

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET/NODIS - XGDS

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4.

MR 91-16, #8 NSC Hr. 8/20/92

By KBH NARA, Date 9/25/92

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Ambassador Graham Martin, Ambassador to Republic of Vietnam
President Ford
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:

Friday, September 13, 1974
11:30 a.m.

PLACE:

The Oval Office
The White House

President: We had a good meeting yesterday. We sold that group, but it's hard to say how the numbers will come out.

Martin: The propaganda campaign is a real problem.

President: I agree.

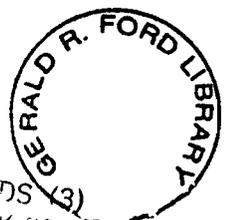
Martin: The bureaucracy has the feeling we shouldn't dirty our hands in Vietnam. I have tried to take it on. I met with the Post editorial board. I discussed the issues, not the distortions -- how we came out in Vietnam.

Kissinger: It is inconceivable we can spend \$1 billion in Israel and not the same in Vietnam where so many Americans have died.

Martin: It is remarkable what has happened in the last year, in the degree of acceptance of President Thieu. If we can get all \$700 million without any administrative restrictions, we can hold through the winter. We will need at least \$300 million before the end of the year.

SECRET/NODIS

~~TOP SECRET - XGDS (3)~~
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER



Kissinger: The President made that point and Stennis seemed to support it.

President: Yes, he asked for a sort of interdepartmental group to manage the MAP. We sort of have an obligation to do it.

Martin: I have a suggestion -- what about General Adderholt?

Kissinger: Stennis had in mind a Presidential emissary to go out and inspect.

President: Yes, if we send someone we will get Stennis behind us.

Martin: There is no way we can lose Vietnam except throw it away here.

Kissinger: Tell the President about the accounting system.

Martin: They have taken the "sense" of the Congress as in the new bill. If the Pentagon could be instructed to charge only what is legally required, we would be much better off.

Kissinger: I agree with Graham. Vietnam is enormously important in the international perception of the United States.

Martin: If I thought it was hopeless, I would tell you. We can make it. But if North Vietnam sees the loosening of support it will change their perceptions. There will be no peace for a long time, but someday they can accommodate to each other.

President: The trouble is that your story doesn't get broad enough exposure, and the opposition is at it every day.

Martin: Doug Pike has done a study on the "anatomy of deception." You should use him. We aren't giving our friends ammunition to defend against Abzug and the others.

President: Please tell President Thieu of my admiration.

Martin: Can I tell Thieu you will fight for what is needed?

President: You surely can. That was my pitch yesterday and I was amazed at the reaction.



Martin: The Goldwater vote was instructive. The Senate did recognize an obligation.

President: The change in the Post's policy shows what can be done. [See Post editorial attached].

Martin: The Globe and Post Dispatch are moving.

I need \$1 billion and \$600 million. Then we can get more out of the Japanese and the international financial institutions. They are on the verge of a take-off.

On the Continuing Resolution of last year, we would be at \$435 million. In the House it can be done with a closed rule.

President: That would be hard now. We should consult with Mahon to get the right kind of long range.... And a new Continuing Resolution. The leadership was talking about continuing it to February 15 or November 30. I would rather have February.

Martin: We need to get above last year's levels.

President: If we could get them at least to the \$450 million level.

Kissinger: If we could get it at that without the quarterly restrictions.

Martin: Hays said he would help.

President: He can't control Rosenthal and Gross.

It would help if you talked to Mahon and McClellan.

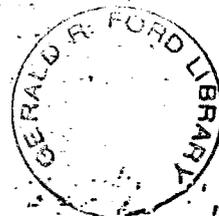
[The conversation ended]



EDITORIALS

WASHINGTON POST 11 August 1974 (12)

Aid for Vietnam



CONGRESS, in its deliberations on aid for South Vietnam, is shying away from the central issue: What is the American interest? For if it matters to the United States whether Saigon fares well or ill, one aid strategy is dictated; and if not, another: To proceed as though the level and kind of aid has no real connection to the goal of American policy is to fly blind.

Like many Americans, we had hoped that the Paris Agreement of 1973 would launch the contending Vietnamese on the path to eventual reconciliation. This would have resolved the America dilemma. But it has not happened. Hanoi and Saigon are still fighting; it looks as though they will for a long time. If one side or the other were clearly at fault, that would be one thing. We accept, however, the judgment of a new Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff study: "Lack of respect for the Agreement is so widespread that it is impossible to apportion responsibility for the continued fighting."

This bears directly on congressional efforts to cut aid. It would be grievously unfair in our view for the United States—by withholding aid—to penalize Saigon alone for a breakdown which is properly the responsibility of both Vietnamese sides. Nor does withholding aid become any fairer in these circumstances when it is described as a way to induce President Thieu to honor the Paris Agreement and to make concessions to his Vietnamese rivals. We have leaned toward this view ourselves in the past. But looking at the record of the last 20 months, we have had second thoughts. We now conclude that it is wrong to try to make Saigon alone observe the agreement, to its political detriment, when Hanoi is under no similar pressure to observe its side of the agreement. Unilateral pressure, furthermore, precludes a new American approach to Moscow and Peking—an approach we believe should be made—to reduce further all outsiders' roles, especially as arms suppliers.

The only correct basis for phasing out aid, we now believe, is a determination that it no longer is important to the United States what happens in South Vietnam. A powerful case for this can be made: the United States has invested an immense amount of blood, treasure and prestige in Vietnam, won that country the opportunity to fend for itself, and now has its own good reason to turn aside. But if this determination is to be made, we Americans owe to ourselves—and to the Vietnamese and to others elsewhere who rely upon us—to make it openly. To pledge fidelity but to reduce our support progressively

or even precipitately is to undermine both interest and honor. If the Congress in its fatigue or wisdom—whatever the mix—is to pare aid this year and to threaten to cut even more next year, it should have the courage to announce that it no longer considers the outcome in Vietnam as a matter of American consequence. To cut aid while claiming that the cut will actually improve Saigon's chances of securing its own salvation is double-talk. To cut aid while declaring that the people of South Vietnam will benefit from the new policies thereby forced upon President Thieu is at best, speculation; in our view, it is too flimsy a foundation for policy.

The alternative approach is, of course, to acknowledge a continuing interest in the fate of Saigon and to act accordingly on aid. This is the course we have come to favor, after having inclined the other way during the past 20 months. What has persuaded us to change our view is largely the prime new fact that a mutually acceptable political solution has seemed progressively to recede from reach. We think that Americans would not like to live in a world where a small nation that had strong reason to rely on American steadfastness had been let down. In that sense, the American "commitment" to Saigon is open-ended. To hold otherwise is to advertise one's own unreliability. It can be argued, with all too much merit, that the assurance of American support lets Saigon ignore American efforts to induce changes in its domestic policies and in its attitude towards Hanoi. The answer—surely worth testing—is that Saigon may become more responsive to American advice as it becomes less fearful of American abandonment.

Aid to Vietnam should be offered on the basis of what dollar levels and what forms of aid (economic or military) and what particular programs will enable Saigon to tend effectively to its citizens' security and welfare. This formulation admittedly leaves many loose ends, many unresolved arguments, many uncertainties. There is in the United States an evident shortage of economic and political resources to assure success. And whether the Thieu government can adequately respond is a question bound to trouble any realistic observer. We are convinced, nonetheless, that the principle of American steadfastness deserves to be honored as best we can, even though the particular government benefiting from its application in this instance is far from a model regime. There is where the overriding American interest lies.



Wash Post
9-9-74

Aid for Vietnam (Cont.)

MMR. EARL RAVENAL'S article elsewhere on this page meets square the issue which, as we have argued in several recent editorials, the Congress should be meeting—but isn't—in its consideration of aid for Vietnam. Does it matter to the United States what happens to South Vietnam? That Americans are sick of Vietnam is not the issue, unless one holds that only enterprises promising success deserve support. Nor should it be controlling that President Thieu's regime is undemocratic and corrupt; a great power concerned with the world balance of power cannot avoid getting stuck with some questionable clients. Nor is it central, though it is distressing, that Moscow and Peking seem to get more mileage out of their military aid to Hanoi than Washington does out of its greater aid to Saigon. These matters affect the political atmosphere in which aid is debated, but the real issue remains the American interest in the outcome.

It is Mr. Ravenal's view that since the United States can't and won't give Saigon enough aid to enable it to win militarily—and the struggle is a *military* one—then rather than sponsor an indefinite stalemate we should cut military aid to zero and accept whatever outcome results. We do not have either the power to ensure success in Vietnam or to make good on most of our other commitments, he goes on. "The sooner our allies and clients become properly skeptical of our promises of support, the better for us, and possibly for them and for the international system."

Mr. Ravenal is not afraid to pursue his logic to its end: Is one commitment wobbly? Away with them all. The conclusion he salutes so cheerfully, however, is one that shakes us to the roots. His idea of a world "system" is one we would equate with anarchy and an open invitation to violence. For what the Vietnam aid debate is finally about, after all, is the kind of world that Americans want to live in. Is it a world where our friends and values generally fare well, or one where we pull up the ladder, wave to our allies and clients, and tell them that whatever happens, it's for their own good? As proponents

post-Vietnam humility is one thing; the denial of any possibility for constructive American involvement is another. Yes, we did get into Vietnam carelessly, and we have paid for it. To pass through the final stage of our exit no less carelessly, however, is to add further risk to damage already done.

The claim that there is a connection between how the United States discharges one "commitment" and how its allies and adversaries regard its other commitments is indeed prone to abuse. The claim can be used to justify excessive support of obsolete, unwise or exorbitantly expensive commitments. But this is, as we have been saying, a question on which reasonable men can differ. The trap on the other side is the contention that the end game in Vietnam has no connection with the American position elsewhere. And this is wrong.

We are not arguing for indefinite and very high levels of aid. We are arguing for an approach to aid that recognizes precisely this broader connection. In such an approach, aid would be offered at levels which allowed Saigon a fair prospect of holding its own. It would be offered with the expectation of being continued for some time, not yanked back next year or the year after. This is what Congress has failed to do.

If Congress, in cutting aid substantially, now and in threatening to cut more soon, were willing to accept whatever outcome ensues, that would be one thing. We suspect, however, that Congress is repeating the mistake which it and the Executive Branch together made in Vietnam during the 1960s. Making an investment too slight to bring about the desired result. In the '60s the United States sought military victory but did not achieve it. Now Congress says it wants a political settlement, but it is pursuing an aid strategy more likely to produce Saigon's military defeat. The better course, we believe, is to accept the costs and uncertainties of a further commitment, even while trying to minimize them, and to provide aid in a way calculated to serve the American interest in a stable and interdependent world.

P/ Graham Martin/R

✓ Transcribed

13 Sept 74

- P Had a good entry yesterday. We told that group, but hard to say how it will come out
- M Propaganda campaign is a real job
- P Japan
- M The bureaucracy has a feeling we shouldn't ^{directly} own banks in VN. I have tried to take it on. W/C Post, I have discussed issues, not a dictation. How we come out in VN
- R Innumeration can spend (but in I + not a ton in VN where so much money has been hid.
- M Responsible what has happened in last yr, dis acceptance of them. If we can get all 200 mil w/o any admin restrictions, we can hold them months. We will need 500 before end of year.
- R ~~Sto~~ I made that point + Strom's objection. seemed to support
- P Yes, he asked for a sort of I.G. to manage NAPP. We sort of have an obligation.
- M I have a suggestion - Gen Addeholt.
- R Strom's had no mind of P emerging to go out + inspect
- P Yes. If we send someone we will get Strom's behind us.
- M There is no way we can lose VN except through it away here.
- R Tell P about accounting system
- M They have taken the "sense" of Corg as in a war bank. If Pentagon would be instructed to charge only what is legally required, we would be much better off.
- R Jaeger w/ Graham. VN is enormously important in intl perception of US.
- M If I thought it was hopeless, I would tell you. We can make it. But if NVA sees decreasing support it will change their perception. No place for doing time, but they can accommodate.
- P Thinkable is your story doesn't get heard enough

