

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: L. K. Jha, Ambassador of India
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff

Date and Place: July 22, 1970 in Dr. Kissinger's office

The Ambassador came in at his request to "get acquainted." He began the discussion by saying that Prime Minister Gandhi wants to improve relations with the United States.

Dr. Kissinger said that we share that sentiment. There can be room for improvement.

Ambassador Jha said that, for this to happen, both sides have to make an effort. Despite wide areas of agreement, there is a range of irritants on each side which are magnified by the press and by questions in parliament. The Prime Minister had told the Ambassador before he left New Delhi that India would have to work to minimize these irritants, but India needs support from the Washington end.

Dr. Kissinger said that in principle we share this sentiment but, he asked, what sort of support did the Ambassador mean?

Ambassador Jha explained that for the first time India is working with a minority government. The Prime Minister has to lean on the leftist parties. Government statements on issues of international concern have to have a tinge that sometimes seems in the U. S. not friendly enough. The government in responding to Parliamentary inquiries has to phrase its responses in debating context.

Take an issue like the whole Indo-China, the Ambassador continued. Basically he thought that the U. S. and India agreed on fundamental objectives--the independence of each country there, each country's freedom to shape its own future and a desire to keep Chinese influence at a minimum. Dr. Kissinger nodded assent to each of the first two.

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Ambassador Jha continued, saying that if Indian statements seem like criticism of the U. S. position it is not because India has a pro-Chinese or a pro-Soviet view but because India's honest view is that the use of force may strengthen Chinese influence in the area. The use of force may drive these nations toward China. India desires them to look in a direction other than to China. Even apart from India's responsibility for the International Control Commission, India feels the importance of keeping the lines of communication open from these nations to non-communist nations.

In Parliament, statements are often made in a limited context and without reference to the broader points of agreement on fundamental objectives between the U. S. and India.

On the other side, the Ambassador continued, there is what has historically been a factor that has helped anti-U. S. lobbies--the feeling that the U. S. has taken a pro-Pakistan stance. There was the question of arms supply to Pakistan in the 1950's and the assurance that U. S. weapons would not be used against India, and then they were used.

Today, the Ambassador continued, some parties on the political right are in opposition to the government. The extreme right is communal in outlook--it exploits Hindu sympathies against the Moslems. The Prime Minister has identified herself against this element. She has emphasized that it is important that India not turn Fascistic or non-secular. These rightist political elements argue that India has two main enemies--Pakistan and China--and they are now in alliance. They criticize the government of India for not building stronger armed forces and for not building nuclear weapons since China has them. They also criticize the Indian government for not being tough enough on the Moslems. Therefore a decision to send arms to Pakistan will create a difficult domestic situation in which the right joins left in opposition to the government.

The Ambassador concluded by saying that the political situation in India is in a delicate state. The economy is in good shape.

Dr. Kissinger suggested that, since he might be called to the President's office at any moment, he give a quick general reaction to the Ambassador's remarks:

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1. India is one of the great nations of the world and a potential power. The U. S. has an interest in good relations with India.
2. The U. S. believes in economic development. The U. S. has demonstrated its support for India's development. The U. S. will continue within the limits of its ability.
3. The Administration recognizes that India has special problems. The U. S. has no interest in seeing India either lose its domestic cohesion or its position in Southeast Asia. Our fundamental objectives are the same there.
4. There are the makings of an understanding relationship between the U. S. and India.
5. There are however some drawbacks:

--The U. S. has to understand India's problems, but some Indians give the impression that they intend to take a free ride up to a point in criticizing the United States. The closing of the cultural centers was perhaps an example of this. We do not regard those centers as foreign policy tools but as instruments for improving understanding.

--There are also some problems growing out of past history. The Ambassador had mentioned the U. S. - Pakistani arms deals of the 1950's. Dr. Kissinger said that he thought when he was a professor that we were naive in the 1950's to enter such a close relationship with Pakistan. He emphasized that this was his private view as a professor but noted that he had expressed it during a 1962 visit to South Asia.

Dr. Kissinger summarized by saying that the problem now is as follows:

1. We have to deal with some vestiges of the past.
2. The U. S. is not going to move again into a permanent arms supply relationship with Pakistan. The U. S. has no interest in fueling an arms race in South Asia.

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3. We have made no final decision on the arms supply issue. We will talk with the Indians before we do so.

4. The question before us is not whether we resume a total arms relationship with Pakistan but whether we consider a one-time exception to fulfill past commitments.

5. If we were to make that decision, India would have two choices:
(a) India could wage a big campaign to discredit the U. S. in India or
(b) India could recognize the spirit in which the U. S. decision had been made and recognize that it establishes a line limiting the U. S. - Pakistani relationship.

If we were back in 1962 and we had to rethink our position in Southeast Asia, Dr. Kissinger said he did not know exactly what he would suggest doing. He recalled his January 1962 discussion with the Indian Foreign Secretary and reflected that perhaps his analysis of the situation in Southeast Asia had been more acute than the U. S. analysis. That water is over the dam, however. The U. S. domestic situation and the U. S. international position now depend on how--not whether--we end the war in South Vietnam.

In this connection, Dr. Kissinger emphasized that Indian recognition of Hanoi would be "taken very ill" here. The President had just a couple of days ago sent Dr. Kissinger a hand-written note on that subject.

Dr. Kissinger said that if the war ends U. S. and Indian objectives will be parallel. The U. S. poses no threat to Hanoi. But if Hanoi exhausts itself fighting us, then it will not be in a position to deal with its traditional enemies.

Dr. Kissinger concluded by saying that he knows U. S. - Indian relations will have their ups and downs. But this Administration recognizes India as one of the potential powers of the world and wants good relations. We would like to establish relations in which we can talk frankly. He said, "I would be amazed if we did things which we knew would be offensive to India." This is the spirit in which this Administration approaches Indian-U. S. relations.

Dr. Kissinger concluded that he had spoken very generally and that it would be desirable for him and the Ambassador to continue their conversation in greater detail at some later time, perhaps in about three weeks after he had returned from California.

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Ambassador Jha said he knew that Dr. Kissinger had to go to see the President but wanted to make two specific points:

1. On the question of arms supply, he said, "For myself, I believe we have to be adult enough to recognize that there cannot be a total and permanent ban on the sale of arms to Pakistan." He emphasized that that is a purely personal position. Having said that, he had to emphasize that public opinion in India had to be dealt with. He said he hoped that the U. S. could talk to the Indians first before doing anything. He also recommended postponing any move until after the Pakistani elections. He explained this in terms of "giving me a reasonable period of time in which to lay the groundwork."

2. On the question of recognizing Hanoi, this had been badly handled on the Indian side. There was Soviet pressure during Firyubān's visit.

After Dr. Kissinger and the Ambassador parted, the Ambassador said that he would very much like to resume his discussion with Dr. Kissinger. He thought perhaps that the discussion might be more relaxed over a meal. He extended a general standing invitation to Dr. Kissinger to be his guest for a lunch or dinner.

H. S.

Harold H. Saunders

cc:David Young

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