing, Le Duc Tho had said that such contact could take place through the DRV ambassador in Moscow or via Poland. Negotiations could accompany a continuing (military) "battle with American imperialism," he explained, terming Hanoi's new interest in them a "tactical move" since the Americans "still have not admitted ... that they are losing [the war]." In a December 17 meeting with KGB chief Yuri Andropov, apparently after receiving new instructions related to the latest Hanoi raids, Le Duc Tho promised that additional messages would follow, but did not retract his earlier statements urging Moscow to encourage contacts with Washington.¹⁵³

While fuzzy about precisely how Hanoi hoped the Soviets would promote this aim, the VWP Politburo message delivered by Le Duc Tho constituted a significant departure from earlier flat statements that the military situation had not "ripened" sufficiently to

¹⁵² Memorandum of conversation, Dobrynin-Thompson, "Subject: Reply to President's Letter to Kosygin," ts/Marigold, 30 December 1966, folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67, NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL. In a conversation with White House aide Walt Rostow a month later, the Soviet envoy also "underlined the emotional reaction from the government in Hanoi and from the Soviet Ambassador in Hanoi and its impact on a meeting of the Central Committee which was then taking place at just the moment when they were hopeful about the Polish contact and the President's letter to Kosygin on Viet Nam." Rostow responded by insisting "that, as he knew, there was no plan to put pressure diplomatically on Hanoi at that stage and that subsequent events made clear that this was not the case." W.W. Rostow, "Conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin, January 27, 1967, at lunch, Subject: Viet Nam," 27 January 1967, in folder "Pol 27-14 Viet/MARIGOLD," ts/Marigold/Sunflower, CFPF, box 2739, RG 59, NA.

¹⁵³ See record of Polish-Soviet talks, 18 January 1967, in Andrzej Paczkowski, ed., *Tajne dokumenty: Biura Politycznego PRL-ZSRR, 1956-1970* (London: "Aneks," 1998), pp.462-464 (excerpt translated by L.W. Gluchowski); see also Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, p. 271 fn 62. Le Duc Tho's comments favoring establishing contacts with US officials raises that possibility that it was connected to the DRV authorities' decision at about the same time to issue a visa (in response to a longstanding request) to *New York Times* correspondent Harrison Salisbury, who may have been regarded as an official or quasi-official emissary, especially as he was used to carry a message from Pham Van Dong to the U.S. leadership. According to Salisbury, a cable informing him that Hanoi had approved his visa, which he could pick up in Paris, reached New York on the morning of December 15. See Harrison Salisbury, *Behind the Lines: Hanoi, December 23, 1966-January 7, 1967* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 8.

consider negotiations. Presumably informed, at least in general terms, of the secret North Vietnamese message, Soviet embassy officials in Washington, in subsequent contacts with U.S. officials, insisting that the Polish initiative had been serious until the second wave of bombings had “ruined everything,” expressed polite mystification at American intentions in carrying out the raids at so critical a juncture, and doubt bordering on disbelief that it had merely constituted a continuation of normal military activity.¹⁵⁴

Whether the Lao Dong Politburo would in fact have authorized the contact to go forward had it not been for the December 13-14 bombings is, at this time, unknown, and perhaps unknowable. Nguyen Dinh Phuong was not, and does not claim to be, privy to those proceedings. Michalowski, for his part, told Gronouski in early January 1967 that even after the first round of bombings the Poles had convinced Hanoi to remain open to the possibility of talks (“believe me we talked to them several times a day to keep the pressure on them and convince them”) but that the second round of bombings “undercut our whole argument, destroyed that little bit of confidence that existed in Hanoi about intentions of U.S., and left us wide open to charges of being completely naive.”¹⁵⁵ After arriving in Washington as ambassador in late 1967, Michalowski told Katzenbach that until the December 13-14 raids “the issue was still touch and go, “ with “discussions and quarreling in the North Vietnamese Politburo.” Following the bombings, however, “those who had opposed the contact took over.”¹⁵⁶ In a similar vein, Michalowski told Harriman that the Hanoi bombings had “strengthened” the DRV leadership “hawks,” backed by China, who opposed talks and exploited the raids “to claim that the Hanoi doves”—including Pham Van Dong—“had taken an erroneous position.”¹⁵⁷ In taking the position that the “pro-peace camp” in the DRV leadership would have gone ahead with the Warsaw contact in early December if not for the repeated U.S. bombing of Hanoi—in other words, if the Johnson Administration had taken several weeks earlier the step it ultimately agreed to on December 23-24 of excluding targets in a ten-mile radius around the city center—Michalowski put considerable value on a December 15 comment by the head of the VWP CC’s foreign department (and former DRV foreign minister), Xuan Thuy, who would later play a prominent role in the Paris peace talks. According to Michalowski’s report and Siedlecki’s contemporaneous ciphergram, this senior North Vietnamese official specially summoned the Polish envoy and told him: “Peace is the heartfelt desire of the Vietnamese nation. We would have talked with the USA on the subject of peace if they had taken an objective position on this matter. But we do not want to talk under pressure. We must be especially vigilant.”¹⁵⁸ But the meaning of Xuan Thuy’s statement, and whether it reflected propaganda to impress the Poles or an accurate reflection of reality within the Politburo, cannot now be determined. Like comparable Soviet assurances to U.S. officials, after Marigold had

¹⁵⁴ See, in addition to the December 30 Dobrynin-Thompson memcon cited above, the memoranda of conversation between Zinchuk and William P. Bundy on December 22; John McNaughton and Zinchuk on 3 January 1967; and Rusk and Dobrynin on 4 January, all in Marigold folders at LBJL and NA.

¹⁵⁵ See Warsaw Embtel 1646 (2 pts), Gronouski to SecState, 6 January 1967, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 329-331.

¹⁵⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, “Polish Views on Viet-Nam Peace Negotiations,” Katzenbach-Michalowski et al., 11 October 1967, secret/nodis, folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1967,” box 2739, CFPPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Michalowski-Harriman-Davidson, 19 February 1969, secret/nodis/Marigold, folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1969,” box 2739, CFPPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

¹⁵⁸ Michalowski report, p. 80, and ciphergram 15890 of 16 December 1966 from Siedlecki in Hanoi, obtained from the Polish Foreign Ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski.

collapsed, that Moscow had checked with DRV authorities and “ascertained firmly” that “Hanoi was definitely willing to talk [with the U.S.] in the sense of exchanging views,”¹⁵⁹ it is also not clear whether such comments applied primarily or exclusively to the situation before the first meeting was scheduled on December 6, or also to the period immediately preceding the second round of bombings of Hanoi a week later. Far more evidence is required to make an informed judgment on the Hanoi leadership’s real position at this point, and to answer the underlying question of whether the raids of December 13-14 tipped the scales against an opportunity to start talks in Warsaw or simply reinforced a negative decision that, by then, was already going to be made.

Even before receiving Gronouski’s report of Rapacki’s reaction to the latest raids, in their December 14 conversation, U.S. officials recognized that their decision to go forward with continued bombing created a potential public relations disaster once, as seemed likely, the Marigold effort collapsed and then became public. Consequently, their attention turned to assuring that they created a respectable “record” of sincerely seeking peace talks, and, if necessary, sowing doubt that the Polish initiative had ever really promised success. On the evening of December 14, Washington time, as public criticism of the Hanoi attacks mounted, the State Department cabled Gronouski that, “In light of Polish tactics we are now inclined to wonder whether they ever had any NVN commitment to a meeting in Warsaw or whether it is not more likely that they have been engaging in an effort to get us committed to something as close as possible to our maximum position and then see whether they could get Hanoi lined up to talk on that basis.” Gronouski’s main objectives in further talks, he was instructed, would be, first, to “keep the door open” for talks should the long-promised North Vietnamese representatives actually materialize, and, second, assure that the “record should clearly show our persistent efforts to move forward” and that any Polish claims that U.S. actions had thrown a “roadblock” in the way of talks are “thoroughly refuted”¹⁶⁰

In the event, the new bombings of Hanoi created an even bigger international uproar than U.S. officials had anticipated. Gory reports (from both Western and Communist observers) quickly began streaming in describing severe damage to residential areas of Hanoi (including to several embassies) and substantial civilian casualties. In an embarrassing episode, an “obviously flustered” State Department spokesman at first vehemently denied, then obliquely conceded, that targets within the city may have been struck, an admission quickly qualified by quibbles over what constituted the city limits (“What do you mean by Hanoi?”). Critics both foreign (not only from predictable communist sources but also among allies and neutrals like UN Secretary General U Thant) and domestic (like the editorial page of *The New York Times*) agreed that the latest bombings not only undermined

¹⁵⁹ These comments were made by Soviet Embassy Counsellor Zinchuk to State’s William P. Bundy on 17 February 1967; see memoranda of conversation in deptel 139631 (to Amembassy Moscow & Buenos Aires), in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 481-483.

¹⁶⁰ Deptel 102960, State Department to U.S. Embassy, Warsaw, 14 December 1966, 10:52 p.m., ts/nodis/Marigold, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” box 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL. About two hours earlier, Acting Secretary Katzenbach—perhaps anticipating Gronouski’s own negative reaction to the new round of attacks on Hanoi and their impact on Marigold—had also tried to butter up the envoy by telling him that LBJ had been “most complimentary” of his handling of the secret exchanges with the Poles and “All of us in the Department heartily concur. Have a good vacation,” he concluded, in what events would prove to be a macabre non sequitur. Deptel 102942 (to Amembassy Warsaw; personal for ambassador), 14 December 1966, 8:53 p.m., ts/nodis/immediate/Marigold, in folder “POL 27-14/MARIGOLD, 12-3-66,” Formerly Top Secret Central Policy Files, 1964-1966, box 22, RG 59, NA II. Gronouski’s cable describing his conversation with Rapacki on the evening of December 14, Warsaw time, is listed as having been received in Washington at 12:30 a.m. on December 15.

the credibility of the Johnson Administration's repeated protestations that it desired a cease-fire and peace talks, but also, contrary to official denials, constituted a major escalation of the air war against the North.¹⁶¹ "The manner in which this critical policy change has reached public awareness and the evasive statements that have accompanied it cannot but sap world confidence in Washington's intentions," the *Times* sternly intoned on December 16. "For, along with military targets, what has been bombed on the fringes of Hanoi is any prospect of peace talks."¹⁶² This tidal wave of criticism, both of the acts themselves and the administration's alleged obfuscation ("confusion—if not deception," the *Times* said¹⁶³) about them, marked a far cry from LBJ's secret wish (as he put it in a telephone call with McNamara on November 9) that the new round of Rolling Thunder bombings would put "steady but undramatic" military pressure against North Vietnam and avoid "something that is so dramatic that you would have a headline every day that you're really changing your policy."¹⁶⁴

Instead, that is exactly what he got—and as the furor intensified, some senior U.S. officials within the tiny circle informed of Marigold worried that the juxtaposition of the attacks on Hanoi with the sensitive diplomatic initiative would turn into a diplomatic and public relations disaster, not to mention the possibility that the military actions had actually undermined a real opportunity for progress to end the war. It has been long been known, for example, that the bombings deeply distressed Ambassador Gronouski.¹⁶⁵ Despite loyally defending U.S. actions to the Polish foreign minister, the agonized envoy could not refrain from adding his own personal plea to a cable to President Johnson describing his chilly encounter with Rapacki on the evening of December 14:

9. Comment: If Moscow datelined account of latest Hanoi bombing published in Dec 14 Paris edition press reports of New York Times and Herald Tribune is true, then we are in an incredibly difficult position. I am convinced that if this represents the breakdown of the current peace initiative – and it surely does unless we take decisive and immediate action – then the Soviets, the Poles and the North Vietnamese will have no trouble convincing the leadership in every capital of the world that our stated desire for peace negotiations is insincere. If we treat this turn of events as anything less than a crisis in our world leadership role then I believe we are making a tragic mistake.

¹⁶¹ See, e.g., coverage in *The New York Times*, 14-18 December 1966, and Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, pp. 69-71. Harsh criticism came not only from Hanoi and Beijing but also less militant communist capitals such as Moscow, which called the raids a "grave crime," and also Warsaw, which issued a formal public statement on December 15 denouncing the raids. Though observers described the Polish Government statement as an "unusual" (in contrast to a diplomatic note), it did not disclose the existence of the still-secret Marigold initiative. Still, a press report noting that "high Polish officials tell Western visitors that every peace initiative by the United States is followed by a step-up in military action" accurately reflected Polish frustration. See Henry Kamm, "Pessimism in Warsaw," *New York Times*, 16 December 1966, p. 4. For U Thant, see "Thant Deplores Trend," *ibid.*

¹⁶² "Bombing the Peace Talks," *New York Times*, 16 December 1966, p. 46.

¹⁶³ "Why Not Say So?" *New York Times*, 16 December 1966, p. 46.

¹⁶⁴ LBJ-McNamara telephone transcript, 9 November 1966, quoted in editorial note, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:816-817.

¹⁶⁵ Kraslow and Loory described Gronouski as "crushed" by the December 13-14 bombings of Hanoi and their impact on Marigold. *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p. 71. The declassification of Gronouski's cables in the late '70s further illuminated his anguish over Marigold's collapse.

10. I am convinced that up till now the Poles, accepting the genuineness of our interest in negotiation, have used whatever influence they have in Hanoi (in all likelihood with Soviet backing) in an effort to initiate US-NVN peace talks. I also am convinced that Rapacki was expressing genuine concern when he warned that the increase in bombing was destroying what appeared to him a good chance that NVN would overcome Chinese influence and engage in Warsaw talks.

11. We have no choice but to take immediate action to try to get discussions back on track. For any chance of success this would require, in my judgement, conveying to Poles that we are willing to accept Rapacki's Dec 13 reasoning (Warsaw 1458) and are prepared now to assure the Poles that we will take care not to create impression of bombing intensification in NVN during period of delicate negotiations over the holding of Warsaw USG-NVN peace talks. We would also assure the Poles that we do not intend to bomb in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong during this period. We would again express our deep desire for the initiation of talks and ask the Poles to continue their efforts.¹⁶⁶

In other words, as the Pentagon Papers' authors note, "Thus, just as Gronouski is ordered to launch a pre-emptive offensive, he is himself recommending retreat."¹⁶⁷

Gronouski's cable recommending an immediate bombing halt around Hanoi and Haiphong was passed without comment by Rostow to LBJ early on December 15, unlike—for reasons that are unclear—an even more passionate follow-up personal message from the envoy to the president also received that morning that was not forwarded to the White House.¹⁶⁸ In this second message (mysteriously absent from the Pentagon Papers compilation), the envoy essentially echoed the Polish viewpoint that the American bombings were destroying the possibilities for talks, and pleaded again for a halt to such raids.¹⁶⁹ (The "interpretation clause" issue, he noted, had faded in importance in comparison to the bombings.) In light of his impression that bombings of the Hanoi area had "sharply increased" since December 2, Gronouski wrote (clearly unconvinced by U.S. denials that the actions were anything abnormal), "one does not have to stretch his imagination to conclude that Hanoi might in fact be tying this in with the prospective Warsaw talks and thus interpreting it as pressure in the manner described by Rapacki." He conceded that, as Administration officials in Washington evidently believed, the Pole might be "engaging in devious tactics" and in fact lacked the commitment from Hanoi which he claimed to possess, admitting that this was "a matter of judgment which must be deduced from the evidence available." But after two weeks of intensive meetings, Gronouski's own view was clear:

¹⁶⁶ Warsaw Embtel 1471, 15 December 1966 (rec'd 12:30 a.m.), ts/nodis/Marigold, for president from Gronouski, in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66, NSF-CO, box 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL, and Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 302-304.

¹⁶⁷ Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 300.

¹⁶⁸ Warsaw Embtel 1471 appears to have been enclosed with a note from Rostow to LBJ marked "Thursday, Dec. 15, 1966, 9:50 a.m." in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," NSF-CO, box 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL; a typed note at the bottom of Embtel 1475, however, reads: "NOT PASSED WHITE HOUSE BY OC/T 12/15/66. 9:05 A.M."

¹⁶⁹ Embtel 1475, U.S. Embassy (Warsaw) to State Department, 15 December 1966 (red'd 8:27 a.m.), for president from Gronouski, in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66," NSF-CO, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL, and in Formerly Top Secret Central Policy Files, 1964-1966, box 22, folder "POL 24-14/MARIGOLD 12-15-66," RG 59, NA.

My judgment is that Rapacki has had authority from Hanoi to attempt to arrange Warsaw meetings and that his efforts to persuade us on the interpretation and bombing questions is not only an attempt to get us committed to our maximum position, which I am sure the Poles as well as Hanoi would like to accomplish, but also reflects the intransigence of Hanoi on these points. My reading is that the Poles during the last few days de-emphasized the interpretation clause because they believed that they could convince Hanoi of the reasonableness of our position on this point, but felt that the intensification of bombing was too much to overcome in their efforts to bring Hanoi to the conference table.

Gronouski once again argued that there was “much to gain and little cost” by assuring the Poles that no further intensification of the bombing, especially around Hanoi or Haiphong, would take place so long as the “delicate” discussions over possible US-DRV contacts continued, and thanking the Poles for their efforts. Otherwise, he warned—in contrast to the decision to resume bombing at the end of the Dec. 1965/Jan. 66 37-day bombing pause, when Warsaw had argued “on very shaky ground” that Hanoi had indicated readiness for talks—Washington would “have a far more difficult time, if the peace efforts break down this time, in making a credible refutation of the arguments that the Poles, Soviets, North Vietnamese and their allies will inevitably make.” They would, he pointed out, “be able to point to what appears here to be clear evidence that at almost the precise time of the final phase of the move undertaken by the Poles to initiate talks in Warsaw, the U.S., despite repeated warnings by the Poles that intensification of bombing particularly in the vicinity of Hanoi was undermining promising attempts to bring Hanoi to the conference table,” went ahead and bombed anyway. Regardless of whether the entire effort had in fact been an “exercise in Polish duplicity” (which he clearly doubted), Gronouski stressed that such arguments would be “very difficult to refute”—which is what he had meant by warning that the bombings put the United States in “an incredibly difficult situation.”

The Poles will be able to argue effectively that had we been sincere in our efforts to initiate negotiations, we certainly would not have aggravated the problem in the face of repeated warnings at the most critical stage of discussions leading up to the commencement of negotiations. They will be able to say that their request was reasonable; that they did not ask that we stop bombing North Vietnam but only that we refrain at this point from creating clear impression that we were stepping up our bombing tempo as a means of either bringing pressure on Hanoi or sabotaging our own peace effort. The Poles will also be able to point out that they made clear to us that the impression of intensification of bombing and the implications of pressure tactics played into the hands of Communist China and to disadvantage of Poles’ attempt to induce Hanoi to overcome China’s influence and engage in peace talks. I am concerned that while we may be able to develop a case which satisfies ourselves we will not be able to refute effectively to others the Polish line of reasoning.

It was with such considerations in mind, Gronouski explained, that he had warned that the Washington faced “a crisis in our world leadership role” unless rapid remedial action were taken—namely, the reassurances to the Poles against further bombing that he was recommending.

The top echelons of the Johnson Administration in Washington, however, responded with a message indicating their distinct skepticism toward both Rapacki’s arguments and,

without saying so directly, their own ambassador's virtual endorsement of them. At 5:25 p.m, Washington time, December 15, Katzenbach cabled Warsaw informing Gronouski that his (first) message had been discussed with LBJ, who approved the comments and instructions the Acting Secretary was now relaying. Rejecting the Polish contention that the U.S. bombings had caused the breakdown in prospects for talks, however, Washington believed that Rapacki had "simply picked up lurid press reports and Communist accusations about recent bombing missions in Hanoi vicinity and decided to use them to the hilt in his tactic of getting maximum concessions out of us." Moreover, suspicious of a Polish scam, "we remain doubtful about how much part Hanoi has played in scenario which has unfolded in Warsaw over past two weeks." Rather than take the conciliatory steps strongly urged by Gronouski, the envoy was counseled to stand firm, and, in effect, adopt the philosophy that the best defense is a good offense. Rapacki should be made to feel "the full force of our rejection of his arguments and our indignation at the Polish Government's changing the signals and then seeking to put the blame on us..." To rebut the Pole's "apparent intent of pinning on us responsibility for possible breakdown of talks" (in order to both extract maximum concessions in the U.S. negotiating position and achieve an immediate bombing cutback), Gronouski was instructed to "bear down hard" on Rapacki by arguing that he, not Washington, bore primary responsibility for the failure to begin talks. Complaints about the "reservation" clause and the bombings were spurious (especially given continued communist infiltration and "terrorism" in South Vietnam), he was to argue—and regarding the foreign minister's "slur on the credibility of our word," Gronouski should respond that "we regretfully find ourselves being led to the conclusion that the Polish Government, whether on its own or in response to promptings from the North Vietnamese Government, is seeking to make a case which is based on false premises and does not relate to the facts as we know them." These Polish actions, he was to warn, could not only damage prospects for peace talks, but also affect the U.S. "attitude about our relations with the Polish Government."

In a condescending passage evidently intended to soothe their agitated envoy, higher authorities also made clear that they believed that Gronouski's emotional second message reflected his failure to appreciate the "big picture" as viewed from Washington as well as that perennial ambassadorial disease of "host country-itis"—which in this case implied something akin to becoming a communist dupe:

8. Your further interpretation and discussion contained Warsaw's 1475 is very much appreciated and I am sure you fully realize that all of us here profoundly share your concern over the turn events have taken in the last few days. Likewise I can well imagine that in the atmosphere of Warsaw and without full information available, particularly considering the bombing of North Viet-Nam, the Polish position may appear to be a strong one, whatever their motivation in presenting it as Rapacki has just done. We want to assure you, however, that on the basis of the over-all picture as we can see it from Washington, the Polish case, except for some fairly superficial and transitory matters, is a weak one and we wonder whether they will try to sell it to world opinion. We still believe that the Poles basically wish to work for a peaceful settlement and we think it more likely that Rapacki's present ploy is an opportunistic one, seizing the chance presented by the sensational publicity given to recent bombings in the Hanoi area (undoubtedly fed by the North Vietnamese) in order to extract one more ounce...

9. Rapacki's last representations to you probably brings us to the crisis phase in our current efforts and we believe we will have the best chance of securing a resolution in

our favor, i.e. by Hanoi's being ready to undertake talks on the basis worked out with Lewandowski, if we maintain and strongly defend our position and rebut and reject the line which Rapacki is trying to sell. We are counting on you in this most challenging assignment.¹⁷⁰

This stern rejoinder to his fervent pleas for a softer approach must have keenly disappointed Gronouski, despite his dutiful response that he “appreciate[d] very much” Katzenbach’s cable and the Department could “rest assured that I will present our case with force and conviction.”¹⁷¹ But the disconsolate diplomat might have been somewhat heartened had he known that Rusk—following the cable traffic in Paris, where was attending the NATO ministerial session—had begun to share his concerns about the Hanoi bombings’ potentially devastating impact on world opinion and regard (especially in Eastern Europe) for the sincerity of U.S. interest for peace in Vietnam once the Polish negotiating initiative became public—even though he remained dubious that any genuine chance for peace had been involved (“In my view, there was nothing to collapse”¹⁷²). The reservations at this key juncture of Rusk, an inveterate hawk deeply skeptical of diplomacy in relation to Vietnam, also appear to have escaped the notice of historians until now. In an eyes-only cable to LBJ from Paris on December 15 or 16—a document, located at the LBJ library, originally excluded from distribution in the State Department, which apparently explains its absence from the Pentagon Papers, the departmental files in the National Archives, and the 1966 *FRUS* volume for Vietnam (although Rusk alluded to it in his as-told-to memoirs¹⁷³)—the Secretary of State warned the president:

I feel obligated to express my concern that we are holding up a very exposed flank through the intensity of bombing in the immediate Hanoi-Haiphong areas in juxtaposition with the Marigold operation. Quite apart from the merits of the issues involved, we are in danger of being trapped into a situation where the Poles or the Soviets could cause us grievous harm by a charge that there was a serious effort by Hanoi toward peace and that we rejected it by intensified bombing. From a broader point of view our [a]bility to hold Eastern Europe within certain limits on Viet-Nam is a matter of major political and military importance. It is possible that, given their ideological blinders and devious logic, we will be credited with unreliability through the most private contacts.

It is unfortunate that weather and other operational factors combined to concentrate actual strikes (which I had approved) in a short span of time just following Lewandowski’s approach to Lodge.

¹⁷⁰ Deptel 103342 (to Amembassy Warsaw), 15 December 1966, 5:25 p.m., in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” NSF-CO, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL, and excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 305-306; this cable was followed at 7:33 p.m. by Deptel 103586, which provided Gronouski information on the bombing campaign, essentially arguing that the attacks on Hanoi were not aimed at civilian targets and did not constitute an escalation.

¹⁷¹ Warsaw Embtel 1498, 16 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [I] 10/16-12/15/66,” NSF-CO, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL.

¹⁷² Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p. 468.

¹⁷³ Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p. 468. Rusk states that he sent the cable from “the Far East,” which appears to be in error as the cable indicates it was sent from Paris.

I am reluctant to try to call the shots from here after a two week absence from Washington but I am inclined to think that a temporary pause in the immediate Hanoi-Haiphong area would be of advantage in terms of putting the responsibility up to Warsaw and Moscow to produce something. During the Christmas and New Year period we will be under considerable pressure for a general pause in North Viet-Nam but I would be opposed since infiltration continues and our hands should not be tied at this point in protecting our own forces. It does not seem to me, however, that there would be military disadvantage in staying outside of our traditional perimeters around Hanoi and Haiphong between now and, say, the first of the year. Obviously, my view is influenced by my own preoccupation with the international political aspects of the problem but these are not the only factors. Bob McNamara will be back tomorrow and I have not had a chance to discuss this with him. You may wish to do so. I have taken unusual means to limit this telegram to your own eyes because I did not wish to have any possibility that anyone outside of you, McNamara and myself could ever suppose that there is any difference among [us]. Your own decision on this will have my fullest support both inside and outside the government. Rusk¹⁷⁴

Whether Rusk's second thoughts reflected a reading of Gronouski's impassioned cables, the criticism he was hearing in Paris, or both, is unclear. Nor is the precise moment it reached Washington and LBJ, since the cable lacks a time or date of transmission or reception. But, if it reached Johnson in time on December 15th, Rusk's private advice (in combination with Gronouski's cable as well as the public hullabaloo) may have contributed to an unannounced decision that day—presumably by LBJ—to alter the “Rolling Thunder 52” bombing program to “Suspend further air strikes against these targets [in the Hanoi area] until further notice.”¹⁷⁵

Washington did not notify Gronouski immediately of this decision for relaying to the Poles in an effort to get Marigold on track, however. Instead, it withheld the information from the envoy and continued to press him to stand his ground with Rapacki: If anything, as worldwide criticism of the bombings swelled, a kind of bunker mentality developed as U.S. officials (other than Gronouski) grew increasingly resentful and suspicious toward the Poles—sentiments fanned by a December 17 cable from Saigon citing a “controlled American source” as reporting that Lewandowski had gossiped to a Dutch diplomat that he had been involved in a negotiating initiative with Hanoi that had been destroyed by the latest bombings, and that “he was so bitter that he planned to write ‘a paper’ on the subject.” Sometimes it seemed to him that “the left hand of the United States Government doesn't know what the right hand is doing,” he was quoted as saying. U.S. analysts didn't know whether the “obviously loose-tongued” Pole was venting frustration or firing the first shot in a campaign to blame Washington for Marigold's failure, but the implications seemed ominous.¹⁷⁶ Mounting pressure to “do something quickly” to remedy

¹⁷⁴ Paris Embtel 9214, n.d. [15 or 16 December 1966], ts/nodis/eyes only for the president, in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD – Incomplete,” NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL. A notation on the cable indicates that it was not circulated within the State Department.

¹⁷⁵ See JCS 1471 (to CINCPAC), TS/LIMDIS, 15 December 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 306.

¹⁷⁶ See versions of Saigon Embtel 13640, 17 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, both in folder “MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” NSF-CO, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL (sanitized) and excerpts in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 307, both of which contain passages missing from the other.

the situation also came from another, ostensibly more friendly quarter. On December 18, D'Orlandi told an American diplomat in Saigon, Philip Habib, that the bombings of Hanoi made him wonder whether "some people in the US who had deliberately sought to create a problem," and brushed aside the Johnson Administration party line that there was "no connection" between the bombings and the proposed meeting in Warsaw. Much as Gronouski had independently concluded in Warsaw, the U.S. embassy in Saigon reported that the Italian ambassador endorsed the view that there was "a strong prima facie case against us"—an opinion DCM William J. Porter attributed in part to D'Orlandi's "personal pique at turn of events."¹⁷⁷

Dec. 19: The Battle Over Blame Begins

With both Washington and Warsaw increasingly upset with each other and primed for secret battle over who was responsible for the floundering of the once-promising diplomatic initiative, Gronouski saw Rapacki on December 19th at 2 p.m. for their eighth meeting that month—and what would turn out to be their angriest. Before the session, Gronouski had cobbled together several cables from Washington into a strongly-worded, eighteen-paragraph aide-memoire to read to Rapacki.¹⁷⁸ The document, presenting the U.S. version of the path leading to Marigold's apparent cul-de-sac, clearly intended to establish for the record that Washington had not been at fault for the failure to achieve the opening of U.S.-DRV talks and for the apparent breakdown in communications, had not recently escalated its bombing by hitting the Hanoi area, and desired "to leave no stone unturned in our search for peace."¹⁷⁹

The Pentagon Papers negotiating volumes give only a cursory account of the tense December 19 encounter between Gronouski and Rapacki,¹⁸⁰ but the Michalowski report and newly declassified U.S. documents limn it in fascinating detail from opposite perspectives. An explosion ensued when Gronouski got as far as the first sentence of paragraph twelve of his oral presentation: "We have been waiting now in Warsaw for almost two weeks to get started on discussions, and your gov[ernment] must bear the responsibility for the fact that

¹⁷⁷ Saigon Embtel 13618, 18 December 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 308-309.

¹⁷⁸ Just before the meeting with Rapacki, Gronouski had attempted to soften the blow by requesting Washington's permission to tell the Poles that the proposed talks "create delicate problems for us with other principals in this conflict who are not inclined to go nearly as far as the USG to initiate peace negotiations"—an apparent reference to Saigon, which had not been told of Marigold—and to suggest that direct US-DRV talks might be linked to "an extension" of the anticipated Tet cease-fire; in an exchange of FLASH messages, State dealt with these "troublesome" requests by authorizing "passing reference" to the first issue while deflecting the second request, stressing that any "phased de-escalation" during the holiday period must be mutual. Warsaw Embtel 1506 and Deptel 104776, 19 December 1966, as cited in "Marigold—A Chronology," p. 31.

¹⁷⁹ For the text of the aide-memoire, see Warsaw Embtel 1508, 19 December 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:952-957, quotation on p. 957. The authors of the Pentagon Papers summarized U.S. objectives for further conversations in Warsaw as two-fold: "i. Keeping the door open for talks to develop," and "ii. Letting the record show our persistent efforts to move forward, while refuting Polish contentions that our actions and statements blocked the opening of conversations." See Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 299.

¹⁸⁰ The Marigold chronology in the Pentagon Papers volume omits the relevant documents and refers only to an "angry exchange" without giving details. See Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 309.

these have yet to get underway....”¹⁸¹ At that point, Gronouski reported to Washington, “Rapacki banged his fist on the table vigorously and in great agitation said, ‘Stop! I will hear no more of this.’ In [an] angry tone, Rapacki said he categorically rejected this attempt to shift responsibility to Poles, that responsibility is squarely on us for destroying chance for peace talks, and that our attempt to shift responsibility is wholly unprecedented and unwarranted.”¹⁸² The account of Michalowski, who was evidently present, tallies with the American’s but adds a bit more: “At this point Rapacki lost his temper and slammed his table with his glasses, such that the optical lenses became dislodged and flew straight into Gronouski’s face. He attacked his interlocutor by declaring that the USA began the talks and torpedoed them themselves and now are [is] attempting to throw the responsibility on others. He categorically rejected Gronouski’s declaration....”¹⁸³ (In still another version of the incident, Michalowski told Harriman in February 1969 that “Rapacki threw his glasses at the floor and he feared that Rapacki was having another heart attack.”¹⁸⁴)

Hearing this outburst, Gronouski wisely skipped a section of the aide-memoire that would have offended the apoplectic Pole even more¹⁸⁵ and started to “fold [his] notes,”

¹⁸¹ This and other quotations from Gronouski’s oral presentation to Rapacki is from Warsaw Embtel 1508, 19 December 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:952-957, quotation on p. 956; for the original, see document #129, folder: “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” NSF-Country File, Box 147, LBJL.

¹⁸² This and other quotations of Gronouski’s account of the 19 December 1966 with Rapacki are from Warsaw Embtel 1513, 19 December 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:958-961, quotation on p. 958; for the original, see document #127, folder: “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” NSF-Country File, Box 147, LBJL.

¹⁸³ Michalowski report, p. 77.

¹⁸⁴ Michalowski-Harriman-Davidson memorandum of conversation, 19 February 1969, secret/nodis/Marigold, folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD 1969,” CFPF, 1967-1969, box 2739, DoS, RG 59, NA II. In April 1967, Lewandowski told Lodge that “Rapacki had had three heart attacks and yet continues to be a chain smoker and drinks cups of black coffee all through the day,” and consequently “cannot put in a hard day’s work anymore.” See Embtel Saigon 22598, 10 April 1967, secret/nodis/Marigold, folder “POL 27-14 MARIGOLD 1967,” CFPF, 1967-1969, box 2739, DoS, RG 59, NA II.

¹⁸⁵ Michalowski report, p. 77. In the aftermath of Rapacki’s eruption, Michalowski correctly suspected that Gronouski—“as it was possible to see—skipped a part of the document” before resuming his reading of the remainder of the statement, which reaffirmed Washington’s interest in moving toward peace and entering into discussions with North Vietnamese representatives. The declassified U.S. records confirm this: Gronouski dryly informed Washington that, “Inasmuch as Rapacki had gotten point on responsibility and given his reaction to the first sentence, I thought it best to pass over remarks from second sentence para 12 through para 13.” Warsaw Embtel 1513, 19 December 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:958. This seems to have been a smart snap decision by Gronouski, as it is difficult to imagine the Poles being willing to continue their efforts in any form (let alone the immediate conversation) had Rapacki heard the remainder of paragraph 12 and, especially, paragraph 13 of the aide memoire:

12. We have been waiting now in Warsaw for almost two weeks to get started on discussions, and your govt must bear the responsibility for the fact that these have yet to get underway. [Gronouski broke off here.] You well know that one important subject for such discussions would be to arrange for mutual de-escalation, including bombing of NVN. You also know that in all of the discussions leading up to the Polish proposal and our agreement to meet with the NVN in Warsaw, there was no condition relating to bombing. All of the increasingly indignant charges we have heard here, including the threat to terminate the conversations, are based on events subsequent to the agreement reached with the Polish Govt on Dec. 3, events which are extraneous to what was the basis of our agreement at that time.
13. We are deeply concerned over the gravity of Polish actions which serve the basic, long-run interests of neither of the parties whom you say you mean to be helping. We regretfully find ourselves being led to the conclusion that the Polish Govt, whether on its own or in response to promptings from the NVN Govt, is seeking to make a case which is based on false premises and does not relate to the facts as we know them. This gives us concern not only because of the damaging effect it could have on prospects for working out a peaceful settlement in Viet-Nam

thinking Rapacki had ended the meeting. But, “the storm having receded,” the Pole softened his tone. He was “keenly disappointed,” he explained, as he had hoped, when Gronouski sought an appointment, that the American would be bringing news that would help overcome Hanoi’s suspicions. Instead, he lamented (after listening to the rest of Gronouski’s presentation), the U.S. had brought nothing new to the table, and was trying to mask its escalation of the war by pious protestations of a desire for peace and negotiations. U.S. claims that the latest bombings had been aimed at strictly military targets (such as the Yen Ven railroad yard and Van Dien vehicle depot) “well outside of Hanoi city limits,” that there was “no evidence” to support charges that the raids had caused casualties in a “residential area” of the capital, that there had been “no escalation, or de-escalation” of bombing, and that there had been no let-up in North Vietnamese “infiltration and terrorist” activities in the South, left Rapacki coldly unimpressed. But Washington’s “unprecedented and cynical” attempt to shift blame to Warsaw for the consequences of its own actions—bombing railroad yards in Hanoi, he observed sardonically, was evidently more important to U.S. officials than peace—clearly heated the Pole’s blood in the midst of the frigid Warsaw winter. When, after all but accusing Poland of blocking peace talks, Gronouski in his summation insisted that “we want to leave no stone unturned in our search for peace,” expressed readiness to sit with DRV representatives “tomorrow,” and ventured that “the coming holidays and the truces associated with them offer an opportune occasion” to move forward, Rapacki could hardly restrain himself: “I am astonished that at the same time you accuse us of stalling talks, you ask us to help you get them going again.” In response to Rapacki’s bitter criticism—with much of which he privately sympathized—Gronouski, conciliatory rather than combative, stressed the need for direct talks to help the warring sides overcome their natural mutual suspicions, and wished that “there was somebody making as strong a presentation and putting as much pressure on Hanoi to come to the negotiating table as the Poles were putting on us.” Rapacki replied that the problem for those trying to convince Hanoi to start talks was that “whenever they feel they are making progress the U.S. bombs their efforts.” By the end of the meeting, Gronouski reported, Rapacki had “mellowed a bit,” but his final message remained firm—if he reported to Hanoi the U.S. message he had just heard, “we will destroy any chance of their engaging in negotiations.”

Unbeknownst to the American, despite Marigold’s apparent impasse and his angry encounter with Rapacki, the Poles persisted, according to Michalowski, in “lively diplomatic activity” aiming at “saving the whole initiative,” and “continued to hope for a victory by the pro-peace camp in Hanoi.”¹⁸⁶ Despite Rapacki’s statement to Gronouski that relaying the latest U.S. views to Hanoi would “destroy” any hopes for talks, Polish sources indicate that in fact, on December 21, ambassador Siedlecki in Hanoi nevertheless reported the conversation to DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh. Not surprisingly, he reacted negatively, seeing the US as out to pressure Hanoi into talks “from a position of strength” and using “deceitful” methods, and commending the decision to break off preparations for direct talks. Nevertheless, Trinh assured Siedlecki that the DRV leadership would “study with great care all proposals and every step”—seemingly leaving the door open to further efforts. In particular, he expressed mixed feelings about an embryonic initiative promoted by U Thant, and his failure to exclude the possibility evidently encouraged Rapacki to let Thant

but because we would find it difficult not to have our attitude about our relations with the Polish Govt also affected.

Gronouski cable, Warsaw Embtel 1508, 19 December 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:956.

¹⁸⁶ Michalowski report, p. 80.

in on the Marigold secret and try to enlist him in further peace moves (and, equally important, give him Warsaw's side of the story should Marigold collapse).¹⁸⁷

The Poles' "lively diplomatic activity" following the December 19 Rapacki-Gronouski exchanges also included Warsaw's first calculated leak concerning the initiative to a third party beyond those already in the know: selected individuals in the U.S., Polish, DRV, Italian, and Soviet governments.¹⁸⁸ In what seems unlikely to have been a coincidence, immediately after the U.S. Government had insinuated that it would attempt to foist blame on Warsaw should the peace talks initiative fail, the Poles authorized their ambassador in Rome, Adam Willman, to disclose details on Marigold to the Vatican. In addition to what he regarded as the brazen American behavior—first bombing Hanoi and then trying to shift blame on Warsaw when the talks fell through—Rapacki's anger may have been deepened by what he viewed as hypocritical U.S. public statements. During the December 19 conversation, Rapacki had acidly charged that a recent public statement by Lodge (who had returned to Washington from Saigon for consultations) to the effect that Hanoi had given no indication of interest in a peaceful resolution of the war constituted "an abuse of the fact that thanks to the secrecy of our talks the world has not been informed of them."¹⁸⁹

It was the very next day, on December 20,¹⁹⁰ that Willman, in a meeting with Archbishop Franco Costa, the Vatican's deputy secretary of state, divulged details of Marigold (emphasizing U.S. culpability for ruining the chance for a breakthrough, naturally)—evidently (as L.W. Gluchowski has noted) in an effort by Warsaw to curry favor with the Pope at a time when the communist government was trying to enhance its standing domestically among its own mostly Roman Catholic population, as well as to beat the Americans in getting its side of the story before the Pope, who was actively engaged in his own Vietnam peace diplomacy.¹⁹¹ (The Poles may also have surmised that the Pope already knew of Marigold from the Italians—and Willman reported that Costa had implied to him that the Pope knew of the initiative from Foreign Minister Fanfani—but according to an Italian account to the Americans (now corroborated by a contemporaneous Polish report of the encounter), on December 23 Fanfani sharply rebuked Willman when he related the exchange with the Vatican, calling it a violation of the mutual agreement on secrecy that damaged Italian-Vatican relations and describing the failure to achieve a US-DRV meeting an "incalculable error" and implied that Warsaw might bear moral responsibility for the

¹⁸⁷ Michalowski report, p. 81, citing ciphergram 16085 (Siedlecki) from Hanoi, 21 December 1966. On Polish conversations with U Thant on Marigold, see below.

¹⁸⁸ The new Polish sources do not mention the one earlier alleged leak (by Lewandowski to the Dutch charge in Saigon blaming the U.S. bombing for blocking negotiations) which concerned U.S. officials in mid-December sufficiently to alert the U.S. Embassy to be ready to brief South Vietnamese leaders (who had been kept in the dark). See "Marigold: A Chronology," n.d. [apparently late spring 1967], p. 30, citing Saigon Embtel cables 13640 (17 December 1966) and 12392 (4 December 1966) and State's 104673 (17 December 1966), folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD chronology," document #2a, NSF Country File-Vietnam, LBJL [hereafter, "Marigold: A Chronology"]; and Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 307. The Michalowski report cites Lewandowski as being in contact with the Dutch diplomat in question in September, but not in the first half of December when the alleged leak was reported to have occurred. Michalowski Report, p. 53.

¹⁸⁹ Michalowski report, p. 79.

¹⁹⁰ This contradicts U.S. records indicating that the Poles gave the Pope the "whole story" on Marigold on December 19, according to the version given Fanfani by the Polish ambassador in Rome. See Reinhardt cable, Rome 3409 (to SecState), 28 December 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 310, 318-320.

¹⁹¹ Michalowski report, pp. 82-84. The issue of Polish-Vatican contacts will be explored in greater depth in L.W. Gluchowski's forthcoming introductory essay to accompany the Michalowski report in our co-edited volume.

initiative's failure. The next day, in Saigon, D'Orlandi told an American diplomat about the conversation, including word that the Poles had given "all details" of Marigold to the Pope.¹⁹² Four days later, on December 28, after another conversation with Willman, Fanfani elaborated to the American ambassador, relating that the Poles had told the Vatican the "whole story," which presumably included "everything they know" about Marigold.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, on December 30, Rapacki could not quite bring himself to admit to Gronouski that the Poles had spilled the beans to the Vatican, volunteering that the Pope was "probably" informed about Marigold but, in response to the American's specific inquiry as to whom had informed him, answered only, "Possibly Fanfani, but I don't know, I am not saying it was Fanfani, I don't know, but the Pope probably is informed."¹⁹⁴) Even as last-ditch efforts to resuscitate Marigold intensified, the concurrent, for the moment still secret, battle for blame had begun.

American Reconsiderations

Combined with the continuing firestorm of international and domestic criticism over the December 13-14 bombings of Hanoi, Gronouski's report of his December 19 conversation with Rapacki—what Rostow, in forwarding a copy of the cable to the president at the LBJ ranch, gingerly described as "this somewhat difficult session"¹⁹⁵—prompted the Johnson Administration to reassess its policy. Clearly on the defensive and worried about the ramifications of public exposure should Marigold collapse, U.S. officials now began to consider whether they should offer Warsaw (and Hanoi) the concession of a commitment against further bombing of the North Vietnamese capital—far short of the long-demanded total halt to bombing and other acts war against the DRV, but at least enough to respond to arguments that such raids undercut the possibility of direct contacts. Rusk, now back from Paris, evidently supported dangling such a concession, and on December 20 took up the issue in Washington while summoning Gronouski back to the U.S. capital from Warsaw for urgent consultations.¹⁹⁶

On Wednesday afternoon, December 21, before leaving the next morning for a lightning visit to Washington, Gronouski requested another session with Rapacki to review

¹⁹² Saigon Embtel 14206, relating a December 24 conversation between U.S. envoy Philip Habib and D'Orlandi in which the latter read from a message from Fanfani describing his encounter with the Polish ambassador; the cable is among a package quoted by Walt Rostow to LBJ on 25 December 1966 in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD-Incomplete," NSF, CO-Vietnam, LBJL; and ciphergram no. 16216, 23 December 1966 (Willman to Rapacki), obtained from Polish foreign ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski (cited in Michalowski report, p. 84).

¹⁹³ Rome Embtel (Reinhardt) 3409, 28 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 310, 318-320.

¹⁹⁴ Cable from Gronouski to Department of State, Embtel Warsaw 1596 (section 2 or 2), 30 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, document #104, folder: "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67," NSF-Country File, Box 147, LBJL; also in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:985.

¹⁹⁵ Walt Rostow to Jake Jacobsen for the President, 20 December 1966, forwarding text of Warsaw Embtel 1513, 19 December 1966, in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II], 12/16/66-6/2/67," boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

¹⁹⁶ The December 20 summons to Gronouski is from Deptel 105909 (to Warsaw), 20 December 1966, cited in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:961 n 3. Rusk's position is inferred from his cable from Paris on December 15 or 16, cited above; Rostow's comment (when forwarding Warsaw Embtel 1513, 19 December 1966) that "Recommendations will be coming forward from Secretary Rusk on our next steps in Marigold in the wake of" the Gronouski's "somewhat difficult" 19 December talk with Rapacki; and the instructions cabled to Gronouski the following day, 21 December 1966, described below.

Marigold and, in particular, to try to ascertain the extent to which the Poles had genuinely been in contact with Hanoi and able to represent their views accurately and authoritatively. When Gronouski saw Rapacki at 6 p.m., the mood was less tense than two days before, but the basic deadlock remained. Hearing that the American planned to rush back to Washington for top-level consultations on Marigold (on the pretext, should there be inquiries, that he needed to discuss US-Polish economic ties), Rapacki welcomed the news, and expressed hope that Gronouski would be able to convey more effectively the “nuances of positions and attitudes,” including “Poland’s dedication to solving the VN war.” In response to the U.S. envoy’s request to clarify Hanoi’s role in the diplomatic initiative, Rapacki assured him that Warsaw had reliably communicated with the North Vietnamese leadership in regard to the basic decisions to agree to and then break off the proposed U.S.-DRV contact, and explained that warnings against trying to bomb Hanoi to the negotiating table had been Polish views that the DRV subsequently endorsed.¹⁹⁷ “Hanoi could never respond to pressure or give the impression that it was responding to pressure,” Rapacki stressed again, that was why the bombing was so important, and why Washington’s “main problem” was its need to restore Hanoi’s “confidence” that America was “genuinely interested in a negotiated settlement” rather than probing or pressuring them by military means.¹⁹⁸

Dec. 22-24: The “Christmas Present”

When Gronouski returned to the embassy to cable his report of the conversation, a cable from the State Department awaited him, informing him of a new, albeit grudgingly worded, U.S. concession: Washington was “prepared to state that there will be no bombing within ten miles of Hanoi city center...for an indefinite period if talks with North Vietnamese can be gotten underway shortly,” the cable informed Gronouski, with the proviso that “reciprocal action with respect to bombs, mortar and similar activities within ten miles of the center of Saigon...would be anticipated by us as evidence of good faith.”¹⁹⁹ Hastily, Gronouski contacted the Polish Foreign Ministry and arranged a post-midnight meeting that evening to present the latest proposals to Rapacki before he had to depart for Washington the next morning.

At 1 a.m. on December 22, Warsaw time, Gronouski and Rapacki spoke yet again.²⁰⁰ An excited Gronouski apologized for disturbing the foreign minister at such a late hour, but explained that he had received so vital a communication from Washington that he needed to discuss it with Rapacki before leaving—and hoped the Polish Government would likewise “treat it as a very significant development.” Clearly intrigued, Rapacki had Gronouski read the American statement twice over and asked the American probing questions in an effort to clarify whether the offer meant an unconditional halt to bombing around Hanoi or was predicated on the opening of talks and a reciprocal show of restraint toward Saigon by

¹⁹⁷ Rapacki’s statements were generally consistent with the contemporaneous declassified Polish materials obtained by the authors.

¹⁹⁸ Warsaw Embtel 1535, 21 December 1966, ts/immediate/nodis/Marigold, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:966-967; copies also in LBJL and DoS, NA II.

¹⁹⁹ Deptel 106358 (to Warsaw), 21 December 1966, in folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD,” DoS, RG 59, NA II, cited in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:968 fn 2.

²⁰⁰ This account of the 22 December 1966 Gronouski-Rapacki conversation is based on Warsaw Embtel 1537, 22 December 1966, top secret/nodis/eyes only/Marigold, as relayed by Rostow to LBJ in CAP661291, in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” box 147, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL; and Michalowski report, pp. 84-85.

communist forces. Gronouski urged him to view the step as “a breakthrough—a possibility to get off dead center,” but Rapacki reacted cautiously. While “appreciating” U.S. intention and efforts to move forward, in particular the implicit recognition that hitting Hanoi could cause (accidental) civilian casualties and doom peace prospects, and applauding Gronouski’s own forthcoming visit to Washington, “he could not share my enthusiasm regarding the substance of the communication.” The key problems, as Rapacki saw them, were, first, that the American proposition “appears to make U.S. action dependent on some signal that a contact will be established by Hanoi” and, second, despite Gronouski’s denial of any “direct quid-pro-quo,” the “indirect linking—or request—that an appropriate step (re Saigon) will be taken by the other side.” Moreover, the link to action in Saigon might imply to DRV authorities that, even if talks started, Washington reserved the right to resume bombing Hanoi in response to actions in the south. On this latter problem, Rapacki alluded to an additional complicating factor—any demands concerning activities in South Vietnam implied gaining NLF agreement, which seemed particularly unlikely given their militant stand, backed by China, then experiencing an upswing in belligerency as the Cultural Revolution accelerated. One got the impression, Rapacki observed, that the US was “trying to ‘kill too many birds with one stone.’” While willing to transmit the new proposal to North Vietnamese authorities if the Americans insisted, he recommended strongly that in the interests of achieving positive results they rework the offer to eliminate the appearance (not to mention the fact) of conditionality. Once again, he stressed that North Vietnam, “a small, weak nation,” could not afford to appear to be breaking under pressure from its superpower enemy. That being the case, in its present form the U.S. proposal “would not be well received in Hanoi.” But perhaps if Gronouski used his Washington trip to help re-work the proposal to give it “better expression,” its prospects might improve.

Apparently impressed by Rapacki’s arguments, Gronouski did not insist on the proposal’s immediate transmittal, and promised to take up the issue of improving its prospects during his imminent talks with U.S. officials. At 2:30 a.m., the two parted on the understanding that Poland would defer relaying the proposal to Hanoi until after Gronouski returned to Warsaw. Later that day—whether he caught any sleep or not is unknown—Gronouski flew Polish LOT airlines to Frankfurt, where after a layover he continued to London, and thence to Washington, arriving on Thursday evening, December 22, for one day of rapid consultations both on Vietnam and on Polish economic issues, the “cover story” for his visit.²⁰¹

Unfortunately, only sketchy sources have surfaced on the details of Gronouski’s consultations in Washington on Friday, December 23, as top U.S. officials considered whether to drop the conditions attached to their offer to halt bombing around Hanoi, as Rapacki was urging. Later, after returning to Warsaw, the ambassador told an inquisitive Associated Press reporter (who had gotten wind that his quick trip may have been connected to Vietnam developments) that officials he had spoken with during his rapid round of Washington talks had included Rusk, Katzenbach, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow, various State and White House officials dealing with Poland and Eastern Europe, and (regarding the ongoing Sino-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw) William Bundy and Paul Kreisberg—but not President Johnson, who was at the LBJ Ranch

²⁰¹ Gronouski’s routing is from Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p. 72; however, as they state incorrectly that he left Warsaw at 6 p.m. on December 21 (as the envoy saw Rapacki at that time, as well as at 1 a.m. on December 22, he must have left Warsaw later that day), this information cannot be regarded as confirmed.

in Texas.²⁰² But if the particulars of the exchanges between Gronouski and senior U.S. officials are unknown, the outcome is not: A clear decision, for which Gronouski undoubtedly ardently pushed, to authorize a bombing halt in a ten-mile radius around Hanoi center, dropping the two implicit conditions which had aroused Rapacki's objections. The basic decision was made by late Friday morning, when Rusk dispatched a message to LBJ in Texas (via Walt Rostow) reporting that they and McNamara "strongly urged" him to drop the preconditions for ordering the halt to bombing in a ten-mile circle around Hanoi, and to order the immediate cessation of such attacks "for an indefinite period." Rusk noted that the senior officials (presumably after conferring with Gronouski) favored the move to "test" Polish contentions that the December raids had been the main impediment to getting US-DRV talks started. Moreover, he added—citing Rapacki's repeated statements that he asked not for a total halt to bombing but "merely that we do not escalate"—if Hanoi really did begin talking in exchange for such a limited bombing reduction, it "would be a major departure from the point which the communist world has been insisting upon, namely, that there can be no move toward peace while the bombing of North Viet-Nam continues."²⁰³ In assessing the motives behind senior officials' newly-evident sensitivity about bombing raids that might endanger Marigold, Chester Cooper has wryly observed: "For some it may have been a matter of prickly consciences; for others there was a genuine desire to salvage the talks, if only to test Hanoi's readiness to participate."²⁰⁴

The proposed concession for Gronouski to give Rapacki that the senior officials conveyed to the president dropped language implying that the halt to raids on Hanoi was conditional on reciprocal communist abstention from actions against South Vietnam's capital, although it noted "that in judging as to whether Hanoi is as interested in successful negotiations as we are, we would be impressed by similar restraint on their part," e.g., "a suspension of incidents" in the Saigon area, a "redisposition" of North Vietnamese forces near the DMZ, a reduction in infiltration, or "perhaps other examples" which might "occur to the other side." Rusk explained that retaining "the idea of action on their part," even if not a quid pro quo, would "provide us a platform" for "the strongest comeback if they themselves escalate" and for insisting on reciprocity during negotiations. Rostow added to LBJ that there had been some discussion of making restraint around Saigon a condition for the bombing halt around Saigon, but the senior officials had agreed that insisting on this would "get us into lengthy negotiation with the Poles," while dropping it would permit a "quick test" of Hanoi's willingness to enter into talks.²⁰⁵ Strikingly, after reading Gronouski's report of his last conversation with Rapacki, the usually skeptical Rostow had agreed with the Pole's argument that bringing the NLF into the picture by requiring reciprocal steps in Saigon might unduly complicate the initiative for Hanoi, observing to the president as he passed Gronouski's cable to the LBJ Ranch on Thursday evening that "the single most persuasive message that has thus come far through the Marigold series is Hanoi's requirement for secrecy at this stage with respect to Peiping [Beijing] and the NLF."²⁰⁶

²⁰² Warsaw Embtel 1554, 25 December 1966, with CAP661328, Walt Rostow to LBJ, 25 December 1966, ts/nodis/eyes only/marigold, in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II], 12/16/66-6/2/67," NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL.

²⁰³ Secretary of State via Walt Rostow to LBJ, CAP661300, 23 December 1966, received Washington Comcenter 11:03 a.m., received LBJ Ranch Comcenter 11:50 a.m., in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD—Incomplete," NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

²⁰⁴ Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 340.

²⁰⁵ Rostow addendum to CAP661300, 23 December 1966.

²⁰⁶ CAP661291, Rostow to LBJ, 22 December 1966, enclosing Warsaw Embtel 1537, ts/nodis/eyes only/Marigold, NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL.

A little more than an hour after receiving Rusk's message, Johnson approved the modifications to the 10-mile proposal in a telephone conversation from Texas with McNamara, after the latter explained that they would serve the dual purposes of testing the chances for talks but also improving the administration's public relations "position" should the initiative fail and leak.

"Would it give you any problem, do you think, before the hawks later on in your testimony?" Johnson asked his defense secretary, according to a recently declassified transcript of the call.

"I don't think so," McNamara replied. "We wrote this first to try to get these things [talks] started but secondly, in the event they don't start and this thing all leaks, to have a reasonable position with both the hawks and doves."

LBJ: "All right, it's OK with me."²⁰⁷

At 4:08 p.m. that afternoon, December 23, formal secret orders went out from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to CINCPAC (Commander-in-Chief, Pacific) Adm. Ulysses S. Grant Sharp notifying him that "until further notice from JCS you will not conduct air operations that involve attacks against targets within 10 NM [nautical miles] of the center of Hanoi."²⁰⁸ Not surprisingly, given the hawkish military attitude toward bombing halts, the directive evoked an immediate secret protest from Sharp, who complained to JCS Chair Gen. Earle G. Wheeler: "We were just starting to put some real pressure on Hanoi...Let's roll up our sleeves and get on with this war. We have the power. I would like authority to use it. We should be authorized to hit all RT 52 targets. The restrictions of Ref A [against hitting Hanoi] should be removed. And then when Hanoi screams in anguish, we should hit them again."²⁰⁹ A reflection of the chasm that had opened between the military and civilian leaderships over the war, Sharp's angry rejoinder helps explain Rusk's concern that, although the holiday season should mask a covert limitation of bombing, "Bob McNamara and I would have to take strenuous measures in our own shops to keep this point [the halt to bombing in a 10-mile radius around Hanoi] quiet"²¹⁰—as well as frequent (erroneous) speculation by the Poles and other observers, such as U Thant, that the military might have sabotaged Marigold by bombing Hanoi without LBJ's authorization.

Gronouski, by contrast, as he rushed between hush-hush meetings on Vietnam to routine consultations on policy towards the latest crisis over the *zloty* and Polish debt repayments,²¹¹ was overjoyed at the development. After personally witnessing McNamara's

²⁰⁷ LBJL recording, 1:01 pm, 23 December 1966, Tape F6612.03, PNO 1, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:968 fn 1.

²⁰⁸ JCS telegram 2135, 23 December 1966, 4:08 p.m., in Department of Defense, Records of JCS, 9155 (18 Feb 65), Section 13, Rolling Thunder 52, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:968 fn 1. Goodman misleadingly implies that the US refused to institute the 10-mile limit unless Hanoi met its condition for reciprocity regarding actions around Saigon. *The Lost Peace*, pp. 43-44.

²⁰⁹ "[I]f some civilians get killed in the course of these stepped up air attacks," Sharp noted, in reference to the outcry over the recent Hanoi bombings, "we should recognize it as part of the increased pressure. This war is a dirty business, like all wars. We need to get hard-headed about it. This is the only kind of action that these tough Communists will respect. That is the way to get this war over soonest." Sharp to Wheeler, 24 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:969-970.

²¹⁰ Secretary of State via Walt Rostow to LBJ, CAP661300, 23 December 1966.

²¹¹ On the package of measures to ease Polish debt burdens to the US which Gronouski promoted during his Washington visit, see Francis M. Bator to LBJ, 26 December 1966, secret, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, vol. XVII: *Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 347-349. While urging LBJ to approve the package in line with his policy of "bridge building" toward Eastern Europe, Bator noted that hardliners might oppose this conciliatory gesture toward a country backing Hanoi, and should the Poles, during negotiations, "go in for unusual pyrotechnics on Viet Nam, we can always back off." It is not clear whether Johnson OK'd the package.

order to cease bombing around Hanoi for an indefinite period,²¹² he telegraphed ahead to the DCM in Warsaw, Walter E. Jenkins, Jr. (whom the ambassador had let in on Marigold just before leaving), to call Michalowski and arrange an “urgent meeting for me with Rapacki tomorrow evening ASAP after my arrival” in the Polish capital late the following afternoon, December 24th.²¹³ At the same time, the State Department cabled the text of the new secret U.S. proposal to the Warsaw embassy ahead of him “to obviate his carrying sensitive message on flight”²¹⁴—an ironic American alternative to Nguyen Dinh Phuong wife’s sewing secret instructions into his vest before he flew to the Polish capital from the other direction a few weeks earlier,

Eager to deliver what some State Department officials sardonically referred to as the “Christmas Present,”²¹⁵ Gronouski left Dulles Airport at 7 pm Friday evening on a Pan Am 707 to London²¹⁶ and jetted back across the Atlantic with “high hopes”²¹⁷—which might have soared even higher had he known that during his whirlwind visit to Washington, Polish foreign ministry officials involved in Marigold were already also striving to break the diplomatic logjam. Although Rapacki had indicated to Gronouski during their post-midnight conversation on December 22 that he preferred to wait before transmitting the U.S. proposal to Hanoi, in order to give the American diplomat time to improve its contents, the Michalowski Report discloses that in fact the Polish foreign minister, perhaps sensing new flexibility on Washington’s part, acted immediately to try to mobilize pressure on the DRV finally to begin direct talks with the Americans. As Michalowski recounts, trying to grasp the “slight chance of saving the talks,” Rapacki opted to employ the “strongest, from the Vietnamese point of view,” channel of communications—an official, secret inter-party message from the PUWP Politburo to the VWP Politburo. Drafted “within a few hours” by Rapacki, Michalowski and their associates in the Foreign Ministry, presented by Rapacki to a quickly-arranged ad hoc politburo session, and then dispatched to Hanoi via party channels—all on December 22-23—the message, reproduced in full in the Michalowski Report, analyzed the entire sequence of events since Lewandowski conveyed the Lodge proposals to Hanoi in late November. While fully endorsing the DRV leadership’s handling of the matter to date, including its refusal to start talks under pressure of bombing Hanoi and its breaking off contacts earlier in December, the PUWP politburo now urged their Vietnamese comrades “to take full advantage of the opportunity for a political resolution to the conflict.” Citing the “difficult political situation” Washington faced domestically and internationally as well as the prospect of further “devastating and protracted war,” the Polish communist leadership termed the present juncture “particularly suitable and amenable” for a move to political action, including “talks with the enemy,” and proposed the

²¹² According to Michalowski, who was present, Gronouski told Rapacki on 24 December 1966 that he had personally witnessed McNamara’s order. Michalowski report, p. 89. The comment does not appear in Gronouski’s own cabled report of the conversation.

²¹³ Deptel 10780 (to Warsaw), 23 December 1966, 3:43 p.m., ts/nodis/Marigold, box 22, folder “POL 24-14/MARIGOLD,” Formerly Top Secret CFPF, 1964-1966, RG 59, NA II.

²¹⁴ Deptel 107911 (to Warsaw), 23 December 1966, 4:21 p.m., ts/nodis/Marigold, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:968-969.

²¹⁵ Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 340.

²¹⁶ Gronouski’s return routing is from Deptel 10780 (Gronouski to Jenkins), 23 December 1966, 3:43 p.m., ts/nodis/Marigold, box 22, folder “POL 24-14/MARIGOLD,” Formerly Top Secret CFPF, 1964-1966, RG 59, NA II.

²¹⁷ “high hopes” is from Gronouski’s 30 December 1966 conversation with Rapacki as reported in Warsaw Embtel 1596, 30 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, copy transmitted to LBJ in CAP661394, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD—Incomplete,” NSF-CO, Vietnam, box 147, LBJL.

following scenario—the US ceases bombing the DRV as of December 26 and extends this halt into the New Year; and Hanoi agrees that after ten days of non-bombing, during the first week of January, the DRV ambassador in Warsaw will have a contact with the American ambassador, “and then examine and take a position on the matter of the USA proposals and put forward its own.” Promising full cooperation and coordination, the Poles argued to their fraternal allies that such a course would, in accord with Washington’s own Phase A-Phase B proposals, constrain the US from further bombing of the North and compel it to consider a “package deal” that conformed to DRV and NLF interests. Even before hearing the results of Gronouski’s trip to Washington, Warsaw had dispatched the message “through the Politburo’s own channels” to Hanoi.²¹⁸

Delayed by blizzards that were blanketing Europe, Gronouski transited London and Vienna before finally reaching Warsaw’s Okęcie Airport late Saturday afternoon, December 24th. After a telephone conversation he hoped would dampen the ardor of the nosy AP reporter, the jet-lagged but now high-spirited diplomat rushed to the Foreign Ministry at 7 p.m. for yet another session with Rapacki. Accompanied by Jenkins and Michalowski, the two principals exchanged Christmas Eve greetings and then Gronouski read aloud the four-paragraph text of the decision to suspend indefinitely bombing within a ten-mile radius of Hanoi. By taking this step, the statement emphasized, Washington had removed what Rapacki had described as the “major impediment” to initiating direct US-DRV talks. While still denying any intention to pressure Hanoi with its earlier bombing, the statement declared that the U.S. action reflected its desire to “leave no stone unturned to get negotiations started,” a wish the American authorities “are assuming” that the Poles shared.²¹⁹ Rapacki rued that this action hadn’t come on December 4 or earlier—“Had that been the case, we might already have the first [US-DRV] meeting behind us and have good results by now.” But the Pole acknowledged that, compared with two days earlier, the U.S. had now brought a “concrete proposal” which he would immediately transmit to North Vietnamese authorities, even though he could not predict the timing or substance of their reaction. Still wary, Rapacki said he hoped this latest step represented “more than simply a gambit to get negotiations started” that might be undermined by escalatory actions elsewhere, perhaps by those who opposed talks, and fretted that the reference to hoped-for responses might still be viewed as implying conditions. Gronouski, for his part, stressed the “very positive” nature of Washington’s action. Having personally witnessed McNamara’s order to cease bombing in the Hanoi area, he could now attest to the fact that the action was not “contingent” or conditional—in effect, “Phase A” had already been implemented, at least in the Hanoi area. In any case, the important thing was to overcome the obstacles that had blocked contacts thus far. “The quicker we get talks going, the better the opportunity to avoid such problems in the future,” he argued, prompting Michalowski again to nod his head in agreement. His mission accomplished, the exhausted ambassador—“drained,” according to one account—bid farewell to the Poles to catch a night’s sleep before leaving on a long-anticipated, now shortened Christmas vacation with his family to the Swiss ski resort of Garmisch, leaving Jenkins authorized to handle any Marigold communications in his absence.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Michalowski report, pp. 85-88.

²¹⁹ Deptel 107911 (to Warsaw), 23 December 1966, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:968-969.

²²⁰ On the 24 December 1966 meeting: Warsaw Embtel 1555, 24 December 1966, *ts/immediate/nodis/Marigold, FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:971-973; Michalowski report, p. 89; Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace*, p. 73.

Dec. 25-30: Waiting

The next morning—Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day—Rostow passed Gronouski's report to LBJ in Texas, adding: "John delivered and Hanoi will be told. Good."²²¹ But Warsaw's willingness to transmit the latest U.S. message to Hanoi, while welcomed, did little to vitiolate the already intense doubts at the top of the Johnson Administration about Poland's role in the entire affair. During a telephone conversation from the LBJ Ranch with Rusk that evening, the president remarked, "I've never thought [Marigold] was anything but propaganda but maybe we're wrong. I gather you are more hopeful."

Rusk replied: "Only marginally because I don't think the intermediary is very good on this. I think he's playing a separate hand there and I don't like the way he's handled it very much."²²²

That same Christmas Sunday, as the Secretary of State scorned Poland's efforts, Warsaw's envoy in Hanoi was delivering to North Vietnam the latest U.S. proposal, with a favorable endorsement. Passing Pham Van Dong reports of Rapacki's December 22 and 24 conversations with Gronouski, as well as the foreign minister's comments, Siedlecki urged Hanoi "to take full advantage of the opportunity for a political resolution to the conflict." Echoing the Politburo message sent earlier, Warsaw's representative emphasized the rectitude of DRV actions to date, including its earlier decision to break off the proposed contact in response to the Hanoi bombings, but stressed the advantages of now showing a willingness to accept negotiations. "We consider that the present moment is particularly suitable for a move to determined political action by undertaking direct talks with the enemy," Siedlecki stated. "Refusal from our side would not be understood and it would hand to the Americans all the arguments. Taking up the contact, however, would tie their hands or would also unmask them for good." In any event, he added, Warsaw would continue to support Hanoi regardless of what it decided.²²³

And then there was little to do but wait. Anticipating an answer from Hanoi only after long and perhaps contentious VWP Politburo deliberations, the Poles tried to keep Washington from taking any actions to spook the North Vietnamese yet again. On Tuesday, December 27, Michalowski contacted the US Embassy with an inquiry "for the record" as to whether the American ten-mile bombing halt around Hanoi referred to nautical or statute miles—especially as news reports that day had spoken of raids against targets only 12 miles from the capital.²²⁴ As Michalowski explains in his report, the inquiry was intended to "interfere with an overly hasty USA decision to resume bombing and to stretch out the matter."²²⁵

The apparent nibble of interest reportedly "buoyed" Gronouski, who had just returned to Warsaw and could use some cheering up. He hadn't had much of a vacation. On Christmas morning, he and his family had gone to Warsaw airport, only to find it closed

²²¹ He added: "2. The Poles have told the Pope and Fanfani has made exactly the right noises to the Poles. Bad. 3. An AP man in Warsaw smells a dove. Bad." CAP661328, Rostow to LBJ, enclosing Warsaw Embtel 1555, Saigon Embtel 14206, and Warsaw Embtel 1554, in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD—Incomplete," NSF-CO, LBJL.

²²² See *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:973 fn 6.

²²³ Michalowski report, pp. 90-91.

²²⁴ Warsaw Embtel 1567, 27 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 317.

²²⁵ Michalowski report, p. 92.

for the holiday. Shlepping their baggage, they had boarded a train to Vienna, hoping to book a flight from there, only to discover, as Kraslow and Loory report, the airport there closed the day *after* Christmas—for the second time in two days, he was left holding tickets or reservations for a phantom flight! Giving up, the exhausted envoy and his family trudged back to the Polish capital.²²⁶

Now he relayed Michalowski's question coupled with his own plea to avoid precipitous military actions that extinguish whatever slim chances still existed to save Marigold: "I am most concerned if we are choosing targets so close to the margin that even a slight error could put us in technical violation of our commitment."²²⁷ Within hours, State shot back a reply specifying that the 10-mile vow referred to nautical miles—but from the center of Hanoi, not from the outer city limits—and cautioned Gronouski that it was "important for you and the Poles not to be diverted from the main effort by niggling and haggling about whether a particular bomb fell on this side or that side of this or that circle." The main thing was that the US had promised not to hit "314 square nautical miles," and it was time for "Hanoi to sit down and talk business. The next move is up to them and we can not let them play games with a side issue...."²²⁸ Gronouski dutifully telephoned Michalowski with the information, and continued to cross his fingers.²²⁹

"The Ultimate Reply to All Our Efforts"

On Wednesday, December 28, or Thursday, December 29 (sources on the date conflict²³⁰), the Poles received the North Vietnamese answer—"the ultimate reply to all our efforts," as Michalowski later put it²³¹—and it was not the one for which they or the Americans had been hoping. Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh summoned Siedlecki to his office and delivered a formal note reviewing the sequence of events since Pham Van Dong on November 25 had authorized Lewandowski to inform the Americans, as his own and "not a Vietnamese proposal," that the US envoy in Warsaw could contact his DRV counterpart as a "normal diplomatic activity." But, he told the Pole—and this statement, provided by Nguyen Dinh Phuong, would if accurate seem to confirm the impression of a genuine gap in perceptions of the fateful non-meeting of December 6—"The US swallowed its words and did not keep its appointment." Instead, he continued, Washington had "intensified" its "impudent" bombings, especially in "central Hanoi," "escalat[ing] the war to make pressure on [North] Vietnam" and forcing the DRV leadership

²²⁶ Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace*, p. 73.

²²⁷ Warsaw embtel 1567, 27 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 317.

²²⁸ Deptel 108664 (to Warsaw), 27 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 317-318.

²²⁹ Michalowski report, p. 91; Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace*, p. 73. There is a minor discrepancy between the two sources; Michalowski says he received an answer to his inquiry two days later, while Kraslow and Loory report that it came in only an hour.

²³⁰ Nguyen Dinh Phuong, "The Marigold Drive," p. 4, says Nguyen Dinh Trinh summoned Siedlecki on December 28; the Michalowski report, p. 91, says the meeting took place on December 29. The discrepancy may have resulted from the delay in Warsaw's reception of the report of the conversation and/or the time difference between Hanoi and Warsaw, but as Siedlecki's contemporaneous cable has not become available this has not been possible to check; confusion may also have resulted if the date of the meeting and the formal DRV note different. This account of the conversation and the substance of the DRV note is compiled from both sources.

²³¹ Michalowski report, p. 91.

to reconsider the entire matter. Now came the latest American offer which in Hanoi's view constituted a demand for "concrete Phase B steps" before Washington had instituted "Phase A"—a total bombing halt. "We reject these piratical proposals," Trinh stated. "We cannot allow for the USA to realize the plan for indirect or direct contact when it constantly bombards North Vietnam. The talks are over but the USA continues to be stubborn and insolent. The matter is not ripe for political settlement." Gronouski's words "would no longer be considered." In conclusion, the North Vietnamese thanked Poland for its efforts but made clear, as Nguyen Dinh Phuong later wrote, that Marigold had "come to an end."²³² In light of the DRV message's "accusatory manner," the Poles speculated that it had been "written with the PRC in mind," as they told Lewandowski in relaying Trinh's message.²³³

On Friday, December 30, Rapacki summoned Gronouski to the Foreign Ministry for what would be their most melancholy Marigold meeting.²³⁴ Over the preceding four weeks, the two had met eleven times, and despite moments of sharp discord and exchanges on behalf of their respective governments, developed a sense of mutual trust that both genuinely sought a breakthrough for peace. Rapacki told Gronouski that Warsaw had acted on the December 24th US proposal, but it had been insufficient to overcome the "damage done by previous actions," the Air Force bombings of Hanoi. Now, "we have to consider our role at this stage as terminated."

"We regret very much that [the] matter took such a turn," he added, insisting that the Poles had done "every they could have" to get talks started and expressing appreciation for Gronouski's personal efforts and sorrow that his Christmas vacation had been ruined.

Bitterly disappointed, Gronouski responded that it was "not the holiday that matters," but the collapse of hopes for peace that had risen, fallen, and then risen again during his trip to Washington. "I had high hopes," the American said. "I know there is a point where one gives up but I do not like to."

The main question now, he added bleakly, was "where we go from here." The latest development, the U.S. envoy told Rapacki, "leaves me feeling that maybe we have been kidded from the very beginning." The Pole empathized with Gronouski's exasperation, but assured him that the "authoritative" people in Hanoi had not been kidding. Had the latest U.S. step been taken earlier, say on December 4 (after the first raids on Hanoi), or even between then and the second round of bombings on the 13th-14th, he maintained, the first contact would already have taken place. But this was water under the bridge, history known to both of them. Some day, he hinted, "we may talk about it in a different capacity... We share common misgivings and concerns; but our views on a solution differ."

Like a suitor unwilling to accept a lover's insistence that their relationship must end, Gronouski still insisted that Washington had taken a major step forward: "I am reluctant to give up this opportunity; slowly the conditions for negotiations were being created. To recapture this, we would have to go way back to recreate the conditions we now have. This is a tragic development." Perhaps moved by his counterpart's evident anguish, Rapacki commiserated. For the first time he said clearly that his reaction to the latest US proposal, "while mixed, was not negative." Arguments as to which side had shown more willingness to

²³² Nguyen Dinh Phuong, "The Marigold Drive," p. 4.

²³³ Michalowski report, p. 92, citing ciphergram 13115 to Saigon, 30 December 1966.

²³⁴ This account of the 30 December 1966 Gronouski-Rapacki meeting is based primarily on Warsaw Embtel 1596 (section 2 or 2), 30 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, document #104, folder: "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67," NSF-Country File, Box 147, LBJL; also in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:986-986; short excerpts appear in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 320-321; and Michalowski report, pp. 92-93.

start talks could be made either way, he acknowledged. Yet, he insisted, the United States, as “a great power,” had the “key” to remedy the situation—clearly, though he didn’t have to say so, by stopping all bombing of the north.

Grasping at straws, Gronouski suggested that Poland cooperate with a proposal for a new round of ICC consultations with Canada and India in New Delhi, but Rapacki evinced no enthusiasm for working with the Commission, whose labors, he noted dryly, had failed to produce “any brilliant achievement.” Aware of recent information passed by the Italians about the Polish leak to the Pope, and on instructions, Gronouski then affirmed that Washington remained bound by its vow to maintain “absolute silence” on the initiative (aside from interested parties such as Fanfani and the USSR), and assumed Poland had done and would continue to do the same. Perhaps guiltily, Rapacki agreed in principle but allowed as how “probably the Pope is informed,” although he was vague about how this would have occurred (“Possibly [by] Fanfani, but I don’t know, I am not saying it was Fanfani, I don’t know, but the Pope probably is informed”). He promised to abide by mutual promises of secrecy unless jointly agreed.²³⁵

To the account of the conversation he cabled to Washington, Gronouski appended his personal recommendation that U.S. officials now turn to Moscow to see if the Soviets could take up the initiative where it left off (assuming the continuation of the Hanoi bombing halt). Passing Gronouski’s report to Johnson in Texas, even the perennially optimistic Rostow admitted: “We are at the end of a phase if not at the end of the line with Marigold. We shall now have to pause and consider next steps.”²³⁶ As Kraslow and Loory note with grim irony, “The bookkeeping operation was all very tidy. Ben Read was able to take Gronouski’s last Marigold cable and close out the Marigold file with the old year.”²³⁷ Johnson, for his part, sounded confident that the whole thing had been much ado about nothing. “I just think that Hanoi is not ready,” he told US UN Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg on December 31. “Everybody thinks that Hanoi is ready; the Pope, the Poles, the Russians, but when you really get down to it, they just cannot make a budge there with this situation as it is.”²³⁸

Aftermath: The “War of Leaks”

Marigold seemed dead, but a multitude of historical mysteries and operational questions remained unresolved. Had the Poles and their initiative ever been serious? Should Washington continue to try to communicate with Hanoi through Warsaw? Who would get the blame for Marigold’s failure, both in diplomatic circles (while it remained secret) and in public opinion, both domestic and international, when it inevitably leaked? Was North Vietnam really ready to talk—and if so, to end the war? What had been the Soviet role?

After describing his gloomy December 30 conversation with Rapacki, Gronouski had concluded to Washington: “In this moment of frustration it would be easy to conclude that Poles have led us down the primrose path. But I think this would be an unfortunate misinterpretation of events. If the Poles had been playing this kind of game they would have

²³⁵ Gronouski’s account of Rapacki’s equivocating comments about how the Pope was informed contrasts with Michalowski’s flat statement that the foreign minister had “mention[ed] that the Pope was informed by us.”

²³⁶ Rostow to LBJ, CAP661394, enclosing Warsaw Embtel 1596, 30 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:983.

²³⁷ Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace*, p. 74.

²³⁸ Johnson-Goldberg telephone conversation, 31 December 1966, LBJL, excerpted in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:986-987.

come in today asking us to sweeten the pot. Instead, they threw up their hands and bowed out...I am convinced that Poles have had at least limited authority to investigate negotiation and Warsaw meeting terms, that they felt that our Dec 24 position was a satisfactory one, and that since Dec 24 they did what they could to induce Hanoi to enter negotiations. Failing this, they recognized Hanoi's intransigence and bowed out."²³⁹

Far from convinced of the Poles' good faith, however, the U.S. Embassy in Saigon weighed in the following day with a scornful broadside calling on Washington to change the channel for contacting Hanoi from the "unsatisfactory" Poles, "whom we have reason to distrust," to a non-communist alternative. "We have been watching with increasing puzzlement the Polish minuet danced by Rapacki," began the cable from DCM Porter. While acknowledging that they may indeed have had detailed discussions with Hanoi, Porter noted that "we cannot disregard possibility that Poles constantly manipulated terms of understanding whether involving 'ten points' or later attempts to add provisos," adding that Warsaw's harping on the bombing issue and failure to arrange the promised meeting with a DRV representative were "suspicious." Blaming Warsaw for leaks and "procrastination," at the very least, Porter argued strongly that Washington should consider a "better way of smoking Hanoi out in this matter," suggesting the Canadians (also on the ICC) as a "more trustworthy" messenger (preferring them to the British, who while represented diplomatically in Hanoi had "little official standing" and "restricted" access to high officials).²⁴⁰

Porter's cable—both his substantive recommendations and his tone of derision toward the Poles—elicited a fervent rebuttal from Gronouski. He professed to find the references to "Rapacki's Polish minuet" and "procrastination" to be "understandable in light of frustrations we all feel" with the breakdown of the Warsaw talks, but also considered the view of the Poles they implied to be inaccurate, insupportable, and unacceptable, and the recommendation to switch to a different mediator to be misguided. Gronouski attributed the final decision to terminate Marigold to North Vietnam's rejection of the revised U.S. position presented on December 24 (omitting Hanoi from bombing missions), which he believed the Warsaw found satisfactory, not due to any Polish machinations ("I submit Poles had no reason on their own initiative to delay that agreement ten minutes"). While acknowledging Poland's firm support of Hanoi and consistently sharp condemnation of the U.S. bombing, Gronouski also argued strongly that the Poles believed an end to the war to be in their own interests, for reasons ranging from concern over great power distraction from more important European security issues, to the drain to the Polish economy of aid to North Vietnam, to fear that the Sino-Soviet split, exacerbated by the war, could prompt Moscow to sign a Soviet-West German security deal detrimental to Poland, to the danger of general escalation to an East-West conflict. For these reasons, plus his own "subjective judgment that Rapacki personally is genuinely desirous of bringing this war to an end," Gronouski rejected Porter's insinuations that the Poles had been acting in an obstructionist or "unsatisfactory" manner. More broadly, Gronouski insisted that the Saigon embassy's contention that a non-communist mediator would be preferable missed the point: "True," he acknowledged, Canada or another U.S. ally or friend might be "more trustworthy from our point of view. But for this very reason they would also be even less effective than Poles were

²³⁹ Warsaw Embtel 1596 (section 2 of 2), 30 December 1966, ts/nodis/Marigold, document #104, folder: "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67," NSF-Country File, Box 147, LBJL; also in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:986; short excerpts appear in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 320-321.

²⁴⁰ Saigon Embtel 14702, ts/nodis/Marigold, 31 December 1966, document #103, folder: "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67," NSF-Country File, Box 147, LBJL; an excerpted and sanitized version appeared in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 322.

in convincing Hanoi.” Persuaded that the Poles had done their utmost to intercede at the DRV’s highest levels, Gronouski urged Washington to turn immediately to Moscow, for he felt America’s “best hope” of finding an interlocutor capable of getting negotiations with Hanoi started lay in the “communist world (although I would not completely exclude from consideration deGaulle and U Thant).”²⁴¹

As efforts to resuscitate the talks failed to alter Hanoi’s decision to close the Marigold channel, both Polish and U.S. officials moved to deflect blame for its failure. While not substantiating American suspicions that Warsaw deliberately or directly leaked Marigold’s details to the press, the Michalowski report provides new details of Poland’s quiet but concerted diplomatic campaign, as Marigold wilted and then withered, to disseminate its version of the affair, and alludes intriguingly to Soviet encouragement as well. Not only on December 20, but in several meetings between Willman and Vatican secretary of state Archbishop Agostino Casaroli in succeeding days, the Poles continued to inform the Vatican about Marigold developments, notwithstanding Italian protests.²⁴² On December 23, Warsaw had also disclosed the still-secret initiative to UN Secretary General U Thant, who was predictably “very interested” to learn of it and appeared to embrace the Polish interpretation that the Pentagon’s bombing had wrecked the effort. “In U Thant’s opinion,” Polish UN delegate Bogdan Tomorowicz reported to Rapacki, “the intensification of the bombing was initiated by the Pentagon, which sabotages in this manner all possibilities at establishing peace talks.” The Polish decision to leak Marigold to the UN leader on December 23 coincided with Thant’s proposal for a meeting of the three ICC members as well as Nguyen Duy Trinh’s plea to Siedlecki two days earlier (after reading a report of the December 19 Rapacki-Gronouski encounter) to “unmask the deceitfulness of the USA position on peace” and a warning by Gromyko had “that the Americans might falsely inform him [U Thant] about our action.”²⁴³

As they waited for Hanoi’s response to Washington’s limited bombing halt around Hanoi over the next week, possibly breathing new life into the initiative, the Poles appear to have suspended any further conversations with other parties about Marigold during the following week. But by the time North Vietnamese leadership firmly rebuffed both latest the U.S. offer and the Polish appeal to start talks, some American officials were increasingly pressing the argument that the unreliability, or worse, of the Polish mediators had been the chief culprit. In Saigon, DCM (and acting ambassador in Lodge’s absence) Porter—who, skeptical of Warsaw’s claims to have ever obtained Hanoi’s cooperation, likened Lewandowski to a “thwarted gambler who expected to make a profit playing with other people’s money”—believed the Pole was “obviously lying” when he vehemently denied to D’Orlandi that he had leaked information on negotiations, and wondered whether he

²⁴¹ Warsaw Embtel 1631, 4 January 1967, ts/nodis/Marigold, folder: “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” NSF-Country File, Box 147/8, LBJL; excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 324-325.

²⁴² Michalowski report, pp. 83-84.

²⁴³ Michalowski report, pp. 81-82, and ciphergram no. 16224, 23 December 1966 (Tomorowicz to Rapacki), obtained from Polish foreign ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski. See also entry for 23 December 1966 in U Thant, “The Question of Viet-Nam,” pp. 2-5, secret, folder “Vietnam War (confidential papers), 1965-1966,” DAG-1, 5.2.2.3.2, United Nations archives, New York City, NY. As U Thant recounts, Warsaw’s UN representative showed him a “long memorandum” on Marigold prepared by the Polish government (which the Secretary General found “most interesting”) and, though he had “instructions not to leave it with me,” permitted him to take detailed notes.

planned to write a “paper” on the breakdown of the initiative.²⁴⁴ On December 28, having chewed out the Polish ambassador in Rome, Willman, for breaking secrecy by informing the Vatican about Marigold, Fanfani reported to the American ambassador that Warsaw’s envoy had said that his government “cannot undertake [to] initiate US contact with Hanoi unless there is a cessation of bombing” and had insisted that the “Pope had approached the Polish Government” rather than the other way around. In response, Rusk wondered suspiciously to Gronouski whether Willman’s comments meant that “the Poles have never had any intention of pressing Hanoi for talks without an unconditional and unreciprocal cessation of bombing” (although he conceded that perhaps the Pole had not been told of the 10-mile moratorium)—and State Department officials presumed the Pope was receiving a “one-sided account” of Marigold.²⁴⁵ Rapacki’s evasive responses to Gronouski’s probing on December 30 about who had informed the Pope only irked Washington further, feelings exacerbated on January 2 by a contentious conversation Rusk had with the Canadian ambassador in Washington, Charles Ritchie. Rusk saw Ritchie at the urgent request of Canadian Foreign Minister Paul Martin, who had called the Secretary on New Year’s Day to seek an appointment on his envoy’s behalf to discuss a topic he didn’t want to speak about over the phone. That turned out to be Marigold: when they met the next morning, Ritchie told Rusk that when Ottawa’s representative at the UN had called on Thant on December 28 in connection with the idea of an ICC meeting, the Secretary General had “in utmost confidence” revealed the account of Marigold he had received from Tomorowicz five days earlier.²⁴⁶

Clearly annoyed, Rusk told the Canadian that the account Warsaw had given U Thant was slanted and inaccurate,²⁴⁷ and, obviously thinking of Rapacki’s fudging response to Gronouski on a few days before when asked about the Pope, added that the Polish foreign minister had “lied to us directly as to whether he himself had informed any governments or parties.” Contrary to what the Canadians had heard, Rusk proceeded to deny firmly that the US bombings of Hanoi on December 13-14 had torpedoed the proposed Warsaw talks and to note acidly that the Polish account had omitted the December 7 mortar strike on Tan Son

²⁴⁴ See Saigon Embtel 14015, 22 December 1966, NSF, CO, Vietnam, LBJL, and “Marigold—A Chronology,” pp. 30-31, 35.

²⁴⁵ See excerpts from deptel 109639 (to Amembassy Warsaw), Rusk to Gronouski, 28 December 1966, ts/nodis, and deptel 108773 (to Amembassy Rome), 27 December 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 319-320.

²⁴⁶ “Marigold—A Chronology,” p. 47; Rusk to President, “Subject: Necessary Actions in Connection with the MARIGOLD Project,” 3 January 1967, top secret/Marigold, folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD,” box 2739, RG 59, NA II. The account here conflicts with Chester Cooper’s statement that “the first hint we had that the Poles had breached the understanding about keeping the talks secret” came when the Australian ambassador, Robert Furlonger, “normally a placid and understanding man,” “stormed angrily into the State Department early in January” to demand information on talks that the Poles had been discussing with U Thant (*The Lost Crusade*, p. 341). The classified record examined here, however, makes no mention of Furlonger’s outburst, and indicates that Australian officials were not briefed about Marigold until February 4, after it had been publicly revealed in *The Washington Post*. (“Marigold—A Chronology,” p. 78.) Whether Cooper conflated Furlonger with Ritchie, or accurately recalled an undocumented outburst by Furlonger, is not clear. In any case (aside from a report a week earlier of Lewandowski’s indiscretion to the Dutch charge in Saigon), the Americans had already gotten “the first hint” of Polish leakage on December 24, when they learned from the Italians that the Polish ambassador in Rome had admitted disclosing “all details” of Marigold to the Vatican. (Citations above.)

²⁴⁷ Rusk was able to read the Polish account through the following sequence of events. As noted above, U Thant had been allowed to take verbatim notes on the Polish memorandum on Marigold; U Thant in turn permitted his Canadian visitor to make a verbatim copy of his notes; and Ritchie provided this to Rusk, who in turn included it in his memorandum of conversation, cited below.

Nhut, “the Saigon airport where he himself was just about to land” (two days later), as well as other guerrilla attacks on the South Vietnamese capital during this period. To his further consternation, however, Ritchie “did not appear convinced by such arguments,” noting that such attacks in the south were commonplace and perhaps not subject to Hanoi’s orders. The Canadian’s view, Rusk sternly responded, reflected the kind of thinking that blamed Washington for bombing the North while excusing “what the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were doing in the South.” Equally upsetting, by the end of the conversation Rusk had the clear impression that not only U Thant—whom he viewed as unreliable in any case—but the Canadians blamed the US bombing for destroying the chance for peace talks, and perhaps even suspected that Washington’s backing for a new ICC initiative was intended to blur its sabotaging of the Polish effort. Moreover, in contrast to Rusk, Ritchie indicated that Ottawa did not see the Poles as “mischievous” for letting U Thant in on Marigold, nor the UN leader as “indiscreet” for telling the Canadians.²⁴⁸

At this point, Rusk had had enough. The next day, January 3, he sought (and evidently obtained) Johnson’s approval to retaliate, beginning with full briefings on Marigold for the Pope, U Thant, the British (who were outraged to learn that they had been kept in the dark about the Polish channel while themselves passing U.S. proposals to the Soviets in late November), and the Canadians. Anxious to catch up on the diplomatic “spin control” front, beginning in early January, U.S. officials began providing them and selected others, such as the South Vietnamese, with a version of events designed to rebut the Polish-North Vietnamese claim, then still unknown to the general public, that the U.S. bombings of Hanoi and waffling about the ten-point agreement had wrecked a promising chance to open direct peace discussions.²⁴⁹

Meanwhile, in Warsaw on January 5, Gronouski continued his discussions with Michalowski, as the two reviewed the previous month’s lamentable “past history” in an “informal” and at times emotional hour-long session. When the American told him frankly that there existed “in some quarters doubts about [the] sincerity of Polish effort,” particularly given the failure to ever produce a North Vietnamese representative, Michalowski stressed “with some feeling” that “Poles [had] put heavy pressure on Hanoi and in fact put [Poland’s] prestige ... on [the] line” by agreeing to Warsaw as a venue for talks. “Believe me,” he insisted, even after the first round of bombings of Hanoi, “we talked to them several times a day to keep pressure on them and convince them.” But the second round, on December 13-14, had “undercut our whole argument, destroyed that little bit of confidence that existed in Hanoi about intentions of U.S., and left us wide open to charges of being completely naïve”—and the subsequent gesture of the ten-mile moratorium had been insufficient to

²⁴⁸ Tab A, “Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Ritchie of Canada, January 2, 10:00 a.m.,” attached to Rusk to LBJ, 3 January 1967, folder “POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD,” box 2739, CFPF, RG 59, NA II. For U Thant’s account of being informed of Marigold by Goldberg, see U Thant, “The Question of Viet-Nam,” 3 January 1967, folder “Vietnam War, 1967-1968,” DAG-1, 5.2.2.3.2, box 1, rest. Strictly confidential, UN archives, New York City. For the British record of being informed, and their reaction, see telegrams 15 and 16, Washington (Sir P. Dean) to Foreign Office, 3 January 1967, top secret/dedip/immediate, and other documents in PREM 13/1917, PRO. Wilson’s immediate reaction (Minute, “Vietnam,” 4 January 1967) to these “disheartening” cables, which varied little subsequently, included outrage at the Americans’ “disconcerting lack of frankness with us” (little assuaged by Washington’s explanations that secrecy precluded informing London prior to Brown’s trip to Moscow) and a sense that the initiative’s failure constituted “a rather gloomy story of muddle, lack of confidence and incompetence (either by the Pole [Lewandowski] or by Ambassador Lodge in explaining the American position to him).”

²⁴⁹ See extensive documentation in RG 59, NA II, and NSF, CO—Vietnam, LBJL files and in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 322-323, 325, 326-335, 351, 354-355.

compensate. Gronouski, still grasping for a way to move forward despite the inevitable “peaks and valleys,” at his own initiative floated the idea that the Poles propose measures to Hanoi along the lines of the “Phase A-Phase B” package that Washington had been dangling since November, and—despite Michalowski’s skepticism—requested State Department guidance and approval for a new set of proposals for “de-escalatory alternatives” which the Poles could transmit to North Vietnam.²⁵⁰

But Washington had lost patience with Warsaw, and on January 6 instructed Gronouski to avoid any new initiatives via the Poles.²⁵¹ The decision to give up on the Poles seems to have reflected a variety of reasons—a decision to focus on Moscow as the most likely venue for direct contacts, mounting irritation at Warsaw’s leaking, and perhaps also from concern that neither the Poles nor their own eager ambassador fully shared their own strategy or sentiments regarding peace talks. (At the same time, however, as Michalowski had alluded to Gronouski, the U.S. was seeking Polish diplomatic assistance in Algiers in an attempt, code-named PRIMROSE, to make contact with NLF officials there.²⁵² Michalowski reports that the Polish ambassador actually transmitted an American message to an NLF representative, but the latter refused to meet with an US official due to continued bombing of the DRV.²⁵³)

A few days later, Michalowski left for the United States for a previously-planned trip to speak at a conference on “The Image of the United States in Europe” at Carleton College in Minnesota. There, he criticized US conduct in Vietnam without mentioning Marigold,²⁵⁴ but the diplomat took full advantage of transit stops in New York City to disseminate Poland’s version of events, particularly in private conversations with diplomats at the United Nations. Blaming Washington’s “stupid and irresponsible” bombings of Hanoi for the collapse of efforts to get talks started, as he put it to Canadian diplomats,²⁵⁵ Michalowski fired what Kraslow and Loory later described as “apparently the opening shots in a quiet propaganda war fought in diplomatic circles to assign blame for the failure of Marigold.”²⁵⁶ (Ironically, Gronouski had urged Washington to “consider arranging meeting between Michalowski and, hopefully, Katzenbach,” during the former’s visit to the United States in

²⁵⁰ See Warsaw Embtel 1646 (two parts), 6 January 1967 (reporting conversation with Michalowski on January 5), folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL; excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 329-331.

²⁵¹ Deptel 114370 (to Amembassy Warsaw), 6 January 1967, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL; excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 332.

²⁵² See ciphergram no. 161, Algiers (Wychowaniec) to Michalowski, 5 January 1967, obtained from Polish foreign ministry archives and translated by L.W. Gluchowski; and folders on “PRIMROSE” in CFPF, box 2739, RG 59, NA II.

²⁵³ Michalowski Report, pp. 121-122.

²⁵⁴ The text of Michalowski’s presentation at Carleton College, from an unidentified publication entitled *The United States in Foreign Eyes* (pp. 17-20), is appended to Thomas L. Hughes to Rusk, 20 April 1967, in folder “POL 17-1 POL-US 1/1/67,” box 2436, CFPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II.

²⁵⁵ By late January, for example, US officials received reports of Michalowski’s conversations in New York on January 10 with former US ambassador to Thailand Kenneth Young of the Asia Society and on January 16 with a Canadian UN delegate (to whom he made the “stupid and irresponsible” comment); see “Marigold—A Chronology,” p. 73; copies of memoranda of both conversations can be found in Marigold folders in CFPF, box 2739, RG 59, NA II. Michalowski also gave a lengthy account to U Thant on January 15. See U Thant, “The Question of Vietnam,” entry for 15 January 1967, DAG-1, 5.2.2.3.2, box 1, Rest. Strictly Confidential, UN archives, NYC, NY. However, he does not describe his January 1967 trip and conversations in the Michalowski report.

²⁵⁶ Kraslow and Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, p. 75.

order to “impress Poles with seriousness of our interest and provide opportunity for Undersecretary to gain first-hand impression of Polish interest and attitude.”²⁵⁷ State showed no interest in the suggestion—although Katzenbach and Michalowski would eventually get their chance to trade impressions of Marigold.)

Meanwhile, the Polish mediation option grew increasingly moot as other efforts to contact Hanoi during the bombing pause went forward—in particular the “Sunflower” Soviet channel through Moscow. Washington’s increasing willingness to turn to Moscow had been prompted by increasingly explicit hints from Soviet diplomats—such as a comment on December 30 by Dobrynin to Thompson, about to leave to take up his new post, “that perhaps during my stay in Moscow I would be able to have contact with a certain ambassador, obviously meaning the North Vietnamese.”²⁵⁸ To this had been added Pham Van Dong’s seemingly forthcoming attitude toward talks taken in conversations with *New York Times* correspondent Harrison Salisbury (relayed first by British diplomats and then by Salisbury himself), the Soviet channel increasingly engaged Washington’s attention. On January 6, 10, and 20, the U.S. charge in Moscow, John Guthrie, was able to deliver personally American messages proposing secret direct US-DRV talks to his North Vietnamese counterpart, Le Chang—in marked contrast to the abortive “Mayflower” efforts of May 1965 to do so, and perhaps with tacit Soviet cooperation inspired by Le Duc Tho’s visit a few weeks earlier. As these contacts were taking place, the 13th plenum of the VWP CC in Hanoi ratified openly the policy which seems to have been conducted for perhaps two months by the party Politburo, that of “stepping up diplomatic struggle” which, while still secondary to the military and political fronts, “played an important, active and innovatory role” in the war.²⁵⁹ Accordingly, on January 27, Chang relayed Hanoi’s firm response (echoed publicly the next day by Foreign Minister Trinh in his interview with Burchett) blasting Washington’s recent “intensifying” of the war and insisting that only after the US “immediately and unconditionally” ceased bombing and all other acts of war against North Vietnam “could” U.S. and DRV representatives exchange views “concerning the place or date” for peace talks—a formula U.S. officials found far from sufficient to justify a halt to military actions.²⁶⁰

In the midst of these machinations in Hanoi and Moscow, the Soviet leadership made an unusually high-level (Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny) visit to Poland. The January 17-18 summit in Lansk offered a chance for consultations on various issues, including Vietnam, and shed light on one of Marigold’s lingering puzzles, the nature and extent of Soviet involvement. As noted above, the Michalowski report confirms the impression from U.S. contacts at the time that the Soviets knew and approved of, but did not instigate or closely supervise, the Polish diplomatic activities in Marigold. Still unanswered, however, was a question raised by the Pentagon Paper’s analysts, who wondered what lay behind the Kremlin’s willingness to take a more active role in encouraging US-DRV peace contacts in early 1967, even after Marigold’s collapse. “Did the Russians receive encouragement to try further?” they asked, or did the US bombing of Hanoi provoke Moscow to take its own

²⁵⁷ Warsaw Embtel 1646 (pt. 2), 6 January 1967.

²⁵⁸ Dobrynin-Thompson memcon, 30 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:981-982.

²⁵⁹ [Institute of the History of the Communist Party of Vietnam,] *History of the Communist Party of Vietnam* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1986), pp. 199-200, as well as comments by Vietnamese participants at oral history conference at White Oaks, Florida, 10-12 December 1999, organized by Brown University’s Watson Institute.

²⁶⁰ For the texts of the January 27 message passed to Guthrie, and Trinh’s January 28 interview, see Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 419-420, 422-424.

initiative in an effort to head off further escalation?²⁶¹ The record of the 18 January 1967 Polish-Soviet conversation—not mentioned in Michalowski’s report but recently published by Polish scholars²⁶²—provides strong evidence that Moscow was responding to Hanoi’s prodding. Evidently well-informed on Marigold’s collapse thanks to intense diplomatic consultations, the two sides did not review that effort’s failure but concentrated on the current situation. According to the Polish transcript, Brezhnev told Gomulka and Rapacki that in mid-December, Le Duc Tho in the name of the VWP Politburo had implored the Soviet leadership to assist them in “establishing contact with the USA in the matter of a peaceful settlement,” either through the US ambassador in Moscow or through Poland, and had suggested direct Polish-Soviet consultations on the subject. Later, the Soviets received a “lecture by Pham Van Dong” (not further identified) that had “contained hints regarding negotiations.” Then—silence. Not hearing any retraction of Hanoi’s earlier request despite the collapse of the Polish initiative, Brezhnev continued, the Soviets had decided to “proceed as if their request was still up-to-date.” (Hearing such comments, Rapacki expressed mystification that the North Vietnamese had nevertheless declined to accept contacts with the Americans despite their bombing halt around Hanoi.) Exchanging gossip on Sino-Vietnamese relations, Gomulka and Rapacki noted recent reports indicating that Chinese pressure against entering talks had recently lessened;²⁶³ Brezhnev confirmed that “similar information” had reached Moscow, adding that the Chinese were trying to foster discord between the VWP and the (purportedly more belligerent) NLF. Trading data on current diplomatic intrigues, Brezhnev dismissed Polish reports that India and Burma were then involved in mediation efforts. More broadly, Gomulka assessed that recently hawks had gotten the upper hand in Washington, hoping to decide the conflict “on a military path,” and that there seemed “no possibility” of evicting the Americans from Vietnam by force. Brezhnev’s bottom line was Moscow must take a cautious line on Vietnam, which “shows the Americans that we are not bent on unleashing a great war. But what the imperialists in the depth of their souls are planning—the devils know.”

Brezhnev’s comments offer clues to the singularly intense effort to promote the opening of US-DRV peace talks undertaken in the second week of February by Soviet Premier Kosygin when he visited England for talks with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, which took place concurrent with a suspension of U.S. bombing for the Tet holiday. Climaxing weeks of hints that Moscow might play a more active mediatory role—Soviet officials told U.S. aides that they knew and approved of the Le Chang-Guthrie contacts, which continued into early February²⁶⁴—Kosygin (to Wilson’s pleasant surprise) avidly sought to find a formula that would lead to a the opening of peace talks in exchange for a permanent bombing halt, and agreed to transmit US proposals (passed via Wilson) to Hanoi. But these attempts, using the “Phase A-Phase B” (then shifted to Phase B-Phase A, to match a secret letter from LBJ to Ho Chi Minh) formula to combine a bombing halt and an

²⁶¹ See Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 227-228.

²⁶² See record of Polish-Soviet talks, 18 January 1967, in Paczkowski, ed., *Tajne dokumenty: Biura Politycznego PRL-ZSRR, 1956-1970*, pp.462-464 (excerpt translated by L.W. Gluchowski).

²⁶³ The Poles here appeared to be relying on the data and analysis in Siedlecki’s cable of 25 December 1966, cited above.

²⁶⁴ See, e.g., Deptel 141591 (to Amembassy Moscow), 3 February 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 429.

“assured stoppage” of North Vietnamese military infiltration of the South, also proved futile (amid considerable Anglo-American disarray), and the bombing resumed on February 13.²⁶⁵

The *coup de grace* to any immediate prospect of reviving Marigold, however, had already been administered earlier in February, when newspaper accounts of the secret initiative’s failure began to appear, beginning with articles by *The Washington Post’s* Robert Estabrook blaming its demise on the American “bombing of the Hanoi area” in mid-December. “The Americans bungled it,” an “informed source” was prominently quoted as saying.²⁶⁶ Two weeks before, in a story datelined Ottawa and quoting “high Canadian officials” (some of whom had known of Marigold for more than two weeks), Estabrook had reported that the “accidental U.S. bombings of Hanoi in mid-December” had “disrupted” unspecified “[p]rivate soundings then underway” to start peace talks.²⁶⁷ Now, the Polish connection and the proposed Warsaw US-DRV contact exploded into public view. Despite the fact that by then gossip about the affair had been ricocheting for weeks around diplomatic corridors, the State Department’s William Bundy told a British colleague that the story “could only have come from the Poles in New York,” and their decision to leak it “must regarded as a depressing indication of real intentions on the Communist side.”²⁶⁸ To already skeptical U.S. officials who blamed it on the Poles, Marigold’s public exposure constituted conclusive evidence that Warsaw could not be trusted. “We were never sure whether the Poles were speaking for Hanoi or entirely for themselves,” Rusk cabled Lodge on February 4 as he instructed the ambassador to fill in South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Cao Ky on the background to the *Post* stories, “and we concluded ultimately that the exercise had been primarily a fishing expedition by the Poles in order to get us to change our position with respect to [the] bombing of North Vietnam.”²⁶⁹ U.S. UN Ambassador Goldberg, also fingering the Poles for the Estabrook leak, cabled from New York his own recommendation that Washington “should no longer use Poland or any other Bloc country as channel to Hanoi”²⁷⁰—once again drawing an objection from the increasingly beleaguered Gronouski, who continued to defend Warsaw’s efforts (as the “only Communist country willing to take on [the] chore” of interceding with Hanoi), arguing that the story had probably come from

²⁶⁵ For documentation on “Sunflower,” see Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 371-516; the more complete files now declassified in the NSF-CO, LBJL, and CFPF, RG 59, NA II; among the many memoirs, see esp. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, pp. 350-368; and for detailed British records of the Wilson-Kosygin talks, see PREM 13/1917, PREM 13/1918, and PREM 13/1840, PRO. The present author is currently seeking to obtain Russian records (from both the Russian Foreign Ministry and former CPSU CC archives) on exchanges between London and Moscow, and Moscow and Hanoi, during “Sunflower,” some of which were seen and used by Russian scholar Ilya V. Gaiduk for his book, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, but were later “reclassified” by Russian archival authorities.

²⁶⁶ Estabrook story datelined New York, February 1, published on February 2 in *The Washington Post*, and quoted in full in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 343-345. Interestingly, Estabrook described the Poles as “extremely frustrated, not merely over the effect of the bombing, but more particularly with the uncooperative attitude of Hanoi.” The Polish evidence cited in this paper supports the view that the Marigold experience left Warsaw exasperated with both parties, though probably more so with Washington.

²⁶⁷ Estabrook, “Ottawa Sees Hanoi Ready to Ease War,” *Paris Herald Tribune* [and *Washington Post*], 20 January 1967, reprinted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 337-338.

²⁶⁸ Michael Stewart, British Embassy, Washington, D.C., to A.J. de la Mare, FO, “Vietnam: Possibilities of a Settlement,” 4 February 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁶⁹ Rusk cable, deptel 131715 (to Amembassy Saigon), 4 February 1967, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 351.

²⁷⁰ Goldberg cable, USUN 3847 (to SecState), 2 February 1967, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 342-343. Goldberg dismissed comments attributed to Estabrook that he had gotten the story not from the Poles but from UN and Canadian sources while visiting Ottawa in mid-January.

the Canadian Foreign Minister when the *Post* reporter had been in Ottawa.²⁷¹ (More than twenty years later, Estabrook identified the Danish representative at the UN as the source who had provided the key “tip” on Marigold, probably supplemented by information from Canadian diplomats.²⁷²)

Post-Mortems: US-Polish and Polish-British

As the story continued to seep into public view in early 1967, both sides engaged in what the Pentagon Papers’ analysts termed a “war of leaks”²⁷³ to journalists and diplomats and considered seriously (although ultimately rejected) publishing rival “white papers” revealing secret records on the affair to press their respective cases. Amid renewed bombing and military escalation following what Chester Cooper has called “months of initiatives, high expectations, and soul-destroying frustrations,”²⁷⁴ arguments over Marigold’s collapse (and then exposure), as well as the implosion of the Wilson-Kosygin initiative, continued to roiled relations among many of those involved, Poles, Americans, British, Vietnamese—Hanoi’s internal reaction to the exposure of the “Lewandowski affair” is not known due to lack of documentation, but it was reported to be “furious” and in a “very embarrassing position vis-à-vis the Chinese.”²⁷⁵

Explorations of what had gone wrong and who was to blame took place in secret as well as in public. The subject (as well as the circumstances of the Wilson-Kosygin effort) repeatedly came up in exchanges between Soviet and American diplomats, with Moscow’s representatives insisting that the Polish effort had been authentic. During “a long specific discussion of the December events” over lunch on February 17, Soviet charge Zinchuk told William P. Bundy (who claimed that “the original message from the Poles had been exceedingly vague”) that Hanoi had been “definitely willing to talk in the sense of exchanging views.” Zinchuk “had gone back over this with Hanoi and had ascertained firmly that this was the Hanoi position at that time.” Bundy admitted that if that were the case, “we had simply had a clear misunderstanding as to what Zinchuk now described as Hanoi’s intent at that time.”²⁷⁶ Despite the ill-will generated by the leaking, U.S. and Polish officials (aside from Gronouski and Michalowski) also fitfully tried to reexamine events

²⁷¹ Warsaw Embtel 1939 (to SecState), 8 February 1967, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 356-357. Aside from the explicit attribution in Estabrook’s story, Gronouski’s surmise may have been influenced by hearing from Ottawa’s envoy in Warsaw that Canadian foreign minister Paul Martin, never enthusiastic about US policy in Vietnam, had been “quite disturbed” and “miffed” by Rusk’s failure to inform him of Marigold during a conversation in December. See Warsaw Embtel 1701, 12 January 1967, ts/nodis/Marigold, folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67,” NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL.

²⁷² Robert H. Estabrook, “Journalists and Policymakers: A 1950s and 1960s Retrospective,” *SHAFR Newsletter* 23 (December 1992), p. 15, cited in Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, p. 206 n 61. In early reports, Estabrook inaccurately attributed Marigold in part to efforts by Canadian External Affairs Minister Paul Martin, who visited Warsaw in December, which might reflect an effort by Canadian sources to exaggerate their own role. See, e.g., *Washington Post*, 2 February 1967.

²⁷³ See Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 230.

²⁷⁴ Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 368.

²⁷⁵ The fourth-hand source for this reaction is a cable from Goldberg reporting on a conversation with a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporter citing a Polish Mission source citing a “long cable from Warsaw” on February 3 (which has not, alas, surfaced). USUN 3904, 4 February 1967, in “Marigold—A Chronology,” p. 76.

²⁷⁶ Deptel 139631 (to Amembassy Moscow), 17 February 1967, ts/nodis/priority/Sunflower Plus, folder “Vietnam, Sunflower Plus (folder 1 of 2),” box 256, NSF-CO, LBJL.

dispassionately. At the United Nations, Goldberg had launched his own mini-investigation of Marigold in order to rebut the account the Poles had given U Thant. On March 3, accompanied by Lodge, the former Supreme Court justice met with D'Orlandi in Saigon in order, as he put it, "to secure first-hand confirmation from entirely independent source of inaccuracy of Polish version," especially Warsaw's claim that Lodge had approved the ten points only to renege later through the "interpretation clause." On that point the Italian backed up the American position, but Goldberg had to acknowledge that D'Orlandi agreed with Lewandowski, in whose integrity he expressed great confidence, that the December 13-14 bombings "derailed Warsaw talks."²⁷⁷ On returning to New York, Goldberg reviewed the events with Polish representative Tomorowicz and found that, on the point of authorship, he largely agreed with the US understanding. However, Goldberg recorded, further discussion brought out a different apparent discrepancy in the two sides' understanding of events—the Polish record, unlike Lodge's cables, made no mention of any hedging on the ten points by Lodge on December 1st (a statement Lewandowski's contemporaneous cable, cited here, helps to explain), and also indicated that the Poles had warned repeatedly, from December 1 on, that any "intensification" of bombing could endanger the proposed talks (a statement actually supported by the US record in regard to December 3 forward, after the first attack on Hanoi, although only implicitly in Lodge's December 1 cable). Goldberg urged the Pole to try to clarify the record when he returned to Warsaw,²⁷⁸ but the tentative and short-lived US-Polish joint inquiry faded away.

A more intriguing post-mortem involved the British and the Poles, on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain but feeling a bit of empathy—sharing a common desire to act as mediators to get peace talks started, and a feeling of having had the rug pulled out from under them by Washington. Both Prime Minister Wilson and Foreign Secretary Brown had been furious to learn in early January about Marigold, which they felt had left them in the dark the previous November when Brown had traveled to Moscow carrying the "Phase A-Phase B" package to the Kremlin unaware of the simultaneous proposals being transmitted to Hanoi via Lewandowski. "I want you to know that, as I have told [US Ambassador to London] David Bruce privately, I am seriously concerned at a matter which is, I think, pretty fundamental to our relationship," Wilson had wired the White House.²⁷⁹ Even after rushed consultations by US officials to patch matters up, there had ensued a still-more embarrassing public mix-up between the two allies over a seeming hardening of the U.S. position in the midst of the Wilson-Kosygin summit, a series of miscommunications that had left the frustrated British leader openly hinting that the Johnson Administration had blown yet another promising chance for peace—and wondering privately, as he told US officials, "where the responsibility really lay for the confusion in the Lewandowski affair."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ USUN 4238 (to SecState), 6 March 1967, s/nodis, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 359.

²⁷⁸ USUN 4390 (to SecState), 15 March 1967, s/nodis, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 360-361.

²⁷⁹ Bromley Smith for Ben Read (containing message from Harold Wilson to LBJ), 12 January 1967, secret/eyes only, folder POL 27-14 VIET/MARIGOLD, RG 59, NA II; see also documents in PREM 13/1917, PRO. This message was alluded to but not declassified in the negotiating volumes of the Pentagon Papers, and editor George Herring plausibly but incorrectly speculates that it contained a request to have Johnson send someone to London to brief him on Marigold prior to Kosygin's visit. See Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 335, 839 n 28.

²⁸⁰ For Wilson's comment (to Chester Cooper and US ambassador to Britain David Bruce), see "Record of a Meeting at 10 Downing Street at 10.40 p.m. on Saturday, February 11," secret, PREM 13/1918, PRO.

On February 24, less than two weeks after Kosygin's departure from London, at a meeting at 10 Downing Street, a still-smarting Wilson probed Rapacki for a detailed account of the "nature and cause of the misunderstandings" which had evidently derailed Marigold. As he had in public during Parliament question time on February 8 (when he had, much to Washington's consternation, blamed the Polish initiative's breakdown on "a very considerable two-way misunderstanding"²⁸¹), Wilson suggested that mistakes on both sides, perhaps "some lack of precision" and "a failure in human communications" involving Lodge and Lewandowski, must have been responsible. Strongly disagreeing, the Polish foreign minister—who left British officials with "the strong impression that Rapacki felt he had taken a personal risk in the December project, had gotten burned, and was very disillusioned about the experience," and therefore "not disposed to get burned again"—instead blamed the American bombings of Hanoi for torpedoing the talks, perhaps as a result of "deliberate sabotage" by "Saigon hawks." Wilson then proposed, and Rapacki agreed, that British and Polish experts "compare notes" and see if they could establish why the possibility for U.S.-North Vietnamese talks had collapsed.²⁸²

Although comparably annoyed at Washington's behavior, the British Foreign Office saw little benefit, and some potential risk, in following up Wilson's initiative. (They were simultaneously engaged in an ultimately fruitless effort to dissuade Wilson from sending LBJ a message complaining at the "failure of communications" that had occurred during Kosygin's visit and proposing another joint inquiry into what had gone wrong in *that* case.²⁸³) With a sigh of resignation, the FO grudgingly pursued the matter after the Poles

²⁸¹ Wilson's comments, implying a real chance for peace had been missed, angered LBJ. The State Department euphemistically cabled the US ambassador that "Highest levels" had been "deeply disturbed" by Wilson's comments, made during a Parliamentary debate. See deptel 133105 (for ambassador and Cooper), 8 February 1967, in folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II], 12/16/66-6/2/67," NSF-CO, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL. Handwritten changes altered a draft of a message that date from Walt Rostow to Wilson aide Michael Palliser from "President greatly disturbed" to "We are greatly distressed" and added, "We are no means convinced that there was a misunderstanding. Other explanations better fit the facts as we know them." See "Personal for Michael Palliser from Walt Rostow, (via private wire to London), 2/8/67," and CAP67039, Rostow to Palliser, 8 February 1967, both in folder "Vietnam, SUNFLOWER PLUS (folder 1 of 2)," box 256, NSF-CO, LBJL. For British reactions, including drafts of Palliser's response to Rostow, see documents in PREM 13/1917, PRO.
²⁸² See "Record of a talk between the Foreign Secretary [George Brown], the Minister of State, the Right Honourable George Thomson, and the Polish Foreign Minister, Mr. Rapacki, in the Foreign Secretary's room at 3.0[0] p.m on 22 February on Vietnam," secret, PREM 13/1918, PRO, and "Record of Conversation between Prime Minister and Polish Foreign Minister during Lunch at 10, Downing Street on February 24, 1967," Secret, FCO 15/645, PRO. About a week later, the British informed U.S. officials of the gist of the conversations with Rapacki about Marigold and the plans to conduct a U.K.-Polish post-mortem of the affair. See London embtel 6998 (Kaiser) to Washington, 1 March 1967, ts/nodis/immediate/Sunflower-Marigold, folder "Vietnam SUNFLOWER PLUS (folder 1 of 2)," NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

²⁸³ See documents in FCO 15/633, PRO. Interestingly, on the same day (February 24) that he agreed with Rapacki on a joint British-Polish post-mortem on Marigold, Wilson proposed a more intense US-British "detailed inquiry" into the recent "major failure of communication" between Washington and London, evidently alluding both to events in November (when Brown had gone to Moscow carrying a message from Rusk for Hanoi without being informed of the simultaneous US proposals being relayed by Lewandowski) as well as during the Kosygin visit. Wilson thought this exercise might take a form similar to the classified inquest by Harvard professor Richard Neustadt into the 1962 "Skybolt affair" which roiled Anglo-American relations during the Kennedy Administration. However, as the minutes record, "Mr. Rostow was non-committal"—the joint investigation never took place, and the British instead conducted their own post-mortem. See "Record of a Conversation between the Prime Minister and Mr. Walt W. Rostow at No. 10 Downing Street at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, February 24, 1967," secret, PREM 13/1918, PRO, and FO [D.F. Murray?], "The Kosygin Visit: A Study in Anglo-American Relations," February 1967, FCO 15/634, PRO. One reason why Wilson insisted on writing directly to Johnson is that he did not trust Rostow to convey a "full and accurate picture" to LBJ of his

duly informed London's embassy in Warsaw that, consonant with the Wilson-Rapacki discussions, Foreign Ministry Director-General Michalowski was prepared to review the Marigold matter with British ambassador Thomas Brimelow. One FO official sensed "considerable dangers in this exchange of information with a Communist power," fearing that Warsaw would use the meeting to extract data on what the U.S. had told the British which it could then use to fan London's suspicions about Washington and thereby exacerbate the already evident discord between the two Western allies, and for general anti-American propaganda.²⁸⁴ Echoing such foreboding, U.S. officials, upon being informed of the contents of the British discussions with the Polish foreign minister, discerned "further evidence of Rapacki's continuing vindictiveness" and presumed that "his feelings [would] badly discolor the Polish contribution to a 'more detailed post mortem' between the British and the Poles." Unable to head off the talks, however, the State Department in mid-March gave the British a rebuttal to Rapacki's arguments—specifically denying that Lodge had "reneged after giving firm agreement" to the ten points, or that stopping the bombing had been a precondition for direct US-DRV talks—as well as Washington's own chronology of events for Brimelow's use.²⁸⁵ At the same time, aware that "Wilson and Brown still do a lot of churning over the Kosygin visit and may still have some scars from our having given the Phase A/Phase B formula to the Poles in November without telling Brown,"²⁸⁶ U.S. officials had to worry that the U.K.-Polish review might confirm London's skepticism about Washington's interest in peace.

FO aides agreed that the best course would be for Brimelow to "go through the motions" and remain "as uncommunicative as possible" during what they regarded as a "purely historical exercise," and prepped him with the secret U.S. account of the affair and earnest warnings to stay on his guard. Foreseeing "pitfalls" in his upcoming encounter with Michalowski, they warned Brimelow that the Poles "will exploit anything you may say," and seek to convince him that "the Americans have lied to us" and were never serious about going through with the proposed Warsaw meeting in December. While urging him to probe for information on "the real enigma" of the affair, the actual degree of Hanoi's backing for Warsaw's diplomacy—Did the Poles have a "clear mandate" from the North Vietnamese or were they acting as an intermediary despite not having fully "sold" them on the idea of making the attempt?—the FO stressed to Brimelow that he should "avoid being drawn into any discussion which could impugn American veracity or which could lead, in your judgment, to Polish wedge-driving between the United Kingdom and the United States or to the danger of Polish propaganda about the 'perfidious Americans'."²⁸⁷

Notwithstanding the FO's fretting, when Michalowski saw Brimelow on April 4, the Pole did not pump the envoy for inside information on Anglo-American exchanges—though

"very serious anxieties," especially as he suspected that Rostow had been behind the hardening of U.S. terms and related Anglo-American "misunderstandings" during the Wilson-Kosygin summit earlier that month. See PM's Personal Minute, 15 March 1967, secret, FCO 15/633, PRO. For Rostow's report of the conversation with Wilson and other related documents, see box 256, NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

²⁸⁴ See D.F. Murray, "Vietnam: The Lewandowski Affair," 14 March 1967, secret (covering ts), as well as minutes by A.J. de la Mare, 15 March 1967, et. al., FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁸⁵ See deptel 158246, State Department (Katzenbach) to U.S. Embassy, London, 19 March 1967, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 127-129.

²⁸⁶ See Embtel 7602, U.S. Embassy, London, to State Department, 21 March 1967, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 94-95, and (in fuller form) folder "Vietnam SUNFLOWER (2 of 2), boxes 252-257 (255), NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

²⁸⁷ P.H. Gore-Booth to T. Brimelow, 20 March 1967, ts and personal, FCO 15/646, PRO, as well as accompanying U.S. memoranda in the same file.

he did express interest (which London brushed aside) at the conclusion of the conversation in receiving a briefing on Britain's efforts during the Kosygin-Wilson summit in February. Instead, he laid out in detail the Polish case that U.S. bombing had been primarily responsible for the failure of the initiative to get peace talks going the previous fall. Reviewing the sequence of events in what he agreed was "purely an historical exercise," Michalowski stated that the effort had been a "Polish initiative" rather than one instigated by Hanoi, adding the perhaps significant comment (in light of what now seems to be the unfortunate reluctance of the DRV ambassador in Warsaw to advertise his readiness to receive his American counterpart) that "It was very difficult indeed for the North Viet-Nameese to make any move themselves. They were afraid that if they were to make any move, it would be interpreted as a sign of weakness." Yet, he insisted, Warsaw had remained "in regular contact...and not only by telegram" with DRV authorities during the crucial November-December events, even alluding vaguely (for the first time, so far as the British were aware) to "talks with the North Viet-Nameese Foreign Minister in a third country" (which the Michalowski Report reveals was Bulgaria). Those contacts, he said, left no doubt that Hanoi had been serious and ready for direct talks with Washington had not the ill-advised U.S. bombing raids ruined the most promising opportunity yet to stop the war—either before or since—and "confirmed the North Vietnamese in all their suspicions that the Americans do not really want to start talks." While mentioning also the unnecessary confusion, delay, and suspicion Warsaw believed had resulted from the "interpretation clause," Michalowski emphasized that Polish and North Vietnamese officials agreed that the bombings had been the decisive reason for the initiative's collapse in early December—in the process throwing cold water on Wilson's pet theory that the failure had resulted from diplomatic misunderstandings, miscommunications, mistranslations, or other miscues. Michalowski also rejected Washington's contention (already apparent through press leaks and statements) that the U.S. bombings of Hanoi were not to blame for the abortion of the contact. The Pole argued that although DRV leaders had, indeed, not made a complete bombing halt a precondition for the Warsaw meeting, they nevertheless perceived the timing of the attacks on the capital (on the 2nd and 4th, and especially on the 13th-14th) as a deliberate and "obvious" pressure tactic that provoked first a "re-considering" of Hanoi's position and then a decision to "terminate the conversations on the possibility of direct talks." The harm had been done, as Brimelow paraphrased the Pole, not by the *continuation* but the *intensification* of the bombing. Michalowski reported that the Polish Foreign Ministry "did not think this was double play by Washington" but rather a "deliberate action by the U.S. military authorities in Saigon," whereas the DRV leadership saw the raids on Hanoi as a conscious top-level American government decision and tactic synchronized with the prospect of talks. Subsequently, Hanoi had in effect told Warsaw, "I told you so"—that the Poles had been "naïve and that they, the Vietnamese, had been correct in doubting whether any good could come out of these talks." As their hour-and-twenty-minute conversation ended, Michalowski lamented that the collapse of the Polish initiative "had been a great set-back" and "It would be harder to get talks started in [the] future. He saw no early prospect of further talks."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ For the record of the 4 April 1967 Brimelow-Michalowski conversation, see Brimelow, "Record of Conversation with Mr. Michalowski, Director General of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 a.m.-11:20 a.m., 4 April, 1967," ts; Brimelow to FO, 4 April 1967, telno 203, ts/dedip, and Brimelow to Sir Paul Gore-Booth, FO, "Viet Nam: The November-December Talks," 5 April 1967, ts and personal, all in FCO 15/646, PRO.

Essentially, with some minor discrepancies and considerably less specificity concerning Warsaw's contacts with both Hanoi and Moscow, the account Michalowski gave Brimelow was consistent with the one he would later provide in the report he would write years after leaving the Foreign Ministry. One puzzling apparent contradiction emerged when Michalowski had a further conversation at a reception two days after their long talk, when he reportedly stated that the "North Vietnamese had known from 3 December that the Americans had reservations about Lewandowski's ten points" but had "nonetheless instructed their Ambassador in Warsaw to prepare for talks with the United States Ambassador."²⁸⁹ What is odd about this assertion is that, according to the clear record in the Michalowski Report (consistent with declassified U.S. documents), Warsaw did not convey the offending "interpretation clause" to Hanoi until late on December 6; so it is not clear how Hanoi would have known about it three days earlier; moreover, as noted above, contrary to the implication here, the Michalowski Report suggests that as of December 5 Polish officials believed that the DRV ambassador in Warsaw did *not* know, had *not* been informed or "instructed," about the supposedly imminent meeting with his US counterpart. Whether Michalowski was relaying different information, misspoke, or was misquoted by Brimelow remains unclear.

In any event, the Pole's account failed to impress FO officials. "My own view is that the record [of the Brimelow-Michalowski conversation] confirms our earlier suspicions that the Poles probably never had a sufficiently clear mandate from the North Vietnamese to the point of arranging a meeting between the United States and North Vietnamese Ambassadors on 6 December, as the Americans had proposed," observed the South East Asia Department's (SEAD's) D.F. Murray. "In other words, the Poles were trying an initiative on their own; they may have made a certain amount of progress with it because they had good contacts with the North Vietnamese; but they were never in the position of being able to 'deliver' their friends."²⁹⁰ After other colleagues seconded this assessment,²⁹¹ the SEAD relayed its reading of the evidence to Prime Minister Wilson. The conversations with Michalowski, they acknowledged, had yielded some new evidence of DRV-Polish contacts, but the "most important point of all" had been his "failure to give any clear indication that the Poles really had a proper mandate from Hanoi." Judging the claims of Polish consultation with the North Vietnamese to be "not sufficiently precise," and sensing other indications "that the Polish efforts were possibly more in the nature of an intermediary attempt which may not have been effectively 'sold' in Hanoi," FO officials concluded (in the form of a "reasonable guess from the evidence we now have") that, contrary to what they had claimed, "the Poles were simply not in a position" to arrange the direct U.S.-DRV meeting in Warsaw on December 6 or to provide "good offices in arranging the contact," and no meeting would have occurred even had the Americans not bombed Hanoi in early December.²⁹²

The FO's Murray passed a record of the Brimelow-Michalowski conversation (minus a reference to the Pole's inquiry about the Wilson-Kosygin talks²⁹³) in mid-April to State

²⁸⁹ Priority Warsaw (Mr. Brimelow) to FO, 7 April 1967, telno 215, dedip/ts, FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁹⁰ D.F. Murray, "Vietnam: The Lewandowski Affair," 14 April 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁹¹ See handwritten comments on D.F. Murray, "Vietnam: The Lewandowski Affair," 14 April 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁹² C.N. MacLehose, FO, to A.M. Palliser, 10 Downing St., 17 April 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO; see also MacLehose to Palliser, 18 May 1967, ts, in same file.

²⁹³ The FO had summarily rejected the idea of responding to the Pole's inquiry regarding the Wilson-Kosygin talks, an idea it judged to be "a dangerous exercise to conduct with another communist power, particularly with

Department aide Chester L. Cooper, who “expressed gratitude but added that he devoutly hoped that this was the last we would all hear of this particular exercise.”²⁹⁴ FO aides likewise saw “very little point or value” in further rehashing Marigold,²⁹⁵ but were compelled to produce further analysis after Wilson pressed them to appoint an expert to “sit down and reconcile or identify the points where things went wrong, if possible saying why the misunderstanding occurred and who was responsible.”²⁹⁶ Exasperated by this “depressing” and “entirely profitless” exercise, the South East Asia Department’s in mid-May dutifully coughed up a further analysis of “The Lewandowski Affair.” While carefully hedging that after comparing the Polish and American accounts it remained “difficult to apportion blame”—and the FO gave some to Washington²⁹⁷—Foreign Secretary Brown stressed to Wilson “the essential point” that “the Poles were probably never really in the position of being able to ‘deliver’ their friends and consequently misled the Americans.”²⁹⁸ Much to the relief of his diplomats, the Prime Minister, by then engrossed in trying to reactivate a British peace role in connection with Brown’s visit that month to Moscow, finally agreed to stop pursuing the matter with Washington.²⁹⁹

the Poles who irritate the Russians greatly on occasion.” Word would inevitably “filter” to Moscow and perhaps endanger Soviet cooperation on the peace talks front and “undermine our position in Moscow.” So sensitive did FO aides find the idea, in fact, that they opted not to pass it on to “Number 10” (Wilson) and to censor it from the memcon given to American officials. See D.F. Murray, “Vietnam: The Lewandowski Affair,” 27 April 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO. At Murray’s suggestion, on April 21 the British gave U.S. officials Brimelow’s cabled summary account of his conversation with Michalowski (telno 203), minus the reference to the inquiry regarding the Wilson-Kosygin talks, rather than the more detailed memorandum of conversation. U.S. officials regarded Michalowski’s account as having “followed traditional [Polish] lines.” See “Marigold—A Chronology,” n.d. [mid-1967?], p. 89.

²⁹⁴ Cooper is quoted in D.F. Murray, “Vietnam: The Lewandowski Affair,” 27 April 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁹⁵ See D.F. Murray minutes (“Vietnam: The Lewandowski Affair”) of 14 and 27 April 1967, and handwritten comments on both, in FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁹⁶ A.M. Palliser. 10 Downing Street, to C.M. MacLehose, FO, 17 April 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO; see also Palliser to MacLehose, 29 April 1967, in same file.

²⁹⁷ The FO found four major factors for the breakdown of the initiative: 1) the Poles “appear to have given the impression throughout their discussions with the Americans that they had greater influence with, and a firmer mandate from, the North Vietnamese than ever was the case”; 2) Lodge was “ill-advised” to allow Lewandowski to proceed to Hanoi in mid-November “without ensuring that the latter had in his pocket a document which had already received American endorsement”; 3) the Americans should have clarified the “reservations” they had in mind in their disputed clause; and 4) the U.S. bombings of Hanoi on December 2, 4, 13, and 14 may have been the “prime reason” why Hanoi broke off the talks, although if so it “tends to confirm that they were far less committed to negotiations with the Americans than the Poles were apparently making out.” See “The Lewandowski Affair,” n.d., ts, FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁹⁸ “essential point”: Foreign Secretary, quoted in C.M. MacLehose, FO, to A.M. Palliser, 10 Downing St., 18 May 1967, ts, FCO 15/646, PRO.

²⁹⁹ Palliser to MacLehose, 22 May 1967, FCO 15/646, PRO. When Wilson had a chance to speak face-to-face with LBJ in early June, however, he could not resist the opportunity (despite being urged by Brown to avoid the issue) to stress the “possible grave consequences” of the Anglo-American “shambles” during the Kosygin visit, speculating that Administration “hawks” had forced a stiffening of US policy in February, but made little of the Polish affair. When Johnson cited the account of the recently defected Hungarian charge d’affaires (Radvanyi) as evidence that Budapest’s initiative had been “completely phoney – the Hungarians had never been remotely in touch with Hanoi” – Wilson hastened to agree, asking rhetorically, “did the President really think that any of the East Europeans had a separate existence [from Moscow] in this matter or a direct line to Hanoi[?]” See “Record of Conversations between the Prime Minister and President Johnson at the White House on Friday, June 2, 1967,” Top Secret, and (for Brown’s warning that “enough had been said for the time being about the incidents during the Kosygin visit) Palliser to C.M. MacLehose, 21 April 1967, both in PREM 13/1919, PRO.

Aftermath

After months on the defense against charges its December bombings had derailed a genuine chance for peace, the Johnson Administration finally felt it had made progress in the public relations war when the Associated Press published a lengthy, sympathetic account. The May 8 story by the AP's John Hightower relayed Washington's view that the disputed bombings "might have presented Hanoi or Warsaw a convenient pretext" for not following through on the planned contacts, and quoted unnamed "high [U.S.] officials" as even expressing doubt that Rapacki and the Poles had been communicating the U.S. readiness for talks to Hanoi—an accusation, clearly emanating from and endorsed by top-level sources, that prompted outraged Poles, including Michalowski, to complain to the U.S. ambassador in Warsaw about the story's "disturbing distortions, errors and innuendoes" challenging Rapacki's integrity, and to insist indignantly that the Poles "had of course delivered [American] messages [to Hanoi]."³⁰⁰

By taking some of the political heat off the administration, the AP story—given prominent display in *The New York Times* and other leading media outlets—eased the pressure to produce a full-blown official account of Marigold. Quiet contacts ensued between U.S. and Polish officials—who had warned that U.S. release of such a document would leave them no choice but to respond with a report of their own—to avert a "war of White Books." Instead, White House and State Department officials quietly backgrounded journalists that they had "no quarrel" with the AP story, and privately assured Warsaw that "since we have no desire [to] exacerbate US-Polish relations over this matter," there was no intention to publish a "White Book" on Marigold—eliciting Michalowski's tart rejoinder that "U.S. officials had apparently chosen another way to put out the story." But he issued no threats or hints that Poland desired to escalate the confrontation, and with the White House now satisfied on the public relations front, the immediate controversy petered out.³⁰¹

So, too, had a final, half-hearted attempt to activate the Lewandowski channel. Suspicious that Warsaw was more interested in stopping U.S. bombing than ending the war, Washington had evinced little interest in late January when D'Orlandi reported to Lodge (on the American's return to Saigon) that Lewandowski seemed "eager" to make another trip to Hanoi "provided [Washington] can give him something to say."³⁰² Instead, the State Department had shelved the Polish channel for the time being, preferring to explore the Sunflower initiatives and a slew of others; moreover, the renewal of bombing and the angry atmosphere seemed unpropitious. In mid-March, after Fanfani (citing D'Orlandi) had reported to Rusk that Hanoi would enter into negotiations after a three-week bombing pause, interest in the Saigon channel perked up again. That same day, March 16, a farewell reception was being held for the ailing senior Italian diplomat in the South Vietnamese capital. "Well, anyway," Lewandowski reportedly told him, "no one can ever say it was either your fault or my fault that [US-DRV] conversations did not start" (a comment that mystified the Americans, who weren't sure whom the Pole meant to blame—themselves,

³⁰⁰ See documents cited in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 366-369.

³⁰¹ See cables quoted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 367-369, and in "Marigold—A Chronology," pp. 89-90.

³⁰² Saigon embtel 16017, 19 January 1967, ts/nodis/Marigold, folder "Vietnam MARIGOLD [II] 12/16/66-6/2/67," NSF-CO, Vietnam, boxes 139, 143, 147, 148, LBJL

Rapacki, or Hanoi?).³⁰³ After reaching Rome, D'Orlandi told the US ambassador on April 7 that it still made sense to attempt to achieve results via Lewandowski, and offered suggestions to learn from December's said experiences in order to succeed this time around—such as clarifying nailing down key details in advance, coordinating a bombing halt with the Pole's visit, and reaffirming US readiness to negotiate on the basis of the (still-secret) ten points. He urged Washington to move fast since Lewandowski himself would be leaving Saigon in mid-May. The next day, at a diplomatic reception in Saigon Lewandowski “made a real effort to come over and sit down next to me,” Lodge reported, volunteered some gossip about Rapacki's chain-smoking and poor health and working habits, and mentioned that he planned to stop in Italy to see D'Orlandi on his way home to Warsaw before continuing on to New York for his next post, with the Polish UN delegation.³⁰⁴

That sparked State's interest enough to OK a meeting between Lodge and the Pole to “make him feel we will still be interested” in staying in touch in his new job, and see if he had “any new ideas on possible approaches to Hanoi either by Poles in Saigon or elsewhere, or others.” It also authorized the U.S. ambassador in Rome, Frederick G. Reinhardt, to organize a quiet three-way meeting with D'Orlandi and Lewandowski, when he passed through Italy—“not,” it stressed, as a “post mortem on Marigold but [an] analysis of main elements in North Vietnamese calculations and discussion of possible new approaches to issues of settlement.” Such a meeting could also allow Lodge to probe the basis for Fanfani's assurances to Rusk about the three-week bombing halt being sufficient to start talks. “Apart from anything else, this might be useful in distinguishing where Lewandowski ends and d'Orlandi begins, a problem inherent in Marigold from [the] outset.”³⁰⁵

On April 22, Lodge and Lewandowski met privately for what would apparently be the last time. Despite repeating some familiar positions, the mood seems to have been wistful, even nostalgic, as they sensed the irrevocable disbanding of the diplomatic trio (along with D'Orlandi) that four or five months earlier had felt on the verge of achieving a spectacular breakthrough. But the bitter feelings about what had happened in December remained—though not towards Lodge personally. When the American insisted that Washington could accept a neutral South Vietnam, the Pole replied, “I am sure you really believe this, but I don't believe the United States Government thinks this.” Lodge insisted he did, naturally, but Lewandowski doubted it. For his part, after reminding Lewandowski of their mutual pledge of secrecy the previous fall, Lodge wondered about the “strange” amount of leaking that had occurred during Marigold, by “doubtless well-intentioned” people who had nonetheless done “great harm”—without saying so explicitly, he was clearly reflecting the suspicions of many U.S. officials who blamed Lewandowski himself for such leaks. But the Pole refused to rise to the bait, merely agreeing that this had been odd. Rather than argue, he became “very eloquent on the importance of the Soviet Union and the United States working together”—“only Vietnam stood in the way.” He even expressed understanding for US interests in the Western Pacific (making the analogy to the Soviets and Hungary), though he hoped they could be obtained short of by fighting a war in Vietnam.

Sending the conversation to Rusk (whose reaction is not known), Lodge observed that Lewandowski had been “more warm and forthcoming than I have ever seen him. He has

³⁰³ The above is based on various documents cited in “Marigold—A Chronology,” pp. 66 ff.

³⁰⁴ Rome Embtel 5266, 7 April 1967; Saigon embtel 22598, 10 April 1967; both in folder “POL 27-14 MARIGOLD 1967,” box 2739, CFPPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II.

³⁰⁵ Deptel 179156 (to Amembassy Saigon), 20 April 1967, and Deptel 180271 (to Amembassy Rome), 21 April 1967, both ts/nodis/Marigold, in folder “POL 27-14 MARIGOLD 1967,” box 2739, CFPPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II.

always been very stiff and formal. He obviously wants to keep in touch... For almost eight years, I saw the Iron Curtain diplomats at the United Nations. I rank Lewandowski pretty much up at the top....³⁰⁶ And so dissipated this flickering ghost of Marigold—Lewandowski later cancelled plans to stop in Rome, and the three-way meeting was never held.³⁰⁷ In June 1967, Kosygin saw Johnson in Glassboro, New Jersey, and relayed what he claimed was a reliable offer from Pham Van Dong to “immediately” enter peace talks if Washington halted bombing. “At several different times in the past,” the Soviet premier added snootily (without naming names), “the President had sought an intermediary between the US and North Viet-Nam and had even considered using the offices of some second rate countries, which carried no weight in the world, but here and now there was an opportunity to engage in direct negotiations with Hanoi and he earnestly urged the President to weigh this possibility.”³⁰⁸ This initiative, too, went nowhere.

The Argument Persists: Michalowski in Washington

Even after American peace efforts had long shifted to other channels, sometimes sharp arguments about “who lost Marigold” persisted. “I start with the assumption that the Polish episode of early December was a fraud on the part of the Poles,” wrote Assistant Secretary of State William P. Bundy to Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in July 1967, a claim that elicited a scrawled question mark from Harriman.. To support his assertion, Bundy cited statements by the Hungarian diplomat Janos Radvanyi, who had defected earlier that spring, that “Hanoi was dug in as of late November, as well as pretty clear evidence that Hanoi did not authorize the Poles to do anything.”³⁰⁹

That feelings remained raw among both Americans and Poles involved in Marigold became clear that autumn, after Michalowski arrived in Washington as Warsaw’s new ambassador (replacing his predecessor, Edward Drozniak, who had died the previous November). Before leaving to take up his new position, he had told Gronouski, “I know Vietnam will hang like a cloud over our bilateral relations but let us try to separate ourselves as much as possible from [this] problem.”³¹⁰ That proved to be a forlorn hope, however, in part because of Michalowski’s own strong feelings on the subject. The smoldering dispute re-ignited from the moment the Pole (accompanied by Jamaican and Ecuadorian colleagues) presented his credentials to Johnson at the White House on September 12 in what was normally a ceremonial occasion.³¹¹ Initial pleasantries about the contributions of Polish-

³⁰⁶ Saigon Embtel 23719, 22 April 1967, ts/nodis/priority/eyes only for secretary, folder “POL 27-14 MARIGOLD 1967,” box 2739, CFPPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II.

³⁰⁷ Rome Embtel 6506 (to SecState), 6 June 1967, excerpted in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 370.

³⁰⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Johnson-Kosygin, 3:15-4:30 p.m., 23 June 1967, Glassboro, NJ, p. 4, NSF, CO: USSR: Glassboro, LBJL. For an analysis, see Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, pp. 108-132. From his review of Russian archival material, he concludes that, although Kosygin did not “deceive” LBJ about Pham Van Dong’s communication, he may have embellished DRV readiness for serious talks: “The [Soviet embassy in Hanoi’s] reports clearly demonstrate,” he concludes, “that the North Vietnamese leadership did not favor negotiations with the United States in the spring and summer of 1967” (pp. 131-132).

³⁰⁹ William P. Bundy to McNamara, 3 July 1967, “Subject: Thoughts on Vietnam,” ts/nodis, copy in folder: July 1967, box FCL 33, Harriman Papers, LC.

³¹⁰ Warsaw embtel 2700, 9 May 1967, s/nodis/immediate/Marigold, folder “POL 27-14 MARIGOLD 1967,” box 2739, CFPPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II.

³¹¹ The account here is largely based on “Subject: President’s Conversation with new Polish Ambassador” (3 pts; pt. III on Vietnam), 12 September 1967, folder “POL 17-1 POL-US 1/1/67,” CFPPF, box 2436, RG 59, NA

Americans to the country's "growth and freedom" (particularly in Texas, LBJ noted) and hopes for warmer bilateral ties prompted Michalowski to note that they could improve even faster were it not for Vietnam. When Johnson insisted that the US remained "anxious" for peace talks, Michalowski could not resist a dig. Washington "had resumed bombing too quickly last December," he argued, ruining the labors of the Poles and Gronouski. LBJ disagreed—Hanoi's charges that bombing prevented talks were "a broken record which they have used over and over again," despite six American bombing pauses, and the essential thing was for North Vietnam to stop trying to take over the south.

"They are bombing us all the time in South Viet-Nam," Johnson said.

"I don't see any North-Vietnamese planes bombing Washington," Michalowski replied.

"That's not the point," LBJ shot back. Bombs were exploding in South Vietnam all the time, killing more people than American bombs in the North.

America and Poland saw the issue differently, Michalowski observed, adding haughtily that "Poland, because of its special position in Viet-Nam, probably knew more about the situation there than any other country." What was occurring, he insisted to Johnson, was "civil war and not aggression."

At that point the Jamaican Ambassador helpfully chimed in that "7 is thought to be a lucky number," so perhaps Johnson should try another bombing pause. Maybe we're already doing so, LBJ replied, observing that Hanoi had not been attacked for "a long time." After Michalowski said that any new bombing pauses or negotiating initiatives should be carried out quietly, Johnson successfully steered the conversation away from Vietnam, raising Latin American problems with the envoy from Quito. Even then, the talk twisted back to the war, although no further explosions ensued.

The encounter with Michalowski undoubtedly infuriated Johnson, who shunned encounters with foreign visitors critical of his Vietnam policies, the irritation in this case probably compounded by having a chorus of small-country ambassadors present.³¹² Over the next month, State Department annoyance mounted as the new Polish ambassador continued, during a round of introductory consultations, to blame Washington's bombing for scotching peace prospects the previous fall. (One senior official who seemed more curious than irked, however, was Ambassador-at-Large Harriman, who had Michalowski over for lunch in lieu of a formal courtesy call on September 26 and listened intently as the Pole recounted his January 1966 trip to Hanoi, which had been triggered by Harriman's conversation with Gomulka, as well as his perspective on Marigold.³¹³) Nor, it appears, did Michalowski shy away from talking to journalists, who eagerly sought background or "off-the-record" insider accounts of secret Vietnam diplomacy.³¹⁴ Back in April, when LBJ had given pro forma approval for his selection as Polish ambassador to Washington, a State Department aide who had participated on the Carleton College panel alongside the Pole in

II. The quotations here are taken from third person renditions in the memorandum of conversation rather than a verbatim transcript. Michalowski states that in their conversation, Johnson did not dispute Poland's role in December 1966 but blamed Hanoi for failing to respond positively to the Christmas Eve ten-mile radius sanctuary around the capital. Michalowski report, p. 103.

³¹² See, e.g., Logevall, *Choosing War*, p. 79.

³¹³ Harriman-Michalowski memorandum of conversation, 26 September 1967, secret, folder: September 1967, box FCL 33, Harriman papers, LC.

³¹⁴

January told Rusk that Michalowski was a “very clever and disarming performer.”³¹⁵ Now, U.S. officials feared those capabilities could constitute a dangerous weapon in the battle over Marigold’s history and significance—especially as pressure for a bombing halt continued. On October 2, Zbigniew Brzezinski, then affiliated with State’s Policy Planning Council, sent the following memorandum to Walt W. Rostow, Johnson’s national security adviser:

1. I understand from some of my journalist friends that the new Polish Ambassador, Mr. Michalowski, is extremely effective in presenting the Polish version of the breakdown of the allegedly developing negotiations [in December 1966], and he is assiduously disseminating his version among Washington newsmen.
2. He is an effective and engaging person, and his efforts could have some impact.
3. Although--as I recall--at the time a semi-official version was put out, it might be useful to prepare a more complete US account of what actually took place and make it available to some reliable journalist for purpose of publication. Otherwise, I have no doubt that within a few weeks Michalowski’s version will become the generally accepted one.³¹⁶

By the time Michalowski stopped by the State Department at noon on October 11 to see Under Secretary Katzenbach—who had of course been one of the key actors in the previous December’s events—senior State Department officials were simmering. In a briefing memorandum for Katzenbach, Philip Habib noted Michalowski’s many conversations with officials³¹⁷ and journalists about Marigold since reaching Washington, evidently intended “not to clarify the events of this period in the interests of serious new explorations with Hanoi but rather to cast doubt on US good faith and generate additional pressures for an unconditional bombing cessation on Hanoi’s terms.” In any case, Habib added, to raise “such a complicated and contentious issue” during a courtesy call violated diplomatic protocol, and he urged Katzenbach to tell the Pole, should he raise the matter, that “we question the propriety of discussion such complicated and sensitive matters with individuals in Washington, both in and out of government, who may not be in possession of the facts or otherwise prepared to discuss the issue.” To assure that Katzenbach himself would be “well prepared to discuss the issue,” Habib appended a detailed summary and chronology of Marigold should the Under Secretary enter into a debate with Michalowski.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Thomas L. Hughes to Rusk, 20 April 1967, folder “POL 17-1 POL-US 1/1/67,” box 2436, CFPF, RG 59, NA II. Other documents on formal US approval of Michalowski’s appointment, including secret biographical information, can be found in the same folder.

³¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski to Walt W. Rostow, 2 October 1967, “Subject: Alleged Breakdown of the December Talks on Vietnam,” secret, folder: “Vietnam MARIGOLD—Incomplete,” document #18, NSF-CO-Vietnam, box 148, LBJL.

³¹⁷ Michalowski had purveyed his views, Habib noted, not only to Johnson and Harriman but also Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Walter Stoessel, Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs Anthony M. Soloman, and Under Secretary for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow.

³¹⁸ Philip C. Habib through S/S to Mr. Katzenbach, “Possible Discussion of Marigold at meeting with Ambassador Michalowski, October 11, 12:00 Noon – INFORMATION MEMORANDUM,” 11 October 1967, folder “POL 27-14 MARIGOLD 1967,” box 2739, CFPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II.

Indeed, it did not take them long, after some initial chit-chat, to move from fencing to outright recriminations over the failed initiative.³¹⁹ To Katzenbach's insistence that Washington "wanted peace in Viet-Nam" and "could get on with it" if only someone could be found with whom to negotiate, the Pole responded that this "shouldn't be too difficult." Katzenbach replied that "we never received one message from Hanoi," prompting Michalowski to cite the one that the Poles had delivered in December 1966. Katzenbach volleyed that this was only a willingness to listen, not talk, and that the US had faithfully observed the only stated condition for the contact, that of secrecy. Unfortunately, he went on, "Others have not done so, including the Ambassador. Mr. Katzenbach said he was aware that the Ambassador had been discussing this with columnists, which was not the right way to go about it, nor helpful in our mutual relations." Michalowski insisted that he had "only discussed these matters privately," and that in any case a genuine "opportunity" for contact the previous fall. "Mr Katzenbach demurred," the minutes record, stressing that "the Poles had failed to produce a single living North Vietnamese," whereupon Michalowski blamed the American bombings of Hanoi, despite repeated Polish warnings that this could ruin chances for the contact. Katzenbach shot back that "Gronouski had been ready every day from December 3 to December 12 and not one live North Vietnamese had been produced by the Poles" ...

—and on and on it went, round after round, a diplomatic boxing match, as Katzenbach and Michalowski hashed out in person the events in which they had participated, from opposite perspectives, in Washington and Warsaw ten months earlier, replicating, amid what seems to have been mounting tension, the arguments that had then characterized the exchanges between Rapacki and Gronouski, only this time venting months of accumulated mutual ill-will over the back-and-forth charges which had reverberated through diplomatic chambers and journalistic exposes. Repeatedly, Michalowski insisted that North Vietnam had truly been interested in talks until the December 13-14 bombings of Hanoi—it had been "touch and go" in the VWP Politburo until then. Why had Washington found it necessary to bomb Hanoi "while delicate exchanges were going on" despite Polish warnings? Why had it been impossible to take earlier in December the measure finally agreed to later on, the ten-mile sanctuary? Such a restriction had never been a condition for the proposed US-DRV meeting in Warsaw, Katzenbach emphasized. It was "evident" that Hanoi simply "did not wish to make the contact," and had used the bombing as an "excuse." No, said Michalowski, the bombing destroyed something fragile yet crucial, "namely a certain confidence on the part of Hanoi that the US was looking for a political solution." Katzenbach again claimed Washington had done what it needed to do—a bombing halt had not been required.³²⁰ But was secrecy an adequate excuse to avoid limiting bombing, the Pole asked? Was changing weather conditions reason enough to threaten a prospect for peace? "The Poles could understand the bombings of December 3 and 4, but not the 13th and 14th. That was plenty of time to produce a North Vietnamese, the American replied (not mentioning that he had been among those "strongly" but vainly urging LBJ not to re-strike Hanoi after the first round of bombings). "As a friend," Michalowski added, the

³¹⁹ The account of the Michalowski-Katzenbach conversation that follows is based on Memorandum of Conversation, "Polish Views on Viet-Nam Peace Negotiations," 11 October 1967, folder "POL 27-14 MARIGOLD 1967," box 2739, CFPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II.

³²⁰ In arguing that a bombing halt had not been a precondition for the Warsaw contact, Katzenbach disingenuously ignored the repeated Polish warnings that such attacks could kill the chance for talks; at the same time, he concealed the fact that he, as well as other officials, had opposed the second round of strikes on Hanoi, but was overruled by Johnson.

initiative's collapse had made starting talks even more difficult due to the DRV's "deep feeling about the lack of US sincerity." Unimpressed, Katzenbach made clear that Washington retained doubts about the "sincerity" of Hanoi, and Warsaw as well, questioning whether North Vietnam had ever really been ready to meet the Americans in December 1966.

"What the Ambassador said nine times did not make it true," Katzenbach said, admonishing Michalowski that his further contacts with columnists could endanger both peace prospects and US-Polish relations. Michalowski defensively pointed out that the journalists were "well-informed" and often knew more than he did—perhaps alluding to Kraslow and Loory, who were then interviewing officials on various sides for their study, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*—and that had he had only confirmed "in general that opportunities for peace talks had been possible but that the bombing of December 13 and 14 had destroyed them. These were the facts."³²¹

"I don't call my opinions facts," Katzenbach said. "The fact was that the North Vietnamese did not appear in Warsaw."

Despite Michalowski's efforts to change the subject, the two had several more go-rounds, neither prevailing. The testy encounter finally ended, according to the State Department record (we lack the Polish version), with Katzenbach cautioning Michalowski not to "misunderstand what was happening" on the American political scene: Although there was mounting unhappiness about the war (including a march on the Pentagon later that month), and rumors of an antiwar challenge from within the Democratic Party to Johnson's renomination for a run for a second term as president in 1968, he vowed that criticism would not provoke an American withdrawal from Viet-Nam, but that the US remained

³²¹ Unfortunately, Michalowski in his report does not provide information on his own contacts with journalists. These presumably included Kraslow and/or Loory, who were then researching *The Secret Search for Peace*, which was published the following year. In his report, Michalowski praises their "excellent professional research" (as well as a less detailed but "more precise" account of Marigold by Washington-based British journalist Henry Brandon) but does not state whether he spoke to the authors, although it was "easy to presume" that Chester Cooper had been their primary source on Marigold. Michalowski report, pp. 113-115, 116. In a confidential record he made of the conversation, Cooper acknowledged at the suggestion of State's Robert McCloskey and Benjamin Read he granted an interview to Kraslow and Loory for "several hours" at his home" on 6 November 1967. However, he reported that they were already "well informed" on Marigold. According to the record, in response to the authors' feeling that bombing Hanoi during the Warsaw talks had reflected "either gross negligence or a great gap in communications and orchestration," Cooper loyally promulgated the party line. The Administration had taken "great care" in selecting bombing targets in Vietnam, he maintained, and coordinating them with State Department officials: "Never before in the history of war has such close attention [been] paid to day-to-day military operations by the highest levels of Government. I noted that at the Department of State the Secretary was kept abreast of intended bombing strikes through a channel of military/political advisers and, at the same time, was kept current on the negotiating situation through a channel of officials and staff officers concerned with negotiations; the Executive Secretariat was the point at which the most sensitive documents relating to bombing and negotiations came together." See Chester L. Cooper, memorandum for the record, "Conversation with David Kraslow and Stuart Loory of the *Los Angeles Times*," 8 November 1967, folder "Cooper, Chester 1965-1968 (3)," box 451, Harriman Papers, LC. After leaving office, however, Cooper gave a rather different impression. The raids in early December, he wrote, had been "just a piece of unfinished business" delayed by bad weather, and if Hanoi suspected Washington of sending signals, "Such a rationale would have done American policymakers too much credit. The relationship between major bombing raids and American political decisions was by no means as intimate as the North Vietnamese, or even more sophisticated observers, might have assumed...." Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, pp. 337-338. Whether Cooper actually spoke more candidly to Kraslow and Loory than his memorandum "for the record" reflected—which is certainly possible, especially as it was circulated to other State Department officials—or simply felt liberated to vent his feelings more frankly (and honestly) after leaving office, is unclear

“prepared to talk with Hanoi representatives—any place and with anybody.” (Looking back years later, Katzenbach concluded privately that Marigold was a “phony” and that Hanoi had used the bombing as a pretext to cancel the talks, but conceded that Washington had “badly handled” the matter by authorizing the second round of raids on Hanoi.)³²²

After the explosive session with Katzenbach, Michalowski appears to have avoided the subject of Vietnam when he finally saw Dean Rusk on November 18 for what was described as a *tour d’horizon*—at least, the topic does not appear in the memorandum of conversation found in State Department files, and the two concentrated on bilateral and personal issues aside from routine passing references to the war as an impediment in ties between Washington and Warsaw.³²³ (Perhaps chastened by the sharply negative reactions he inspired, which may have impaired his effectiveness as ambassador, by spring 1968 Michalowski had privately concluded, “somewhat ruefully, that he had made a real mistake in talking about Vietnam as much as he had when he first came to Washington,” and “now realizes his error.”³²⁴)

As for Rusk, despite the veneer of diplomatic cordiality that characterized his November 18 conversation with Michalowski, including professions of concern about Rapacki’s health, the following month Harriman discovered the lingering intensity of the Secretary of State’s feelings about Polish conduct during Marigold. When Harriman relayed a comment by the Michalowski about his understanding of U.S. conditions for a bombing halt (as reported by Soviet ambassador Dobrynin), mere mention of the Pole caused Rusk to bristle:

...Then the Secretary of State said, “But the Poles are crooks”. I said I didn’t think so at all. They had done more than any other country to try to bring about talks. Based on my statements to Rapacki in Warsaw [in December 1965], they had sent Michalowski all the way to Hanoi and had attempted to get Hanoi to agree to a commencement of talks in January of 1966. He said, “But, oh they were crooks in their talks of November/December 1966.” I asked how, and he mentioned that they had not told us that an emissary was on the way,³²⁵ nor had they told us that they had sent to Hanoi our qualifications about the ten points. I said, “Well, in negotiations you’re not a crook if you don’t tell everybody everything you know. You’re a crook only if you try to deceive somebody to take an action. There is no doubt that the Poles were acting as middlemen trying to get us together with Hanoi, and

³²² Transcript, Nicholas D. Katzenbach Oral History Interview II, 23 November 1968, by Paige Mulhollan, Internet Copy, LBJL, pp. 16-17; see also Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, p. 107. Similarly, State Department aide Benjamin Read remained skeptical that the Poles were genuinely able to produce the North Vietnamese, but also believed it would have been “wiser” to proscribe any bombing of the Hanoi area so long as Marigold “was a live possibility, just to preclude having it being used as an excuse for failure.” Transcript, Benjamin H. Read Oral History Interview I, 13 January 1969, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Internet Copy, LBJL, pp. 8-11.

³²³ Memorandum of Conversation, “Polish Ambassador’s Call on the Secretary for a *Tour d’horizon*,” 18 November 1967, confidential, folder “POL POL-US 1/1/67,” box 2435, CFPF, 1967-1969, RG 59, NA II. Of course, it is possible that a more sensitive portion of the conversation dealing with Vietnam was recorded in a separate document that was not located.

³²⁴ Nathaniel Davis, Memorandum for the record, “Subject: Luncheon Conversation with Polish Ambassador,” 26 April 1968, folder “POL POL-US XR POL 27 VIET,” CFPF, RG 59, NA II. Michalowski had other reasons for feeling downhearted by spring 1968. By then, US-Polish relations had deteriorated due to a hard-line, anti-Semitic purge by Gomulka, and the envoy was troubled by persistent attacks on himself and his wife by anticommunist Polish émigré groups.

³²⁵ An apparent allusion to Burchett’s statement to U.S. officials in Paris a few weeks earlier, noted above, that a DRV envoy had been “en route” to Warsaw at the time Washington resumed bombing Hanoi.

undoubtedly they held back something of the things we said from Hanoi, just as they did the other way around.” On this he made no comment. I said that the Poles were undoubtedly very much upset by the bombing of Hanoi on December 10 [13-14?]. He said he was abroad at the time. I said, as I recalled it, on December 2 [?] they called our attention to what they considered escalation of the bombing and indicated that if this continued, talks would not take place. Instead of that, on December 10 [13-14?] Hanoi itself was bombed. I told the Secretary that I thought the Poles had every right to be upset.³²⁶

In his memoirs (as told to his son) more than two decades later, Rusk still sounded bitter at what he believed had been a deliberate Polish effort to mislead him and the United States into falsely believing that Warsaw had acted with a firm basis from Hanoi. Confessing that he had “doubted the authenticity of Marigold” all along, Rusk called Lewandowski’s position “specious,” since he “simply didn’t reflect Hanoi’s views,” and, citing Radvanyi’s account,³²⁷ dismissed Lewandowski as “a Polish intelligence agent acting on his own”³²⁸ and the entire Marigold initiative as a “sham.” Brushing off criticism that the December 1966 bombings of Hanoi had ruined a promising approach, Rusk retorted that “there was nothing to collapse.”³²⁹ (Rusk’s consistently sharp dismissal of Marigold and harsh view of the Polish role starkly contradicts Michalowski’s account of a discussion between the two at a melancholy reception by the diplomatic corps at the State Department marking the Secretary of State’s departure from office in January 1969 in which the American is quoted as having expressed regret for failing to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by Marigold to begin negotiations to end the Vietnam conflict, and thanked the Poles for their efforts; perhaps he was just being diplomatic.³³⁰)

In his own account, published in 1971, Johnson was too polite to call the Poles “crooks,” but his acute skepticism shone through clearly just the same. Noting that Washington “never received through the Marigold exchanges anything that could be considered an authoritative statement direct from the North Vietnamese,” Johnson dismissed the channel as a “dry creek” that was exposed as fraudulent when the North Vietnamese failed to show up for the proposed 6 December 1966 meeting in Warsaw. Blaming the American bombing of Hanoi for refusing to appear could only have been an “excuse” or pretext, Johnson insisted, because the previous understanding had not implied a prior cessation of bombing. “The simple truth, I was convinced, was that the North Vietnamese

³²⁶ Harriman, “Further Notes on Conversation with USSR Ambassador Dobrynin,” 27 December 1967, personal/secret/absolutely for personal files only, declassified 7/98, box FCL-8, Harriman papers, LC.

³²⁷ See Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality*, pp. 192-201. Radvanyi (who based much of his account of Marigold on declassified U.S. sources) acknowledged, however, that he had had no contemporaneous knowledge of the Polish initiative in late 1966 despite his involvement with Hungary’s own activities and contacts with Hanoi and Washington over the possibility of negotiations (p. 200).

³²⁸ Radvanyi described Lewandowski as “not a career diplomat but a former high-ranking officer of the Polish Intelligence Service, a hard-liner, a man consistently hostile to America.” *Delusion and Reality*, pp. 194-195.

³²⁹ Rusk, *As I Saw It*, pp. 467-468. Rusk sounded similarly dismissive in a September 1969 oral history interview, concluding that charges that the bombings of Hanoi had torpedoed Marigold were “a pretext on the part of Hanoi, who did not want to talk ... I mean if there was any real interest on the part of Hanoi in peace and in these proposals, they would not have let these bombing incidents get in the way. This was simply a reflection of the lack of seriousness on their part.” See Transcript, Dean Rusk Oral History Interview II, 26 September 1969, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Internet Copy, LBJL, pp. 30-32.

³³⁰ Michalowski report, p. 128; the passage appears in English translation in Michalowski, “Polish Secret Peace Initiatives in Vietnam,” *CWIHP Bulletin* 6/7 (Winter 1995/1996), p. 259.

were not ready to talk to us. The Poles had not only put the cart before the horse, when the time of reckoning came, they had no horse.”³³¹

This skeptical appraisal of the entire affair was echoed by internal White House post-mortems commissioned by Johnson’s staff in 1967,³³² and by a brief Pentagon staff review of Marigold (apparently for inclusion in an internal history) written the following year. They essentially adopted the view that, rather than an earnest effort to stop the war, the Polish initiative had been a probing maneuver intended to get Washington to stop bombing North Vietnam and, when that didn’t work, to blame it for the initiative’s collapse. Ideology ran thicker than blood, the Pentagon study seemed to say: “What the United States had to keep in mind was, that regardless of the color of their skins, the Polish officials were Communists and therefore on the side of the NVN and would do whatever they could get away with to promote Hanoi’s interests.”³³³ The official classified internal history of the JCS and the Vietnam War, in reviewing the episode, concluded cautiously that the “question remains” (open) whether different US tactics might have led to direct contacts with North Vietnamese officials in December 1966; while acknowledging the arguments of Administration critics who blamed Marigold’s failure on the Hanoi bombings, the study underlines the “equally valid speculation ... that Hanoi only agreed to talk in the first place on the basis of a false and misleading presentation by Lewandowski” (implying US readiness to halt bombing without military conditions) and then, upon discovering that Washington still demanded reciprocal “compensating military deescalation” in exchange for stopping the bombing, jumped on the Hanoi raids as a pretext to call off the Warsaw meeting.³³⁴

A far more detailed study undertaken in 1968 as part of the “Pentagon Papers” inquest commissioned by McNamara concluded, in contrast to the views of Rusk, Katzenbach, and William Bundy, and above all Johnson himself, that that DRV probably “did in fact agree to a meeting in Warsaw.” It struck the analysts—evidently the main author of this section was Leslie H. Gelb, later a prominent correspondent for *The New York Times*, State Department official, and president of the Council on Foreign Relations—as

³³¹ Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 252. Though more vaguely, LBJ’s national security adviser, Walt W. Rostow, also sounded a predictably skeptical note in his memoirs. Without referring explicitly to Marigold, Rostow observed that in 1966-67 “the diplomatic networks were filled with suggestions emanating, or allegedly emanating, from Hanoi that a serious negotiating process was possible. In some cases, these hopes—expressed through third parties—were encouraged by Hanoi to create an environment of false hope and to try to erode the American negotiating position. In others, there was simply wishful thinking by third parties....” See Walt W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power, 1957-1972: Men, Events, and Decisions that Shaped America’s Role in the World—from Sputnik to Peking* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 515. In a 1969 oral history interview, Rostow speculated that the Poles had never obtained a firm commitment from Hanoi to talk to Washington on the basis of Lewandowski’s ten points; instead, he believed, Warsaw had first sought Lodge’s commitment before approaching Hanoi, which responded, “To hell with it.” The Poles, Rostow said, reminded him of the story of a Polish marriage broker who, after much exertion, is able to convince a peasant to allow his “lovely daughter” to marry a prince—and then sighs, “Ah, now for the Prince.” “I’ve told this to Poles and they just laugh when I tell them the story because they know it’s basically right,” Rostow said. “They never had Hanoi sewed up.” See Transcript, Walt W. Rostow Oral History Interview I, 21 March 1969, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Internet Copy, LBJL, pp. 49-50.

³³² See “Marigold—A Summary,” “Marigold—A Chronology,” and William Jorden to Rostow, “A Short History of Phases A & B,” all in folder “Vietnam MARIGOLD chronology,” NSF-CO, Vietnam, LBJL.

³³³ Memorandum or draft chapter, n.d. [apparently 1968], declass. by JCS 26 September 1989, “Operation MARIGOLD,” folder “Vietnam: MARIGOLD peace approach 1968,” Vietnam/Southeast Asia Collection, Box 1, National Security Archive, Washington, DC.

³³⁴ Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 July 1970, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Part III, p. 40-8, declassified 1994 under Freedom of Information Act, National Security Archive, Washington, DC.

“highly improbable” that the Poles would have “gone far out on a limb” in its dealings with Americans, Italians “and, apparently, the Russians,” without a commitment from Hanoi, given the adverse consequences that would ensue from “the revelation that the whole venture was built on air.”³³⁵ Not surprisingly, an influential public study of the war authored by Gelb with Richard K. Betts and drawing heavily on the Pentagon Papers’ study, described Marigold as “promising” though it also criticized both the Poles for having “blundered” and the Americans for a lack of coordination by bombing Hanoi during the key phase, “succeeding neither in signaling nor in smashing.”³³⁶

Conclusions

Like all documents and memoirs, the Michalowski Report (which combines elements of both) requires critical scrutiny. The Poles, like the Americans, were eager to cast their actions in the most favorable light and to avoid responsibility for missing a chance to end the war and start negotiations, and Michalowski personally was fingered at the time, in the aftermath of Marigold’s collapse, as one of the most active and skillful exponents of Warsaw’s version of events. Affable, urbane, and fluent in English, Michalowski represented a logical choice to be, aside from Rapacki himself, the chief Polish diplomat to present Warsaw’s version of events—at the United Nations in New York, and then in the United States, where, as has been seen, he seized this role with considerable gusto, and ultimately, for that matter, before history.

Even before he arrived in Washington, U.S. officials, while respecting Michalowski’s skill as a diplomat and advocate, had cast doubt on his credibility and integrity. “Well-liked by people generally,” a secret CIA profile dated 4 January 1967 observed, “Michalowski is a man of considerable charm and self-confidence,” displaying capability in his work (if not a “particularly brilliant intellect”) and an “approachable and open-minded” attitude toward the West. At the same time, the profile described Michalowski as “a cool cynic” who “apparently does not have strong moral qualities” and was “best described as a political opportunist, who has skillfully adjusted to the changes of political climate in Poland during the past 20 years” (but who also lacked the confidence of the present regime).³³⁷

Two former Central European diplomats who dealt with the Vietnam War and later emigrated or defected to the West also painted less than flattering portraits of Michalowski. “An adroit opportunist,” was former Foreign Ministry colleague Mieczyslaw Maneli’s label; writing shortly after he left Poland after falling victim to hard-line purges in 1968, the Warsaw University law professor—who had served as Poland’s delegate to the ICC in the early 1960s—depicted Michalowski as “a realist who never fell under the illusions” that Poland could operate independently of Kremlin and who understood that Moscow (and Beijing), rather than desiring “peace and a sovereign, independent Vietnam,” instead

³³⁵ The Pentagon Papers study assessed Warsaw’s principal motives as: 1) “Ending the violence in Vietnam”; 2) “Doing so on terms relatively favorable to the Communist side”; 3) “Building a case” to use against the US as pressure during the contact and to embarrass Washington should the effort fail and be exposed, as actually happened; and 4) Prestige. See Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 217, 220.

³³⁶ Leslie H. Gelb with Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1979), pp. 151-153.

³³⁷ Michalowski profile, Biographic Register, Office of Central Reference, CIA, 4 January 1967, secret/no foreign dissem, in folder “POL 17-1 POL-US 1/1/67,” in box 2436, CFPF, 1967-1969, DoS, RG 59, NA.

“wanted the Americans to remain embroiled in Southeast Asia indefinitely so that they could make political capital at their expense.”³³⁸

Another, even more jaundiced warning about Michalowski, later came from the Hungarian ex-diplomat Radvanyi, who wrote in 1978 that the Pole “was considered somewhat two-faced, maintaining friendly relations with American and Western diplomats while in reality remaining a consistent hardliner.”³³⁹

Nevertheless, despite these warnings and the obvious need to seek further evidence, most importantly from Vietnamese sources, the Michalowski Report cannot be easily dismissed. In combination with the contemporaneous Polish documents it cites, the report adds significant fresh information on communist-side consultations to Marigold’s chronology and makes a strong case that the initiative comprised more than intrigue and confusion, as Johnson contended, or a “fishing expedition” or “sham,” as Rusk (citing Radvanyi) alleged, or “phony,” as Katzenbach labeled it, or “fraud,” as William Bundy assumed. Instead, it constituted a potentially important juncture in the history of the Vietnam War and its diplomacy, involving high-level, high-stakes communist side exchanges that seem to have portended the crucial shift in Hanoi from a purely military approach (favored by the Chinese) to at least a willingness to explore a political-diplomatic resolution to the conflict, almost certainly in combination with some form of continued military struggle. The communist evidence, therefore, tends to corroborate the interpretation of Kraslow and Loory’s *Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, Thies’ *When Governments Collide*, and the Pentagon Papers’ analysts, that bombing and bungling helped ruin the chances for a direct US-DRV contact, and the opening of some sort of ongoing direct talks. (Further evidence of the fact that some shift occurred is the fact that soon after Marigold’s collapse, in January-February 1967, the Soviets for the first time, at what now appears to be the VWP Politburo’s prompting as conveyed by Lu Duc Tho, showed a willingness to take a more active and visible role to try to get peace talks started between Washington and Hanoi—the so-called SUNFLOWER episode—with similarly frustrating results.)

Consistent with his and Rapacki’s arguments at the time, Michalowski’s report strongly endorses the view that Poland’s chief motivation was, as Lewandowski told Lodge on 14 November 1966, “to take any role which would bring peace nearer,” but also combined the dual functions of serving as an intermediary and also an advocate and explainer—or, in Lewandowski’s terms (paraphrasing a question by Lodge), “to work to facilitate a better understanding and pave the way to contact or, on the other hand, to be an intermediary.”³⁴⁰ Rather than the “crooks” Rusk felt them to be, Michalowski argues that despite their solidarity and friendship with the North Vietnamese, the Poles’ role, as Rapacki told Gronouski on December 13, was “neither that of postman or advocate; what we want is peace.”³⁴¹ Moreover, in addition to exculpating the Poles from blame for Marigold’s collapse, Michalowski also cites declassified U.S. documents to strong effect to argue that, even after explicit Polish warnings and as U.S. ambassador Gronouski courageously tried to restrain (and then protest) escalatory actions that could ruin the chances for direct talks,³⁴² the Johnson Administration deliberately continued the bombing of Hanoi (on December 13-14) in an irresponsible and misguided effort to apply pressure on the North Vietnamese

³³⁸ Maneli, *War of the Vanquished*, pp. 147-148.

³³⁹ Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality*, p. 120.

³⁴⁰ Quoted in Lodge cable, Saigon Embtel 10856 (to SecState), 14 November 1966, in Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 267, and also in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:839-841.

³⁴¹ Warsaw Embtel 1458, 13 December 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, 4:933-935, quotation on p. 934.

³⁴² Michalowski report, p. 108.

authorities.³⁴³ With some outrage, Michalowski correctly notes that on December 10, Johnson and his advisors made a deliberate decision not to alter planned bombing missions that would include Hanoi and which they recognized would be liable to Polish (and North Vietnamese) charges of representing “further escalation.”³⁴⁴ Corroborating Gronouski’s views in his argument with Porter, Michalowski also provides compelling evidence of the sincerity of Polish efforts to get talks started, even after December 24, when the U.S. suspended bombing within a ten-mile radius of the center of Hanoi—but to no avail.³⁴⁵

In some cases, however, Michalowski presents information that (perhaps unwittingly) raises questions about Polish conduct. For instance, there is his revelation that on December 7 Pham Van Dong, despite complaining bitterly about the U.S. air raids on Hanoi of December 2 and 4, told Warsaw’s ambassador in Hanoi that, “If the USA ambassador [in Warsaw] knocks on the door of our embassy he will be received.”³⁴⁶ Instead of immediately alerting the Americans to the North Vietnamese readiness to receive a representative, the Poles opted to “exert influence”³⁴⁷—i.e., pressure—on Washington to halt its bombing and to back off from the so-called “interpretation clause.” The tactic backfired, however, as Washington retrenched and demonstratively refused to alter its bombing plans. As Thies points out, “Polish warnings on the bombing resulted in a stiffening of the Administration’s resolve *not* to cancel any of the strikes authorized on November 10 as part of ROLLING THUNDER 52.”³⁴⁸ Only *after* the December 13-14 raids prompted a wave of second thoughts, internal protests, and worry about what the record would look like (in addition to eliminating any possibility that the DRV leaders would approve the initially proposed contact), did U.S. officials take the decision of December 21-24 to suspend bombing within a ten-mile radius of Hanoi. But by then it was too late. In that respect, then, while Washington must be faulted for miscalculating the impact of its bombing on Hanoi at this delicate moment, there may also be justice in D’Orlandi’s speculation to Rusk on December 8 that Rapacki “had ‘tried to be clever’” by getting Washington to withdraw all reservations before the initial contact. Similarly, the Polish evidence corroborates Washington’s impression that the Poles made the first decision to violate their mutual understanding and leak Marigold to an uninformed third-party, the Pope—although it provides a more comprehensible context for Rapacki’s anger, and is ambiguous on whether the foreign minister flatly lied to Gronouski when confronted on the issue afterward. In retrospect, the premature Polish decision to inform the Pope both needlessly alienated the Italians and furnished U.S. officials with an additional reason to doubt their motives as a mediator.

³⁴³ Michalowski report, p. 106.

³⁴⁴ Michalowski report, pp. 106, 109, which correctly note that the documents establish that at least the second round of attacks resulted from a conscious decision not to withdraw authorization for planned attacks despite the sensitive state of Marigold, rather than confusion, miscommunication, or bungling.

³⁴⁵ Michalowski report, 85-88, 90-92. Evidence of Polish efforts to promote Washington’s proposals as late as December 24-29 strongly contradicts some U.S. accounts implying or stating that Warsaw ceased its involvement in Marigold as of mid-December following the bombings of Hanoi on December 13-14, e.g. Goodman, *The Lost Peace*, p. 43, or even as early as December 5, as stated in Lodge’s account (*As It Was*, pp. 179-181) which Michalowski angrily disputes (Michalowski report, pp. 94-101).

³⁴⁶ Michalowski report, p. 71.

³⁴⁷ Michalowski report, p. 72. During the December 7-13 period (until the second round of bombing raids on Hanoi), this pressure took at least two forms, direct statements to the Americans, and urging the Italian Foreign Minister, Fanfani, to press the Americans to cease the bombing and to retract the interpretation clause.

³⁴⁸ Thies, *When Governments Collide*, p. 150.

As for Hanoi, any judgements must be extremely tentative given the paucity of reliable contemporaneous documentary evidence. *If* Nguyen Phuong's account is accurate, this blatant contradiction between the Vietnamese and American (and Polish) understandings of the situation on December 6 is difficult to explain, and raises troubling questions. Did the Vietnamese genuinely expect the Americans to appear on their doorstep at the DRV embassy in Warsaw on that date (or in the week that followed)? Did the Poles mislead the Americans by not encouraging them to do so, or by failing to indicate that the North Vietnamese were ready to receive them (if not on Dec. 6 then after receiving the report of Pham Van Dong's conversation the next day)? Did the Americans, as many have suspected over the years, imply to the Poles and/or North Vietnamese with the December 2 and 4 bombings of Hanoi and/or the "interpretation clause" that they were trying to pressure the DRV into talks? Did the North Vietnamese confuse the Poles by failing to inform them of the presence in Warsaw of an authoritative DRV emissary and their ambassador's readiness to receive his American counterpart? Did Warsaw err by not informing Hanoi of the correct arrangements for the first contact, that the Poles would bring the two ambassadors at the foreign ministry rather than have the US ambassador visit the DRV embassy? (Or, as Dobrynin later implied to Rusk, did Gronouski and Rapacki somehow confuse signals on December 5?) Conversely, were Phuong and/or Quang somehow in error as to their own government's willingness to receive a U.S. diplomat on the 6th, if a negative decision had been made over their heads and communicated directly to the Poles? Or did no one consciously mislead anyone, yet miscommunications and/or misunderstandings block a contact from occurring despite a willingness on all three (Polish, American, North Vietnamese) sides—or at least two—to see it happen? Even if ready to receive U.S. confirmation of the ten-point agreement, was Hanoi really ready to consider a political solution seriously—or, as much of the Lao Dong's rhetoric implied, was diplomacy merely a secondary "front" to the military struggle, which would be pursued in any case?

To the extent that DRV leaders (or at least some of them) genuinely desired to probe U.S. willingness to negotiate on the basis of Lewandowski's "ten points," they needed to make every possible effort to assure that such an exploration did not fail simply due to misunderstandings or miscommunications. Given Hanoi's sensitivities had it become known (either publicly or to Beijing and, possibly, to the NLF) that direct US-DRV contacts were taking place prior to a complete bombing halt, as it had been publicly demanding, and its fear, as a smaller country engaged in an intense military clash with a superpower, of communicating any indication of weakness, it seems understandable that the North Vietnamese remained exceedingly wary of taking any step that might have exposed their eagerness or even willingness to talk with the Americans. Nevertheless, if Nguyen Dinh Phuong's account is accurate, it indeed seems "a pity" that, on December 6th in particular, he or Do Phat Quang did not telephone the U.S. Embassy, or at least the Polish Foreign Ministry, to discover what had gone awry.

While not conclusively putting the onus on Washington for Marigold's failure, the new evidence certainly provides fresh ammunition to those who would argue that senior U.S. officials, especially LBJ, first mishandled and misjudged, and later distorted, the whole affair—especially the (mis)calculation that bombing (or continuing to bomb) Hanoi would be more likely to bring the North Vietnamese to the table, or that the Polish promises of delivering Hanoi were simply not sufficiently credible to justify altering pre-set military plans (until the opportunity may already have been squandered). In sum, the evidence considered here, especially the Michalowski Report, the contemporaneous Polish cables, and Nguyen Dinh Phuong's testimony, suggests that:

- 1) contrary to Washington’s suspicions, the Poles had been authorized by Hanoi to arrange the Warsaw meeting;
- 2) Hanoi was serious enough about following through with a contact with the Americans to make a strong personal commitment at the leadership level, and to send an authorized emissary carrying instructions half-way around the world;
- 3) therefore, a U.S.-DRV meeting could and should have taken place on December 6, 1966;
- 4) the reason, responsibility, and blame for its failure to take place remains unclear, but appears to be shared by all three parties—the Americans for bombing Hanoi (both for “[b]ureaucratic blunders and gross management,” as George Herring put it, for allowing the first round of bombings of Hanoi to occur uncoordinated with Marigold³⁴⁹, and then for consciously approving the second round despite clear Polish warnings against doing so); the Poles for seeking the best possible arrangement for talks rather than pushing ahead for an initial contact to break the ice, and the North Vietnamese for failing to inform Warsaw of Nguyen Dinh Phuong’s mission, or to consult closely enough with the Poles to preclude the possibility of a misunderstanding or miscommunication; and
- 5) while clearly sympathetic in general to Hanoi’s cause, the Poles repeatedly pressed DRV leaders to enter peace talks, both in January 1966 and during the Marigold affair up to the final rejection of the U.S. 10-mile proposal near the end of December;
- 6) whether Hanoi would have approved the initiation of the Warsaw contacts with the Americans had the second round of bombings not occurred remains unknown, and—if the decision was still “touch and go,” as Michalowski contended—unknowable;
- 7) even if the US-DRV contact in Warsaw had occurred, either on December 6 “or shortly thereafter,” and led to continuing discussions of one sort or another, it appears doubtful that a rapid conclusion to the war could have been achieved, given the mindsets on both sides;
- 8) nevertheless, breaking the taboo on direct contacts (especially if they led to substantive discussions, even if futile), and avoiding the mutually-intensified mistrust between Washington and Hanoi that was the actual result, would likely have been a positive development, creating a precedent for further such discussions.

* * * * *

Quite aside from the inevitable limitations of any historical analysis (or analyst), these conclusions must be regarded as tentative—a more rigorous analysis must await the release of fuller documentation and sources on all three sides (four, counting the Italians), particularly the Vietnamese, as well as additional studies by scholars conversant with the relevant languages. Nevertheless, the new Polish and Vietnamese evidence, incomplete as it is, raises new questions and new mysteries, and provides new leads for scholars to pursue in archives on all sides of the conflict. Although Lyndon Johnson concluded in his memoirs

³⁴⁹ Herring puts particular blame on the fact that such tight secrecy was enforced on Marigold that insufficient attention was given to coordinating diplomatic and military steps. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, pp. 105-106.

that the “simple truth” was “was that the North Vietnamese were not ready to talk to us,”³⁵⁰ the new information now emerging offers further evidence that whatever the truth of Marigold was, it was not simple.

³⁵⁰ Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 252.

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