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17 November 1971

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

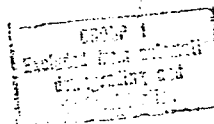
SUBJECT: Conversation with Mr. John D. Ehrlichman, Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs

1. On 16 November 1971 I lunched with John Ehrlichman at the White House. The bulk of our conversation was devoted to a review of our experience in Vietnam, with special focus on the fall of Diem and the problems of organizing the United States Government to fight the revolutionary war with which it was faced in Vietnam.

2. The main point of the lunch came in our discussion of Mr. Ehrlichman's charge from the President to examine the problem of declassifying Government documents. He reiterated the President's resolve to do nothing which would cause problems to CIA and its internal documents. At the same time, he pointed out the real problem of how to handle major events, such as the Dominican Republic, the Lebanon landings, the Bay of Pigs, and the fall of Diem, from the point of view of history and the academic insistence upon the declassification of raw information. I suggested two possible vehicles for approaching the problem and promised to submit some follow-up material on them:

a. Development of an internal classified history of the event during its general time frame, with an effort to be as objective as possible. This history would be accompanied by the key documents and could be declassified as a whole in order to place the event in full perspective and not take the chance of individual documents leaking and possibly being considered out of context.

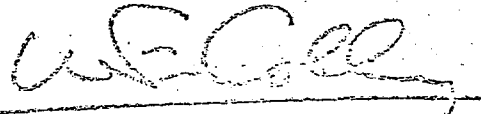
b. There are different levels of sensitivity of intelligence documents. For instance, finished intelligence is

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frequently not terribly sensitive after some time has passed. The same can be said of a number of intelligence reports which are disseminated to customers but which conceal the sources, even during this dissemination. In the last extreme, however, there are internal intelligence documents which almost literally cannot be declassified, since they involve cryptonyms and are in enormous volume, the declassification of which would probably be prohibitive from a point of view of manhours.

3. We left it that I shall send him a few thoughts along the above lines which he might use during his further consideration of the basic problem.



W. E. Colby



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