

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Gerald Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
and Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense
Republican Congressional Leadership
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: April 22, 1975 - Tuesday
8:00 a.m.

PLACE: Roosevelt Room
The White House

The President: I have three subjects I would like to discuss this morning:
Vietnam, energy and the budget.

Kissinger: Jim [Schlesinger] will update the military situation, but it is clearly hopeless. The North Vietnamese have the capability to force a military solution. Our objective is to achieve the most controlled situation possible for evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese. This requires the cooperation of many -- the Congress has to understand the shoals between which we are trying to navigate. We have had a steady reduction in the American presence. We have tried not to leave so many that we couldn't get them out, and we have avoided pulling them out so fast that we create a panic. We will be down to one lift by tonight: one batch will leave from Ton Son Nhut by C-130 and one from Saigon by helicopter. We are evacuating the high-risk Vietnamese by trickles.

The diplomatic situation is delicate and we can't say too much. Hanoi has continued to say that Thieu is the only obstacle. I never believed it. They will probably start trying to unravel the government, although they may want to project an air of responsibility by negotiating for Saigon. We are in touch with several countries. Unless there are controlled conditions, it won't be possible to get out large numbers of Vietnamese. The evacuation from Saigon will be much trickier than the one from Phnom

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By lit, NARA, Date 1/20/00



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

Penh. We are trying not to trigger a panic, but also not to jeopardize Americans. We could have the refugees from Vung Tau but our purpose is not to be indiscriminate but to rescue those who would suffer the most if we left them. The trouble in the ports would be to sort out the high-risk people from the mass of refugees. Any substantial evacuation of South Vietnamese would therefore depend on negotiations.

There is no question North Vietnam could take over Saigon and unravel the government by keeping to make demands for further change. The only glue holding the country together is the military. They have the only viable administrative structure. Huong will probably be replaced soon and his replacement soon after.

Some of the terms of the debate on aid are no longer relevant. The thought that aid is an open commitment is no longer relevant, as is the argument that it would prolong the fighting. What it does now is give North Vietnam some incentive to say in a negotiation they have stopped our aid, and to give the government some confidence to keep things under control. We think it is important to vote some part of the aid package to give us some control over these tragic events.

The President's objective from the outset was to achieve a controlled situation, and these events, while happening rapidly, were somewhat predictable. It is important we get out with the maximum dignity and unity.

Rhodes: What sort of government will it be? Will the Viet Cong be allowed to run it?

Kissinger: It is not clear yet. Sometime over the next two-three years North Vietnam will absorb it, but whether they will go through an interim PRG Government or move quickly to absorb it is not clear. The occupied areas are being administered by cadres from the North because there are no PRG cadre. My guess is they will move rapidly. The ones most unhappy over these developments will be the Chinese.

Scott: Right.

Kissinger: I can't imagine the Chinese wanting a large military power on its border, so the Chinese could be expected to want to support some sort of PRG government.



Rhodes: How about Cambodia?

Kissinger: The last months of the war were being fought against Sihanouk, not the government. Sihanouk has known for a long time that we would support his return. The obstacle to his return was the Khmer Rouge, not us. The Khmer Rouge wanted to prevent Sihanouk from coming back as anything but a tool. That is why they refused even a ceasefire and that is why they are exterminating every vestige of leadership. It may be even worse than what will happen in Vietnam. Cambodia will be a total Communist-controlled state. The question is who will be in control -- Hanoi or Peking? Peking has long supported Sihanouk as a counterweight. They are aided by the hatred between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese.

Over the years it is obvious that there will be a conflict between the large Communist countries and the only hope for Laos and Cambodia will be to balance between them. North Vietnam will take over as much control of Laos as they wish; that is probably true of Cambodia also. The Hanoi leaders have done nothing but fight all their lives.

Cederberg: We have a tactical problem over the next few days. Yesterday I could see more military than economic aid would be a problem, so I recommended equal amounts. But I still think we will have trouble on the Floor, and I see no way to get it to the Floor before next week.

Case: We have a bill on the floor now. One hundred million dollars could be used for anything at all. It would be a while to see what is needed. We might get it raised to \$200 million.

The President: I still believe we need some humanitarian aid and some military aid.

Schlesinger: The situation is crumbling. The East is being pulled back. Bien Hoa will be under attack within two-three days. The Hanoi propaganda line has always been that the PRG is doing the battle, so that they may not want to assault Saigon. We have five carrier groups in the area. We can lift 1,700 and have about 2,000 now. Any evacuation from Saigon will be risky and could be interrupted or terminated by brute force. It will be a hairy exercise.

The President: The Ambassador is under orders to get down by the end of the day. We are getting the Americans and dependents down to the bare minimum.



It is my judgment we should try to get something through the Congress to help stabilize the military situation.

Tower: I have a bill in my pocket to add \$200 million in military aid.

Griffin: I would vote for it but I think it would be defeated. About half the Republicans would vote against it. I think the Democrats are on the hook now. If we were to add military assistance and get it defeated one would get the Democrats off the hook because a lot of Republicans would vote against it.

[There was much discussion -- all negative. The President read a number of reports about foreign leaders' doubts about American constancy. He asked them not to use the quotes.]

Cederberg: What has happened to bipartisanship? The Democrats give us nothing. It is not like when you were minority leader.

The President: There is no leadership there at all.

Griffin: Mr. President: You have to keep pushing for aid, but you should know what the realities are on the hill.

[Secretary Lynn and Mr. Zarb each gave a short report on the economy and energy situations respectively.]

Force #

what happened & our selling back to Penn
better than P's & Co agent

→ 2000 quans price / day us 400 quans / day



Report Leadership Entry 4/22/75

P 3 subjects this evening: PN, Energy, Budget

K Jim will explore rail sit, but it is clearly byelaw.
NOR have a cryptic plan or rail solution. Our objective
is to achieve a most contended sit possible presence
of US & UK. This requires exp of money - Cong has to
understand shreds but which we try to manipulate.
We have had a steady reduction in Amc presence.
We have tried with some as many as we could get them
out & pulling them so fast we create a panic. We
will be down to 1 left by tonight, one better from TSC
& one from Sanjua by helo. We are in a trap
with Ukraine by trickles

Dog set is delicate & we can't say too much - Hawaii
has continued to try Thien only attack - never behind
it. They will not start ^{try to} ~~circumvent~~ the gate, Altho
they may want to project an air of ease by trying
to negot for Sanjua. We in touch w/ several
countries, unless controlled conditions it would be
possible to get out largest of vessels. Evac from Sanjua
will be much trickier than P.P. We trying not to
trigger a panic but rather not to jeopardize Amc.

We could hand refugees from Vang Tan but some purpose
is not to be indiscriminate but to select those who
would suffer. Trouble ~~with~~ in gate would be to
sort out - high risk people from - mass of refugees.
Any substantial evac of SOR would ~~be~~ depend on
negot.

No question if UK could take over Sanjua & increased
a gate by keeping making demands for change.



Only glue holding country together is military. They have only viable admin structure. Every civil job be replaced soon & his replacement soon after.

Some of the terms of the debate are and are no longer relevant. That that civil on-going control no longer relevant, as is that it would prolong fighting. What it does now is give NON some incentive to say in a report they can have stopped our civil, & to give a govt some imp. to keep things under control. We think it important to vote some part of civil package to give us some control over these tragic events. P objective some control was to achieve a controlled set of these events, while happening rapidly were somewhat predictable. Imp. We get out w/ max dignity + unity.

Rebecka
Staff

What sort of govt. will we be allowed to run it?

K Not clear yet. Some time over next 2-3 yrs NON civil order, but whether they will go through interim PLC or more quickly to absorb it is not clear.

Occupied areas are being admin by Cubans from North because there is no PLC order. My guess is they will move rapidly. Most employing over these elements will be PLC.

Scott Right

K I can't imagine PLC writing a large bill, passing on its back, so PLC could be expected to want to support some sort of PLC Govt.

Rebecka How about Curlew

K Left months of war were against Seiborn, vote Govt



Sihanouk has been a poor boy and would support his return. His obstacle was KR, not was KR wanted to prevent Sihanouk coming back as anything but a fool. That's why they refused to be a CF, and are exterminating every vestige of leadership - may be even worse than will happen in VLM. Cambodia will be a ^{total} Communist controlled state. Question is who will control - Hanoi or Peking. Peking has long supported Sihanouk as counterweight. They are cirled by hatred bet Cambodia + Hanoi. Once again it obvious there will be a conflict bet a large Communist countries + a only hope for Laos + Cambodia will be to balance bet them. NVA will take over so much of Laos control as they wish; that part time of Cambodia also. Hanoi leaders have close working but fight all their lives.

Cambodia We have a tactical problem now next few days. Yesterday I could see more fuel than ^{even} ~~prob.~~ and would be ~~prob.~~, so I want equal parts. But I still think will have trouble on a plane, + I see no way to get it to plane before next week.

Case We have a bill one plane now \$100 could be used for anything at all. It would be a shame to do what is needed we might get it raised to \$200

P (Said still need some human + some mil air)

Schles Sit everything. East being ~~too~~ pulled back. Bin for make attack within 2-3 days. Hanoi propaganda line has always been that PRC is doing a trick so that they may not want to assault Saigon. We have 5 carrier groups. We can lift 1700 + have about 2000 now.



* Congress Report says part of a Demos who got
also in UK w/ O more support of house.
Reports trying to get us out w/ ~~house~~ house.
Any move from Saigon will be risky & will
be interrupted or terminated by hostile forces. It
will be a hairy exercise

P Airt is under orders to get down by early of day
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minimum.

It is my judgment we should try to get something thru
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mil aid

Griffin I would vote for it but I think it would be defeated.
About half a Repubs would vote against it. ~~to~~
can have control. I think Demos are one a back row.
If we were to add mil assist & get it defeated we
would get a Demo off a back because a lot of Repub
would vote against it.

(Much discussion - all negative)

P (Reads quote about American ^(Added from note to) ~~constraint~~ use a quote)

Edelman What has happened to bipartisanship. The Demos give
us nothing. Not like you as minority leader.

P There is no leadership there at all.

Griffin Mr P, you have to keep pushing for aid, but you
should know what a subsidy are one bill.

Key on economy

Zachary change

