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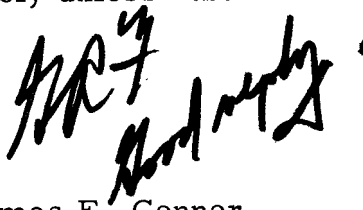
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

6/16/75

MR. PRESIDENT:

The attached is forwarded for
your information and will be
handled routinely unless otherwise
indicated.



James E. Connor
Cabinet Secretary

passed to Bob Linder

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE STREET
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111

EZRA TAFT BENSON

June 10, 1975

Dear Mr. President,

I have observed, with great interest, the progress of your recent trip to Europe. I am pleased that you have elected to participate personally, in the presentation of the foreign policy of our nation, rather than leave those matters strictly in the hands of the State Department, and I commend you for your mediatory efforts toward peace and commerce.

As you enter into discussions tomorrow with Prime Minister Rabin; as you contemplate your next trip to Europe later this summer and a possible trip to China toward the end of this year; and as you continue to formulate United States foreign policy under your administration; I urge you to ponder, carefully and prayerfully, certain basic principles and the admonitions of our Founding Fathers regarding foreign relations, especially in light of the disastrous results of our departures from their advice.

I do not wish to be presumptuous, nor officious; but the following comments embrace what I believe to be sound and enduring principles of foreign policy and worthy of your consideration.

First of all, the function of our national government must be limited to a defensive role--the defense of our citizens against foreign aggressors. To accomplish this, we must maintain a military force which is not only capable of crushing an invasion, but of striking a sufficiently powerful counterblow as to make it unattractive for would-be conquerors to attack us. As President Washington stated: "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." I commend you for your strong stance in favor of maintaining military forces second to none. I exhort you to maintain their independence, subject only to the commands of the President and the Congress of the United States, that our sovereignty as a nation may be preserved; not in the interest of isolationism, as some would define it, but in the interest of continuing independence and peace. It is not necessary for America to give up her independence to have contact, commerce, and influence with other countries.

I pray that, except in clear cases of emergency, it will be your policy not to commit our troops to battle without the contemplation and approval of Congress, as required by the Constitution, and that never again will our fighting men be committed to military action under a no-win policy. In fact, it is difficult to justify sending our men to fight in far-off

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lands under most circumstances. When the freedom of American citizens or the independence of our nation is threatened, we must order our troops to assert that force which is necessary to preserve such freedom and independence. However, the protection of such interests would rarely require the commitment of troops to far-off lands. And rare indeed should be the occasion of ordering our troops to the defense of a weak nation that is being crushed by a strong, ruthless one. We have a duty to the preservation of freedom which clearly exceeds our duty to the preservation of peace; nevertheless, any prolonged engagement of our military men and equipment surely demands the serious deliberation of the merits by Congress and a clear declaration of war emanating therefrom.

We are not, and cannot be, the policemen of the world. While our efforts at mediation may be commendable and, hopefully, fruitful, when invited by the quarreling nations to act as mediator, we are not dutybound to get embroiled in the disputes of other nations. With freedom there comes the corresponding responsibility. In fact, freedom is the assumption of responsibility for your own actions. The principle applies to nations, as well as it does to men, individually. Before America is committed to the preservation of the freedom of a foreign nation, that nation should be committed to the fullest extent of its ability to the maintenance of its own sovereignty and its own free institutions.

It is my personal conviction that the object of our foreign policy should be the preservation and strengthening of our military, economic, and political independence. America has no desire to conquer nor control other nations; therefore, our strength and independence are the main tools available for the maintenance of peace and the promotion of trade and industry throughout the world. With this clear in my mind, I am apprehensive of the continuing efforts toward disarmament. As you prepare for your upcoming trip to Helsinki to attend the "SALT" talks, I urge you to work toward the diplomatic withdrawal of our participation. We should not disarm. To do so, to any degree, is inconsistent with your stand that we should remain strong militarily.

The communists are our mortal enemies. We cannot afford to deal with them. It is pure folly because we are honorable and they are not. Whenever we enter into agreements with them, we get burnt. We should not give them aid. We should not trade with them. And we should not agree to limit our arms. It does not matter whether we disarm unilaterally or collaterally: either course of action would surrender our military independence.

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Regarding the counsel of the Founders of this nation, they made it abundantly clear that we should not meddle in the affairs of foreign nations. Recognizing that there is a significant difference between meddling and mediating, and acknowledging that you have inherited certain commitments under prior alliances and agreements entered into by previous administrations, I call to your attention the principles advocated by the early leaders of America. In light of the circumstances under which you have launched and are setting to sail your ship of state, viz., your taking office as a yet unelected president and your formulating domestic policy to deal with inflation and recession at home and foreign policy to deal with the problems of NATO, the Middle East, Asia, and the select problems concerning Cyprus, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and other parts of the globe, it would appear to be appropriate and helpful to consider George Washington's advice in his famous Farewell Address:

. . . The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. . . .

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

President Thomas Jefferson endorsed this position when he stated in his inaugural address that the policy of America under his administration would be "[e]qual and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations--entangling alliances with none"

It is my view that our country first pursued a serious departure from these admonitions when President Woodrow Wilson declared that "everybody's business is our business." Since then, each administration has followed that treacherous path, winding through World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

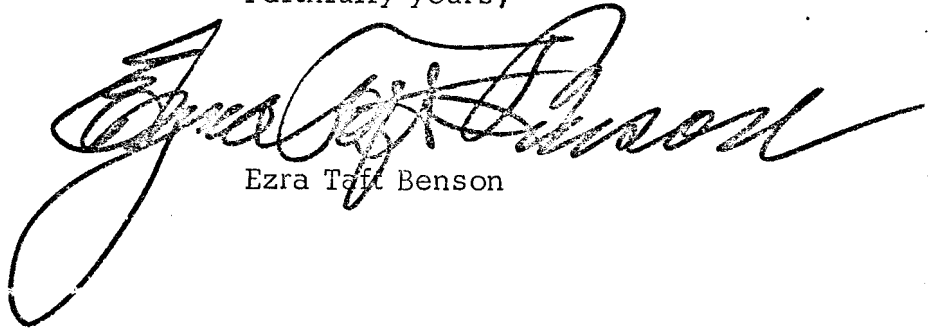
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I encourage a return to the Monroe Doctrine. It is a sound policy of preventive self-defense. Let us not meddle in the affairs of Europe and Asia--and let us see to it that they do not meddle in the affairs and threaten the peace and security of the Americas.

Your administration has the momentous opportunity to return our nation to sound principles of foreign and domestic policy. I hope you will seek divine guidance as you contemplate the weighty matters that confront you.

I pray constantly for your welfare and for the Lord's blessings to be upon you and the office of the Presidency of our great nation.

Faithfully yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ezra Taft Benson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned centrally on the page, below the "Faithfully yours," text and above the printed name.

Ezra Taft Benson

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.