

TELCON

President/Kissinger

10:45 a.m. - 12/17/72

K: Mr. President.

P: Hi, Henry. Tomorrow night we're going to have Alice Longworth over. Are you free to come?

K: I'd be delighted. Yes.

P: Tell me, is Joe back yet?

K: I think Joe's coming back today or tomorrow.

P: Uh-huh.

K: I'm not sure - I know he'll be back tomorrow.

P: Did his wife go with him?

K: His wife was with him, yes.

P: Yeh. Well, I'll hold it open. I don't want too many. I'm just going to have Mrs. Nixon and Alice and myself and you, that'd be four and I might have Joe and his wife and I might have Howard Smith who likes to come to such things.

K: Yes, oh yes.

P: It'd be useful for our purposes.

K: Oh yes, very much.

P: I wonder if there's anybody else of that type that you'd talked to lately.

K: Well, Stewart. . .

P: I know but I had him on the plane. I don't want to overdo one, you know.

K: How about Wilson?

P: Well, we might have Dick Wilson. You know you just might. He's been awfully good, hasn't he?

K: He's been very good.

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- P: And you - I don't know whether he's married. Well if he is it doesn't make any difference I could have. . . . anybody else you can think of of that type that really has stood up when . . . well, Bill Whitehead.
- K: Bill Whitehead but he doesn't have a huge following.
- P: Dick Wilson.
- K: But White is a fine fellow.
- P: Yeh, White's fine. Well, fine, fine, I've got an idea but will you let me know about Joe.
- K: I'll find out for you.
- P: And just let - call somebody over here.
- K: Right.
- P: Call Steve Bull. The other thing I was going to ask you is on the letter for Haig
- K: We sent it over last night. Have you had a chance to see it?
- P: I haven't seen it yet. I'll have to look in the other room. They may have put it in there. When does he leave?
- K: He's leaving tonight. It's a very tough letter.
- P: Yeh, well that's why I wanted to be sure to get a look at it.
- K: Oh, yes.
- P: I'll have to cancell it, I have to do a church service at Noon. But I'll--
- K: Well it should be over there now. It was supposed to wait for you after the affair last night.
- P: I'll find it, it will be around here. And I'll get it back over to you by, say, 3:00 o'clock this afternoon.
- K: That would be very good.

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- P: And that will get everybody on their way.
- K: Right.
- P: So we can figure--
- K: Because I think there is a better than 50/50 chance. The Paris delegation made a very plaintive rebuttal to what I said yesterday.
- P: I looked at the papers and I said that Colson would see how the radio would handle it, and TV, but the paper play was about the same and they all thought it was very objective. They thought it was about right. What was your feeling.
- K: That's my feeling. The NYTimes guy said I was defensive, but--
- P: They are always going to characterize things, Henry, to suit their own purposes. But if you see
- K: But if you see it on television, I did it just the way I did the other one.
- P: Sure.
- K: And noone else is saying that.
- P: Look, you notice after every press conference ~~and~~ Dan Rather says I'm nervous. Everybody else says I'm not. You knp w what I mean, it's purely a thing, they'al say anything they want.
- K: Well that's their way of suggesting that it was a bad wicket.
- P: (laughter) Do you care?
- K: Absolutely not.
- P: You know it's a tough wicket, but why is it necessarily bad? The whole thing that counts is how we look four years from now and not how we look four weeks from now. I really read the act to people around here, I said, you know what I mean, I didn't have any problem with them, but some of them said oh, gee, it's too bad to have to do it before Christmas and have to do it before the Inauguration, and then we just drag along with talks and when things were going so well and everything, and I said look, --
- K: You could have said <sup>there</sup> /was an option you had.
- P: I know, we had the option but the point is--

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P: It is really harder to do it then than now.

K: Absolutely.

P: The Congress will be back and they'd be badgering. You see, one of the beauties of doing it now we don't have the problem of having to consult with the Congress. Nobody expects me to consult with the Congress before doing what we are going to do tomorrow, you understand.

K: There is, I think, these are basically wanting to settle. We had an intelligent report today in which a very Senior Chinese official said that they were pressing Hanoi to settle, that they thought the decision was already made. But these guys are just a bloody bunch of bastards. Dobrynin told me yesterday that they told the Russians that you would have to settle just before Inauguration so you can see their strategy.

P: Yeah.

K: They were going to meet me again early in January--

P: And make us settle on bad terms.

K: Well, make us go back to the October 26 draft.

P: Yeah.

K: We could have easily lived with it in October, but if we accept now after all this arguing for changes would ;make us look impotent. With this blow they are going to get, they're going ;to scream for a few weeks, but with blow they're going g to--

P: They are going to realize that--

K: It's going to make the agreement enforceable, Mr. President, they are going to be very careful.

P: I think that point is the most, probably the most important point. With this blow, they are going to think twice before they break the agreement.

K: That's right.

P: The other point, however, too, is with this blow God knows which way it will react. It may be that if they react by being preference saying you cannot force us into it.

K: I doubt it.

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- P: This has been known to happen.
- K: It's been known to happen but if they thought they had that option they would have done it already. They don't react to our moves that way they react to their analysis of the situation. If they felt confident in being able to face us down they would have broken off the talks.
- P: Uh huh. Well let me say that's why this blow, I hope to God, Henry, I went over those for the first time, you know I don't do target lists usually, but I went over that God damned thing with Moorer and Rush and Moorer swears that this is everything they can get that's worth hitting, I mean without going -- taking out too much civilian stuff.
- K: If the whole bloody country is again covered with clouds, so they have to do it with B-52s.
- P: Well, the B-52s are no problem, the clouds--
- K: No question.
- P: And, what's the harm of that. I mean you can't just follow up with the--
- K: You can't take out the power plant in the center of Hanoi, and you know if we had had 72 hours of good weather, we could have done the whole bloody thing in one blow.
- P: Yeah. What happens then, is the clouds going to last forever. It always seems that they do, although I don't believe our--
- K: The thing is going to last until the 20th now. We have had to cancel 65% of our strikes--
- P: I do not -- anymore, you know, ~~the specifics about this~~ I said to Clements about this, and Clements, well I tell you he's on the right wave length on that, he says our Air Force is so God damned impotent because we haven't got the right kind of planes.
- K: Exactly.
- P: Which is ;also they cost too much considering what their job is. He's so right.
- K: He's right on both counts. We have, Mr. President, <sup>to cancel</sup> /over 50% of our targets during the dry season, and now they only have three or four days of what they consider flying weather in months. Now that just means they've got the wrong airplane.

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- P: By the way, at least the 52s will shake them want it.  
double loaded.
- K: Yes. They are ~~successful~~. That's like a 4,000 plane raid in World War II.
- P: It is?
- K: Yeah.
- P: 100 planes--
- K: 30 planes are like a thousand and they are flying 127 double loaded, that's like 250, so it's really between 4 and 8 thousand planes, if they got them all over there. It's going to break every window in Hanoi.
- P: Just the reverberations?
- K: Yeah.
- P: Well that should tend to shake them up a little bit. It does, doesn't it.
- K: Oh, yeah.
- P: We know how those things are. Assuming that they are expecting--
- K: I don't know whether you've been in Saigon when they hit 30 or 40 miles away, how the ground shakes.
- P: Well I know how the ground shakes when we even shoot of a 155, one of our own.
- K: Well, this one is going to be two miles outside, and there are going to be about 50 of them. I don't think there are going to be too many windows in Hanoi tomorrow. But it would have been good if we could have taken all power plants simultaneously.
- P: But as it is, what are we going to get.
- K: Well we are going to get the ship yards in Haiphong, we are going to get the marshalling yards, the rail yards, radio Hanoi, we'll get the transmitters at the outskirts of town.
- P: But we will miss the power plant.

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- K: It's in the center of town.
- P: But it will still be there, and the day that it clears up they can go in and get it, can't they.
- K: Absolutely.
- P: That's a standing order to Moorer.
- K: But it is a lousy set of airplanes. I think they are going give them quite a shock tomorrow, we're going to have a little screaming here.
- P: Sure they are going to scream. They always do. They would have screamed otherwise but for the fact that the talks were broken. Now we'll give them something else to scream about.
- K: Absolutely.
- P: They'dl scream now, well the talks are broken and we have resumed bombing, so we \_\_\_\_\_ stop bombings. Ziegler said that handling it is going to be very very good that way. We are continuing our activities to prevent another enemy offensive.
- K: That's right. They are building up.
- P: I know, but we are doing it for other reasons.
- K: Oh, no question about it.
- P: I mean, let them give their reasons.
- K: Yeah.
- P: And the fact that it has some truth in it helps.
- K: Well, Le Duc Tho asked that we send him a message as soon as he returns. He's returning tomorrow.
- P: Yeah. That's the one you told me about yesterday.
- K: Yeah. He'll be back within 6 hours--6 hours after he returns he'll get it.
- P: He will hear this message.
- K: That's what I mean.
- P: Yeah. If he'll hear it, it won't have to be delivered by hand.

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K: Well, we are sending him another one too which he'll get about four hours before it hits.

P: What's it going to say?

K: It's just going to say your talks were conducted in bad faith and the only way to settle is to go back to November 23rd. That's taking out the ~~real~~ word "administrative structure" which they had agreed to last week, and--

P: We are ready to do that?

K: We are ready to do that immediately.

P: Well, anyway. When you come to think of it, you know, I was looking over all of that crowd and those people that have been in their Cabinets etc, and they are all are decent fine people and the rest, but when you really come down to it, at the top of the heap we've always got to have some who are willing to step up and hit the hard ones, you know, it's -- much as we love all of them, there are not ;many that's going to do that.

K: Well, when you really come down to it,/<sup>even</sup>~~lets~~ the Vice President caved in on us because the sum total of his recommendation was to do nothing. If Congress--when you've got to go wailing to Thieu and you can't do anything because Congress will cut you off, you are paralyzed.

P: Look, he is simply telling us why--warning us that Congress was going to cut us off. I already knew this was a problem. But the point was he would not, believe me, now believe me, he would not take this chance.

K: Absolutely not. No, no, that was clear to me.

P: I mean he was, it was just a cop out. He wanted us to go get Thieu to frankly to convince Thieu that you ought to reassure. Well, God damn it, I was so amazed at that because ~~Thieu~~<sup>you</sup> went into that with him.

K: Hell, he's done it for two months and even if we did it, where would we be. Our strategy now has to be to turn on both of them.

P: As far as reassuring Thieu, no ;one could reassure Thieu more than I've reassured Thieu.

K: Listen, you've made three solemn commitments to him.

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- P: And I did it in ~~two~~ different meetings, and wasted a hell of a lot of time and I also wrote him three letters.
- K: Of course, this insane son of a bitch, if he had got along with us early in November, then all these fine points that people talk about now, his sovereignty, who has the right to do what, all would have been washed out in the victory. Whatever he can gain, it doesn't outweigh -- doesn't even come close to what we had offered him.
- P: I know.
- K: And what he simply turned down.
- P: Right.
- K: I think you'll see that letter is a tough proposition.
- P: Fine, fine. I don't want him to take any heart from the fact that we are hitting Hanoi, that's my point.
- K: That's what we've got in the letter. The more I thought about it, the more I think that we ought to go to that other option, really, in January. Because what we are doing now over his total opposition may lead to his collapse.
- P: Well, the problem with the other option, I thought about it, and we've really got to think of very hard, is for us virtually in going to liberate the defeatest thing, that we turn down our--
- K: No, not if we keep military and economic aid;going, not as long as we have this letter from Thieu asking us to do it.
- P: Yeah. Oh, you know what I mean though. Afterall, what if McGovern and Mansfield will say--well look, we could have had withdrawal for prisoners long ago when these insane people wouldn't do it. You see my point. It looks like--that's the thing that really sticks in my craw on that one. Withdrawal for prisoners, that's what it's going to be.
- K: Yeah.
- P: That is a problem, isn't it.
- K: Well, it's a problem. On the other hand, the ultimate test is what is going to survive there if you do it. Two years ago it would haveled-- we couldn't get it two years ago, that's another total lie of these guys, the first time they ever agreed to split military and political issues was October 8th.

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P: Right.

K: So, the others offered it but it could never have been accepted. We in a way offered it. Now we have two more years of Vietnamization, we have the Vietnamese able to stand on their own feet, and they've asked for it. It's a totally different picture.

P: Well, then we go where. He will be surprised when he gets that want he ?

K: I don't think--

P: You see this is the way, if you did it this way, the way you do it you just blandly say ~~that~~ to Thieu, we accept. You go ahead and we'll get the prisoners and so forth and so on.

K: For all your reasons, I've been very hesitant about it, but--well, I myself think that, either the North Vietnamese are going to dig in which I don't really believe, or they are going to cave quickly. And I think that's more likely.

P: I don't see how they can dig in either cause they just can't figure they're gonna take this indefinitely. Now, the one thing that can encourage them some will be some of those statements, public outcry--

K: Yeah, but they've seen that--

P: They've seen that. I checked before, and they saw it also. Let's face it, that's the beauty of the election. They saw all the public outcry was murderous during the election campaign and we won 61 to 38.

K: That's right. They just cannot be sure enough of getting you. They've tried it for four years and I just don't think they have enough self-confidence in order to do it and I think that the Chinese, actually I think the Chinese are pushing them harder than the Russians.

P: Do you really.

K: Oh yeah. We sent this note to the Chinese on Friday, midnight, saying the allies are a bunch of liars and they are tricking you, if you'd like to hear our story we'll be glad to tell you. Within 8 hours we get a phone call saying come on up and tell us why our allies are liars. And it fits in with all the intelligence reporting.

P: According to the intelligence reporting on Thieu.

K: No, the bastards on their Radio today put out another insane statement about my press conference in which they said in effect this means the talks have collapsed completely, that we will never resume them unless the other side changes it's approach completely, and.....(end of tape)

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 BAF

K: . . . . they must have gotten it from the Embassies reporting a massive raid on Hanoi with large fires just north of it, which is what we were aiming at.

P: That was the marshalling yard, isn't it?

K: that's right. That's right.

P: Well, it's a calling card they won't forget.

K: No, no; they won't forget it.

P: We'll see whether it's worth remembering. [Laughs]

K: Well, we were trapped the other way.

P: No choice, no choice

K: That was the problem.

P: Okay.

K: Right.

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