

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~/SENSITIVE/XGDS

DECLASSIFIED
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MR # 10-119-#23
State Dept. Lev 7/29/10
By *del* NARA Date *9/1/10*

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
and Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs.

DATE AND TIME: May 8, 1975;
12:00 - 1:00 p. m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

[The press was admitted.]

President: Did you got up to Harvard during the difficult days?

Lee: Yes, in '67 and '68.

President: Did they give you a hard time?

Lee: Not any worse than they would an American holding similar views.
Moynihan is giving me a dinner. I don't know why.

President: We are putting him in at the UN.

[The press was dismissed.]

Lee: Yes, I have read of the appointment.

I saw your TV press conference. Very forceful thoughts. No notes.
Quiet. Like the Saturday Review said.

Kissinger: He has made a study of you, Mr. President. He doesn't come
unprepared.

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President: I know of your vast knowledge of Asia and that you have just come from the Commonwealth Conference.

Lee: You must have gotten a hilarious account.

Kissinger: You baffled them with your Chinese proverbs.

Lee: Four thousand years of history leave a storehouse on which one can draw when it is apt.

[Secretary Kissinger spoke of how the Chinese think -- Tangtze and the Chinese Wall.]

Lee: There is one proverb which says when a country becomes confused, large matters become small ones and vice versa. We must get things into proportion.

President: I would appreciate your unvarnished views of the situation and what to do. Don't worry about being frank.

Lee: My immediate reaction is one of astonishment and alarm at the rapidity with which the situation fell apart. The present nervousness is reflected in the press like the planted question to Schlesinger which was then relayed to Thailand. Then the Thai blew his lid and said the U.S. has no morals. The press is having a carnival. We must restrain ourselves. The Thai didn't go through an election campaign -- they are intoxicated now and feel they must say these things. The two-party coalition won't last, I don't think. The Indonesians are digging their toes in and Suharto, through Lon Nol, committed himself to Cambodia and said boo to us and to the Third World. That is good. Marcos reacts to the mass media. You are doing a reassessment so he has to do one.

Kissinger: Do you think the bombing halt in Cambodia in 1973 made him cancel his trip?

Lee: No doubt about it.

Kissinger: If we had kept the right to bomb and there had been no Watergate, could we have kept North Vietnam from attacking?

Lee: No doubt, but what is the good of saying it?



There was no inevitability it would fail. If these things hadn't happened and the emphasis could have been on reconstruction, there is no doubt.

But if I said it, the press would just say I am inflexible. I told Thieu he couldn't rely on the one-for-one replacement and had to build a self-generating society.

President: Could they have become a viable society?

Lee: If he had turned from leopard spots to competing economies, he could have won. But not just shooting it out.

Kissinger: If we had given one-for-one, could he have held?

Lee: Yes, with the threat of bombing. But he would have faced it in '77. But we shouldn't waste time on this.

Hanoi may see this as a moment of destiny. They may want a master-servant situation with Cambodia and Laos and put pressure on the Thais. Laos will last through Souvanna. Cambodia, I am worried. It is like the Warsaw uprising.

Kissinger: Won't they start the same thing eventually in South Vietnam?

Lee: Sure. Those who won't bend must be destroyed. They will put up this sham government. Here is Whitlam wanting to send aid and Ghandi writing to send a telegram of congratulations. There is a Chinese proverb: same bed, different dreams -- someone must be wrong.

President: What should we do? Substantively we intend to do whatever is necessary.

Lee: I will speak frankly. I spent time yesterday with a number of Congressmen. It would not be a realistic forum to....I could put forward proposals which would stiffen Southeast Asia, Japan.....

Kissinger: There is a problem in Japan too.

Lee: Sure. If I hear these things, the Japs do too.



President: From the Congress?

Lee: Mostly the House. Strong, established members. Not so much in the Senate.

President: That is a change.

Lee: Maybe because I didn't see Mansfield. I probed to find out what could be your policy and intentions. Given what could be a veto-proof Congress, the maximum achievable is not to lose any more big pieces. Just calm it down. The Thai are not in immediate danger. Laos is a goner. Cambodia is a struggle between China and Hanoi. The Khmer Rouge never would have succeeded had Sihanouk not swung Cambodia to them.

Kissinger: We told him for two years.

Lee: Yes. He should have gone to Phnom Penh, or at least stayed in Paris.

President: We can't do anything?

Lee: No. China will do its best to see that Hanoi doesn't control.

President: The Soviet Union?

Lee: They will support Hanoi. This is an Asian Yugoslavia. It's Albania in reverse. The Soviet Union is backing the Titoists who are independently-minded people.

Kissinger: And arrogant. Their monomania is unbelievable.

Lee: Even more so after this route of a million-man well-equipped army,

We need to calm the Thais down.

Kissinger: How should we handle our withdrawal, fast or slow?

Lee: Khukrit is surprised he is Prime Minister. He is writing his own press articles. He is acceptable to the military. They don't knock him down because they think the King is not ready and it would be messy.



The Chief of Staff is openly contemptuous. I told Khukrit that you have a Congress which can block the President. But then there will be a new Congress and by then remorse and regret will have set in. I said "Don't lose your cool. Say what you have to say to the students, but keep your options open until November 1976. If it's a McGovern, throw the Americans out. But I don't think it will happen that way. So don't throw out the baby with the bath." The Chief of Staff is saying just the opposite -- he wants Utapao open, but he is too simple also. He thinks if he keeps it open he will get more aid for the insurgency. The military is contemptuous of Khukrit. The Government won't last a year, so you can discount sixty percent of what he says.

Kissinger: Won't the Army take over?

Lee: After the King wants it and the civil population has had a belly full.

Chatchai has had experience as Thanom's deputy. He says they have to have the Americans out because they promised. But once they're out, you can't get them back. I played this way with the British. I kept delaying things. It is foolish preemptive statements which are trouble. Whitlam has a penchant for it -- it looks good for the moment.

Say nothing at the moment. I have a not very optimistic view. A situation is created where the other side has such a psychological advantage, and the credibility of U. S. aid being sustained over a long period is not good. Thailand will fight 3 to 5 years with your help, but won't want to go through the Phnom Penh and Saigon mangling machine. They will come to terms with China. I spoke to Chatchai and to the middle levels in the Foreign Ministry. I have a real input to their thinking through our Ambassador.

Kissinger: Do you think the Chinese will work with Thailand to block Hanoi? Should we cooperate?

Lee: No. Because it would look like an American plot. You should delay it by stepping in and doling out aid until they say the insurgency can't be solved that way, but only by reforms. This government won't last and will be replaced by a government sympathetic with the Army. The number three Army man is being groomed for the top job.

I would be dishonest if I said Thailand would be a happy peaceful place. The thinking of the middle level in Thailand -- they have seen Cambodia



and Vietnam. They will try to stop it in the northeast, but if they can't they will come to terms with China. China is their insurance agent. The North Vietnamese Army and Chinese Army won't come down -- they will pass arms and pamphlets and encourage subversion.

Kissinger: Can Indonesia keep stable?

Lee: With the oil, yes. There is no danger from the outside.

Kissinger: Will he take out an insurance policy?

Lee: He has no need. He can't be overthrown from outside. You can work with Suharto but don't back foolish policies. Don't support building a big military machine because that could lead to his overthrow from within. The people will get disgusted.

Indonesia wants to be a great military power. They can't be, but they can be a stable force.

Kissinger: Can Malaysia hold out?

Lee: If they don't fall for Indonesia saying "You need help, we will come in."

Kissinger: Mr. President, he told me two years ago what would happen if Watergate continued.

Lee: Yes. But it has happened and now I move on. I am angry, frustrated, but we must move on from where we are.

It is not lost, provided the economic side in Southeast Asia is kept going. Protectionism here and isolationism going abroad.

Kissinger: What are you saying about Malaysia?

Lee: Malaysia has to get more queasy before you can be effective. Razak has made a move to Habib. We want joint training in counterinsurgency, the way you learned it in Vietnam. But he can't do it alone, only with me. But I can't do it like the British in Malaysia. I have to lance the cancer.

Kissinger: Korea?



Lee: They won't move if they think you will bomb. The Senate knows this; they want Japan so they know they can't scare Japan by losing Korea. But it takes more than the White House -- Congress has to say the U.S. will move if there is open aggression.

Kissinger: What move will China make?

Lee: They will be wistful they didn't take advantage of the confrontation Congress, the Middle East, Cyprus.

Kissinger: How could they take advantage?

Lee: Not very much. They don't want to destroy Taiwan. They know they will get it eventually. One price the Thais must pay is to move from Taiwan to the PRC.

If I may emphasize one point. There is a tendency in the U.S. Congress not to want to export jobs. But we have to have the jobs if we are to stop Communism. We have done that, moving from simple to more complex, skilled labor. If you stop this process, it will do more harm than you can every repair with aid. Don't cut off imports from Southeast Asia. If you start closing down plants in Indonesia, Malaysia, Phillipines, you do great damage.

President: Thank you for coming, Mr. Prime Minister.



Doug wants to present something to her VE Day -
P / PM Lee / K ✓ (1)

Person 8 May 75

P Did you go by to Harvard during a dip day

L Yes, in '67 & '68

P Did they give you hard time

L Not any worse than they would an Asian holding similar
views. Washington is giving me a dinner. Don't
know why.
I've put it in at my
house out

L Yes, I have read of rig of apartment.

I know you a TV pass emp. Very far apart that.

As notes. Quiet. So like Saturday evening said.

K He has made a study of you. I don't come surprised

P I know of your vast knowledge of Asia & that you
have just come from Communist Conf.

L You must have gotten a hilarious account.

K He you huffed them w/ your Chinese parents.

L 4000 yrs of history have a ~~str~~ stone house on
which one can show where ^{it is} kept

K (How Chinese think - Yangtze & Chinese Wall)

L ~~W~~ There is one which says when a country becomes
compromised - large matters become small ones
vice versa. We must get things into perspective

P I would appreciate your unvarnished views of
a set & what to do. Don't worry about being
frank.

L I'm sure reaction is one of astonishment & alarm
at rigidity w/ which set fell apart. The present
unconscious reflected in a press like a planted poison
to Schick which then relayed to Thair. Then the
Thair bear his lie & said US has no morals. The



Hanoi may all this ~~is~~ moment of distress.
They may want master - servant set of
Cambodia + Laos + possession of their. Laos
will last then Siam. Cambodia is
worried. It like Warsaw region.

K About they start hitting event in SON

L Since those who want land must be destroyed.
They will put up this sham part. ^{start} Here is
Whittam writing to send aid + G. G. G. G. writing
to send telegrams of expropriate. Chinese power;
some led, dig ditches - some must be away.

P What should we do? Substantially as intended
& decisions is necessary

L I will speak publicly. I spent time yesterday
w/a # of Congressmen. It would not be realistic
further to... I could not forward proposals which
would trigger SEA, Japan...

K Pick in Japan to

L Sure. If I hear these things, a Japan do to

P From - Eng!

L Mostly - House. Strong, estate members, but
some in Senate.

P That change.

L Maybe because I didn't see Mansfield. I
tried to find out what could be your policy
& interests. Given what could be a satisfactory
comp. a way achievable is not to be any
more big pieces. Just calm it down.
That not in imminent danger. Laos is a

gover. Cambodia is a struggle bet PCC + Hunri
~~Sihanouk~~ KR never would have succeeded had
 Sihanouk not saving Cambodia to them.

! We told him for 2 yrs.

! Yes. He should have gone to PP, or at least
 stayed in Paris.

P We want to do anything?

h no. but have to PRC would do its best to see
 Hunri doesn't control.

P SU?

h They will support Hunri. This is Asia Yugo.
 It's Albania in reverse. SU is backing Titoists
 who are implicitly minded people.

K and arrogant. Their nationalism is unbelievable

! Even more so after this route of a million
 men will be stopped any.

We need to calm Tito's down

K How should we handle our of demand, Fast
 or slow

h K hukit is surprised he is P.M. He writing
 his own press articles. He is acceptable to
 military. They don't back him down cause
 they think him not ready & it would be messy.
 C/S is openly contemptuous. So I told K hukit
 you have a Cuy which can block a Cuy. Then
 a new Cuy & by then reverse & request will
 have set in. Don't see your end. Say what
 you have to say to a students, but keep your
 options open till Nov 76. If a the town



throw a bomb out, but I don't think it will happen that way, as don't throw out a bomb w/ a bomb. I/S saying just - opposite - want utopianism, but he's single also. He thinks if he helps you he will get more aid for a conspiracy. The military is entanglement of K. The Govt went last a year - discount 60% what he says.

K want a army take over

h After a King wants it a civil population has had a belly full.

Chatterin has had experience as Pharoan agent. He says we have to have bomb out a case for they promised. I see out you can't get them back.

I played this way w/ Brits. I kept challenging things it is foolish perceptual statements which are truth. Whether has penchant for it - it looks good for a moment.

Say nothing at a moment. I have a not very optimistic view, set created where other side has such a big advantage & cred of US and being sustained over long period is not good. They will fight 3-5 yrs w/ you help, but won't want to get them a PP & Saigon mangling machine. They will come to terms w/ China. I speak to Chatterin & middle land in FM. I have a real insight to their thinking through our Amb.

K You think Chinese will work w/ them to

* * * + ~~Cobby documents~~ & ~~documents~~ -
- ~~Shapiro~~

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beach Hawaii - Should we say?

L No. Because it would look like a US plot.
You should delay it by staying in and
obligating aid till they say something
can't be solved that way but only by reforms.
This govt won't last & will be replaced by govt
symp w/ Army. The #3 Army man is being
prepared for top job.

I would be surprised if I heard there would be
happy peaceful pling. The thinking of a middle level
in Thair - they have seen Cambodia + VN. They
will try to stay it in NE, but if they can't they
will come to terms w/ PRC - their main
agent. The NVA + PRC army won't come down - they
will pass arms + pamphlets + encourage subversion.

K Can Indonesia keep stable.

L W/out, yes. There is no danger from outside

K would he take out an ~~see~~ ~~in~~ ~~man~~ ~~policy~~?

L No need. He can't be overthrown from outside.

You can work w/ Suharto but don't back
for his ~~see~~ policies. Don't support building
a big nat. machine cause that would lead
to overthrow from w/in. The people will
get disgusted. (~~Does~~ ~~mention~~ ~~a~~ ~~Indonesian~~
in miniature project)

Indonesia wants to be a great military power. They
can't be, but they can be a stable force

K ~~Can~~ Malaysia hold out?

L If they don't fall for Indonesia saying you need



help, ~~you~~ we will come in.

K He told me 2 yrs ago what would happen if watergate continued

L Yes, but it has happened & now I move on. I am angry, frustrated, but must move on from where we are,

It is not lost provided a lever still in S E A is kept going. Protectionism here & multilateral

R ~~going ahead.~~ You say Malaysia has to get more greedy before ^{you} can really help be effective. Ruzok has moved to H. We want joint training in counterinsurgency - the way you learned it in VN. But he can't do it alone, only w/ me. But I can't do it like Brit in Malaya. I have to lance a cancer.

K Korea?

L They won't move if they think you will bomb. Secstate knows this. They want Japan so they know they can't scare Japan by losing Korea. But it takes more than WH - they have to say US will move if there is open aggression.

K What will PRC move

L They will be mad if they didn't take advantage of compensation Cyprus, ME, Cyprus.

K How take advantage

L Not very much, they don't want to destroy Taiwan. They know they will get it eventually. One price Taiwan must pay is to move from Taiwan to PRC



If I may emphasize one point. There is tendency
 in US + Cany. not to export jobs. But we
 have to have jobs if we are to stop unemployment
 as a world and that, meaning from simple
 to more complex, skilled labor. If you stop
 this process, it will do more harm than you
 can ever repair or aid. Don't cut off all from
 EEA. If not just our part, we have
 If you start closing down plants in Indonesia,
 Malaysia, Phil, you