

THE WHITE HOUSE
Washington

January 7, 1971

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting between Prime Minister Chou En-lai
and Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr.

PLACE: The Great Hall of the People
Peking, China

TIME: 11:45 PM, January 7, 1971

PARTICIPANTS: Prime Minister Chou En-lai
Mr. CHI P'eng-fei, Acting Foreign Minister
Mr. HSIUNG Hsiang-hui, Secretary to the Premier
Mr. HAN Hsu, Director, Protocol Department, MFA
Mr. CHANG Wen-chin, Director of the West
European, American and Australian Affairs,
MFA
Miss Nancy T'ang (Interpreter)
Brig. General Alexander M. Haig, Jr.

Chou En-lai: We gave you too much wine today? Our hosts did not know how to make conversation, so they just drowned you in wine. I believe Mr. Chapin can down quite a few cups. General Haig has quite a capacity. It is alright -- you are quite young.

This afternoon, Acting Foreign Minister Fei conveyed to me the message from Dr. Kissinger that you conveyed to him. I thank you for your information. I already said, on the morning of the 4th, that after I reported to Chairman Mao Tse-tung I would discuss it with my colleagues and give you a formal reply. So I would like, first of all, to give a reply to the former message you gave on the morning of the 4th and then to deal with the latter message given this morning -- later on.

We have studied the message conveyed by General Haig. Your straightforwardness has helped us to attain a clearer understanding of the views of the

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U.S. side on the current situation and Sino-Soviet ways. We would like to express our views in a similarly frank way.

1. The high level talks to be held between China and the United States to seek normalization of the relations between the two countries accord with the desire of the Chinese and American people and if positive results can be achieved they will also be conducive to the easing of tension in the Far East and in conformity with the interests of the people in Asia and the world. As the time for the talks draws near, certain hostile forces have been intensifying their destruction and sabotage. This is something within our expectations and we are prepared for it.

2. After the announcement of President Nixon's visit to China, the Soviet Government hastily made concessions in Europe and came to agreement with the West on the Berlin question. While in Asia, it concluded with India a Treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation in name but it was a military alliance in substance. Following that, the Soviet Government took advantage of the situation to support India, to commit armed aggression against Pakistan and occupy East Pakistan. This is a continuation, under new circumstances, of the consistent Soviet policy of contending for hegemony. There is no shift of strategy to speak of. China is under no commitment to Pakistan. However, proceeding from its current principal stand, China has rendered and will continue to render political support and also materiel assistance within our capacity to Pakistan in its struggle against division and aggression. The Soviet Union has supported India to invade and occupy East Pakistan. They appeared arrogant and unbridled for a time but in fact they have further opened their

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expansionist situation and, in fact, have become isolated from the entire world. The development of events are proving that the subcontinent will be in continuous turmoil. India and its supporter have the nooses around their own necks. They will certainly suffer from the consequences of their own doing.

3. There exist fundamental differences between China and the U.S. on the question of Vietnam and Indochina. After Christmas, the United States wantonly bombed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This has shocked world opinion and aroused world opposition. The self-justification made by the United States side is utterly untenable. As victims of the war of aggression, the Vietnamese people have the right to take every necessary action in self defense. China firmly supports their struggle. If the United States truly has the desire to withdraw all its forces and end the war in Vietnam, there is no reason for them to refuse to accept the reasonable seven-point proposal put forward by the North Vietnamese side. In fact, it is not Hanoi that is humiliating the United States but the United States that is insulting Hanoi. By what logic may a big country willfully commit aggression against a small country while the self-defense by a small country be described as aggression? This policy of the U.S. can in no way shape the firm resolve of the peoples of Vietnam and other Asian countries to fight and win. On the contrary, it has created obstacles to the U.S. to the withdrawal of troops and to its efforts to obtain release of the POWs. And has also brought an unfavorable element into the visit of the President of the United States to the People's Republic of China.

4. China is a big country but not yet a very strong one. Economically, we are still very backward. One half a year ago, President Nixon described China as one of the five great powers of the

world but now in its message the United States side, all of a sudden, expresses doubt over China's viability, asserting that it wants to maintain China's independence and viability. We are surprised at this. We hold that no country should ever rely on external forces to maintain its independence and viability. If it does so, it can only become a protectorate or a colony. However small a country may be, so long as it fears no brute force and dares to struggle, it will be able always to stay on its own feet in the family of nations. Vietnam is a vivid case in point. Socialist New China was born and has grown up in continuous struggle against foreign oppression and aggression and will continue to live on and develop. We have long stated that we are prepared to meet enemy invasions from all sides and fight to the very end -- not flinching from undertaking the greatest national sacrifice and make contribution to the human progress. Facts have proved and will continue to prove that all schemes to isolate, encircle, contain and subvert China will only end up in ignominious defeat.

5. The relations between China and the United States have not been normal. Nevertheless, the Chinese side will receive President Nixon with due protocol and courtesy and will make its efforts to seek positive results in the Sino-United States talks. In its message, the United States side expressed the wish that the image of the President as a world leader should be enhanced through the visit. This we find it difficult to understand. The image of a man depends on his own deeds and not on any other factors. We do not believe that any world leader can be self styled.

6. In its message, the United States side indicated that certain forces in the United States

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are opposed to the normalization of Sino-United States relations and the Sino-United States high level talks and asked the Chinese side to reconsider the language of the Draft Communique with regard to a certain portion on Taiwan. Of course, we do not object to further consultations but we would like to point out that we have already done our best to take your difficulties into consideration in our draft. As you know, the Chinese people feel very strongly about the Taiwan question. If the United States side truly has the desire to improve Sino-United States relations, it should adopt a positive attitude of settling this issue which is the crucial question in Sino-United States relations. If there is yielding to certain forces opposed to the normalization of Sino-United States relations and backing down from the former position, that will bring no benefit to China and the United States.

So that is our comment to the oral message you conveyed on the morning of the 4th. Of course, you mentioned some new matters this morning. The first thing is that of trade and I remember very clearly that your Excellency conveyed in your message the wishes of President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger with regard to that matter. And I said that we had noted the opinion of the United States side and we would consider putting it into the Joint Communique. There is no question that the relations between China and the United States have not been normalized and that the development of trade will be limited and slow. However, we should look further to the future and the relations between China and the United States -- should proceed in a direction headed for normalization and the matter of trade should be viewed as a positive factor in this progress. And since Dr. Kissinger has mentioned cultural and scientific exchanges, if he has any specific idea,

of course we would be willing to exchange opinion on these matters during the discussions.

The second question is the matter of the South Asian subcontinent that you mentioned in the message you conveyed from Dr. Kissinger. We appreciate the part of the message in which you mentioned that the United States side at present would wish to count on gaining time to enhance the self-defense of Pakistan and that the United States was willing to undertake an economic assistance towards Pakistan. As for the other portions, they were a sort of explanation and as I have already answered them previously, I feel them to be redundant. And as General Haig has in the early hours of the 4th very straightforwardly conveyed President Nixon's and Dr. Kissinger's message to us, I would like to request your Excellency to report the reply we have just given you in a similarly straightforward manner to President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger.

Haig:

I am very grateful for the very detailed and very frank views which I will convey precisely as received to Dr. Kissinger and to the President. As I pointed out at the time I gave those views, they were views which were largely conveyed in my own language as I understood the general thrust of my instructions. In several instances, I believe the simple language of a soldier might have been more blunt than it might have been. I believe some of my words may have been misinterpreted. I would also like to briefly discuss your reply from a personal point of view because I have not been able to discuss the matter personally with the President or Dr. Kissinger.

First, with respect to the situation in Southeast Asia, I believe it is very helpful to exchange views

even though it appears we basically disagree on this subject. From our perspective, and this is a problem I have been very very close to for the last three years, it is not United States forces that are in Laos or United States forces that are in Cambodia but North Vietnamese forces. We have expressed our desire to withdraw our forces and we have made honorable conscientious proposals that would lead to that withdrawal and a settlement. It is the other side that has not responded to these proposals. I think I explained that we were told to pay attention to the nine points given to us secretly by Hanoi and that is the way we have proceeded, based on advice from Hanoi's spokesman. Even so, this is a topic that I think warrants more extensive exchange at the time of the President's visit. I do believe that in the long run our perception of the convergence of the interests of the United States and the People's Republic of China in the area of Southeast Asia is the ultimate truth.

The second point is the terminology that I used concerning the viability and independence of the People's Republic of China. Certainly, we would not presume to infer that we were assuming the role of the protector or the guarantor of China's viability. On the other hand, we did want to make very clear, and perhaps I did it clumsily, that in our perspective China's viability and future health is of interest to the United States. This is a matter of our own national interest in the context of the world situation as it has developed.

The third point I would like to mention is the again unfortunate language which suggests that the imagery of the President was an important item. This was meant only in the context of the preparations we are making for the President's visit. I

think it is important that we do not afford our enemies an opportunity to attack the President either in terms of his motivation or his effectiveness during his visit. The worst disservice I could do to President Nixon would be to suggest that his public image is a matter of concern to him or a matter which influences his decision on any given substance. Certainly, his performance in the international arena thus far suggests that popularity has never been, nor will ever be, the criteria by which he makes his decisions.

With respect to the issue of Taiwan, I immediately conveyed to Dr. Kissinger the reply that I received from you on Tuesday morning and he is, I think, very much aware of that reply. He did provide this additional information today, primarily to answer the questions that came up Tuesday and not to elevate our discussions here to a dialogue that would go on continuously but, hopefully, to elaborate on those issues which might have required clarification based on the discussion of Tuesday morning.

On the three subjects that we discussed that our side hoped could be more positive in the communique, i. e. , trade, scientific and cultural matters, I am confident that Dr. Kissinger will come up with some very modest proposals because he realizes that that portion of the communique is balanced and very well worked out. I do not expect any drastic revision to the communique in this respect and we recognize the issue of trade is a long term one.

And finally, on the subject of the South Asian sub-continent, I think recent events have confirmed one thing to me from my humble perspective and that is that while forces are sometimes under way

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that we would like to think our own good intentions may somehow control, the facts are sometimes quite to the contrary. In South Asia, certainly the United States was slow in recognizing the dangers. I think it behooves both our sides to be equally cognizant of future dangers there and elsewhere and I would hope it would not be a question of looking back on a situation that had turned sour for the lack of timely action which might have prevented that.

I again thank the Prime Minister for his very thoughtful treatment to me and my party while we have been here in Peking. One thing has characterized any exchanges I have been involved in with your officials and that has been the degree of candor and frankness which is very encouraging to me. I think both of us have had long standing positions on controversial issues on which we do not agree and would hope those will not be translated too readily into -- and to use your term -- "empty canons of rhetoric" but rather to the kind of frank language that will minimize misunderstanding even though the disagreement might remain at the conclusion of the discussion.

Chou En-lai:

Your Excellency has just now commented a bit on our reply and I think I should also like to add a few words. Of course, the reply I gave you just now in itself is a complete answer. And what I am now adding, of course, is additional and it was led to by your comment.

And on the question of Southeast Asia, our current opinion has been, to put it simply, that the United States is in the wrong. This is not only the words of the Chinese but also of the other people in the world. I have heard American friends themselves

speak of this. And, in addition, this is not something that was created by President Nixon himself. It was his predecessors. And President Nixon has already decided to withdraw his troops. And as I have said to Dr. Kissinger before, I would wish that the United States would withdraw completely as General DeGaulle did in Algeria and do it in one strike and cleanly, wholly, without any remainder and immediately. And to find various excuses to drag on in a messy way will only finally end up in losing the initiative. With a subjective wish for a glorious and honorable withdrawal while in reality there may not be such honorable and glorious withdrawal and if you only have the subjective wish but reality is not a glorious and honorable withdrawal, then on the contrary, this might give rise to difficult predicaments that are difficult to extract ones self from. Have you read the Soviet News? That is upon your present visit to China, the Soviet press has done some reporting in which they have given some special descriptions of you as saying that you are especially in charge of Vietnamese and Indochina Affairs. Of course, we do not pay attention to that. It is precisely because you may be in charge of this that I would like to speak to you with special earnestness. That is that your excuses will not carry over with the people of the world. For instance, you said that it was not the United States troops that went first into Laos and Cambodia but North Vietnamese troops. The question is that your troops should not have gone to Vietnam in the first place. The sending of United States troops into Vietnam itself is aggression. For instance, we have a common point in opposing the sending of Indian troops into East Pakistan. Then, how can we agree to your sending troops into South Vietnam. That is why the Soviet Ambassador criticized you on the issue of Vietnam when the question of the war in Pakistan was under debate in the United Nations. That is the first point.

The second point is -- take Laos for instance -- the troops of Thailand went into Laos. That is also foreign aggression. And your CIA has given often air support to the Laotian bandits in the form of ammunition or money or food. They have given this to the Lao bandits of the minority Nationality, the forces of Vang Pao in the area that is under the control of Laos and this is something that is recognized in the American press. Then, since the United States and Thailand can give air support to bandits in Laos, then why can Vietnam not give patriotic assistance to the forces of liberation? For instance, it is the same as the situation in which you assisted South Korea and advanced your forces up to the very banks of the Yellow River. It was only then that we sent our volunteers to assist the Democratic Republic of Korea and when we now coolly assess that situation -- was that not very clear? And the case is similar in Cambodia. If the Lon Nol - Matak clique had not subverted Sihanouk, then how would the war in Cambodia have come about?

Later on, your President himself decided to send troops on an intrusion into Cambodia. That was at the end of April 1970 and later on in the early part of 1971, United States troops entered into Laos and this was even further aggression and at Christmas last year, you launched a massive air strike against North Vietnam. Your President and your Pentagon have called those successes but, in my opinion, they are not successes. You are a soldier and I also have been one in the past -- not now of course. I have also been in military action and I know that this kind of fighting cannot bring victory. It can only give rise to dissatisfaction on the part of ones own people. And these actions on the contrary are giving the Soviet Union an opportunity. And if you want some news, I can tell you a bit that if you do not leave that place, then Southeast Asia which does have the possibility of being turned into an area of nonalignment

will become an area of contention between the two superpowers. We are very clear about that. And then Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the subcontinent, the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia will be linked together and how can tension be relaxed and wouldn't that be completely contrary to the ideals of your President. On the morning of the 4th, you told us of the strategic thinking of the President. And you once again mentioned that your President wished to relax the tension but if things go on like that, then the situation that will appear will be completely contrary to those subjective wishes. And the result will be that the situation will continue in continuous turmoil not only in the subcontinent. Of course, the settlement of the Vietnam question will be reached between the United States and the DRV, either in Paris or Hanoi or perhaps in other places. Of course, we, as the third party, cannot meddle in this but we must state clearly our stand and there must be no ambiguity about that. I have dealt in rather great detail on this question in the hope that you will convey this to President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger. This itself, in fact, constitutes an initial exchange of opinion. Of course, it is probably too long to send in your cables so you can talk about them when you get back and Mrs. Hartley will be tired working on them until tomorrow morning.

As for the other two questions, there is no need to pay too great attention to the wordings and terminology. We would like you to know that although our country is backward, we have our independence. In our country, we have relied on our own initiative and self-reliance and have relied on these to fight until today. We have our self-dignity and so have you and if we mutually respect each other that is equality. So the erroneous terminology that you just now mentioned is not only a matter of terminology but a matter of attitude. We are not a superpower and we refuse to be a superpower. Your President has mentioned that China is a potential strength power. There is a degree of reason in that.

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The third point you mentioned was the image of your President and our reply would be as we have mentioned in the third point of our reply -- that the image of a man depends on his own deeds. And since we have invited your President to China, we will certainly give him the protocol and courtesy due him. I don't think there is any question of this and do not believe we have to say more about this because I believe you will understand this through the technical discussions we have had. Of course, it is impossible to go beyond that because we have not established diplomatic relations and you still recognize Taiwan. You must not forget that. It is important to us. The good thing about it is that Chiang Kai-shek also only recognizes one China. He also says Taiwan is a Province of China. It is a good thing because Taiwan would have long ago become a puppet of yours and become another Thieu or Sigmund Rhee and if such a situation had occurred wouldn't that make it even more impossible for us to come together and that would bring even more difficulty in the normalization of relations. So now, we have come to the question of Taiwan. So as to the question of Taiwan, I have already dealt with it in the official answer to you and if there is further discussion -- if there is still room for individual changes in that part -- then they should await the arrival of President Nixon or Dr. Kissinger. As for the present, we believe that in our draft we have already given very great consideration to your difficulties. As for other specific wordings and various measures, just as I mentioned about trade, cultural and scientific matters, they are rather minor matters and can wait until the arrival of your President. And my secretary has just now called my attention to the fact that you mentioned the fact to pay attention to the danger developing in the sub-continent and you mentioned in the past you had been late in recognizing the danger there. You just now mentioned that in the past you had come to the realization of this danger too late to avoid danger.

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As to that question, I have already answered on the morning of the 4th and we have identical views.

Haig:

I am very grateful for this lengthy discussion. It is presumptuous of me to speak for President Nixon or Dr. Kissinger. I think on the subject of Southeast Asia there will be many useful exchanges during the President's visit. The past history you referred to should be a source of wisdom and learning. It does not necessarily provide the answers to current situations.

Chou En-lai:

Of course, this answer must be given by your President. I cannot do that for him. For instance, in the instance of the Korean War. We entered into the war against aggression. During that time, the President was Truman who was a Democrat and not a Republican. He still put forth the suggestion of negotiation, so actually they fought one year without negotiations but later on, with your Republican President Eisenhower, he ended the war in Korea. I think it is useful to recall that part of history but the situation in Korea was different from that in Vietnam so it would not do to dogmatically copy that. The war that began in Vietnam has brought the whole of Indochina together, has merged it into one but we have not entered that war so the situation is different. And only with determination and resolve can that situation be settled. Otherwise, you will only lose the initiative.

Haig:

I think we are convinced that it is going to take bold action and I think we have taken it by offering sweeping proposals. It is somewhat of a puzzle that we have not received a response to those proposals. Perhaps that is where the trouble lies. That is why alternative means must be pursued.

Chou En-lai:

That is a question that I cannot answer because the war in Indochina is different from the war in Korea. In the case of Korea, on our side the Democratic people of

Korea were the main representatives and our representatives were their deputies. On the other side, the United States was the main representative while Sigmund Rhee was the deputy, so actually there were four sides and in that circumstance it was easier for us to get an opinion. Now you are discussing face to face. So, I will not take up more of your time from your sleep.

Haig:

Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister.

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