

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
Date: 6-30-05

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
John H. Holdridge, NSC Staff
Winston Lord, NSC Staff
Jonathan T. Howe, NSC Staff

Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs
Chang Wen-chin, Director of Western Europe,
North American and Australasian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
Chao Chi-hua, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Chi Chao-chu, Interpreter
Three Notetakers

DATE & TIME: Friday, February 25, 1972 - 9:34 a.m. -10:58 a.m.

PLACE: Guest House, Villa 2, Peking

Dr. Kissinger: I have just been given an AP story -- you can read it yourself. It is not true. As I told the Prime Minister yesterday, most of our bureaucracy is in favor of this course, and they have the tendency to leak to the press what they would like to have happen. President Bhutto has talked to us about recognition after March 17. That was his proposal to us. We have made no decision and we will relate it to the withdrawal of Indian troops at the end of March. And, as the President told the Prime Minister, we will inform you all before official action is taken, and until then, none of this is to be taken as authoritative.

VM Chiao: I am grateful to you and there will be no misunderstanding on our part.

Dr. Kissinger: Secondly, and this is simply for your information, you should know, as we said in our World Report, that we are resuming humanitarian relief to East Bengal. We have adopted the policy that we will do so only through the United Nations and that we will contribute our normal contribution to UN agencies which is to say around 33 percent. This is about

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half of what we contributed before. This is simply for your information. We will not make a big announcement about it.

VM Chiao: Thank you. We are clear about the purpose of your humanitarian relief which we had already read about.

Dr. Kissinger: Now, to get back to our communique. I have discussed your proposal of yesterday with the President and he realizes that you have made a significant effort to take his problems into account. We are therefore accepting the first three sentences as you drafted them. So the only issue is the last sentence. And the President himself, as you see here, drafted the version. I will give you a typed copy. I just think the Vice Minister feels that I am cheating him if I don't show him an internal document once a day. My assistants tell me the diplomatic methods I pursue are highly unorthodox.

VM Chiao: Revolutionary.

Dr. Kissinger: That's right.

VM Chiao: I am on your side.

Dr. Kissinger: We have rephrased the end somewhat, quite frankly to make it a little vaguer, not because our intentions are different, but because of the reasons the President and Prime Minister discussed yesterday. There is a typographical error; we mean "on" Taiwan not "in" Taiwan.

VM Chiao: This is a very serious question.

Dr. Kissinger: Of course, of course.

VM Chiao: And I will adopt no hasty attitude.

Dr. Kissinger: Of course.

VM Chiao: And I only express our preliminary impressions. I realize indeed you have worked hard to try to find a formulation. My preliminary impression is that the world "premise" is very strong and somewhat difficult for us. But we will take a serious attitude.

Dr. Kissinger: I know you will.

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VM Chiao: And I will report to Premier Chou En-lai and after a careful study then we will see whether we can find some way out. And with possible alternatives just for reference sake, not as a formal suggestion, for use for an alternative.

Dr. Kissinger: Do I understand it is the word "premise" that is the principal concern to you?

VM Chiao: And then "looks to" -- it is too loose. It may even imply no action at all. I am not talking about what actually will happen, but the way of expressing it, the impact on the outside world. I recall that in one of your former suggestions you had a formulation that "The U.S. accepts the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of its forces from Taiwan."

Dr. Kissinger: I am looking for the language on . . . yes, we could conceivably do this "based on this premise." Of course you understand I am somewhat limited by this, so we have to say this is just thinking out loud.

VM Chiao: No commitment for either of us on these comments.

Dr. Kissinger: The Vice Minister has correctly pointed out we have put this in the direction of vagueness for the reason that the President gave to the Prime Minister yesterday. It would serve nobody's purpose if we had to spend the next month after we return explaining what we did not agree to. So we could conceivably say, "based on this premise . . ."

VM Chiao: I am not quite familiar with this . . . "on Taiwan" or "from Taiwan?"

Dr. Kissinger: We would be glad to say . . . "from" is fine.

VM Chiao: Immediately before?

Dr. Kissinger: That's fine; that's no problem.

VM Chiao: . . . I just remind you to refresh your memory, "U.S. accepts the ultimate objective . . ." Originally your suggestion then was "The U.S. accepts the ultimate objective . . . and pending that . . ." Changed to ". . . as tensions in Asia diminish . . ."

Dr. Kissinger: Is that easier for you?

VM Chiao: I am just trying to refresh your memory.

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Dr. Kissinger: Yes I have it and it was a proposal by me of course. You understood then that everything we were discussing had to be discussed with the President, but I think we could work with that sentence, if you would rather have that sentence.

VM Chiao: That's not what I mean. What I mean on that, the words "ultimate objective" are words which can be used as a reference.

Dr. Kissinger: Oh, instead of "looks to."

VM Chiao: I am also thinking out loud; that is my personal, preliminary, and unofficial thinking. First, the word "premise" is too strong, and second, the words "looking toward" are too loose. I understand why you use the word "looks toward" because following that you mention final withdrawal, so I believe that you used that for the purpose of discussing your difficulties. On final withdrawal you want to be loose?

Dr. Kissinger: Absolutely. Our problem is -- and you have stated your problem very fairly and clearly -- our problem is the word "hope" is too loose, and the word "intends" is too strong.

VM Chiao: Both of use are just thinking out loud. No commitment on either side.

Dr. Kissinger: Absolutely, I understand.

VM Chiao: And I proceed entirely on that constructive spirit.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand.

VM Chiao: All just thinking out loud. As I said, for our side the difficulty with the word "premise" is that it is too strong, and "looking to" is too loose. But we understand your difficulty too -- if you are to mention "final withdrawal" you want to put it too loose. But for our side as far as public impact is concerned, it could appear you are taking no action. So it is now a question of expression.

Dr. Kissinger: Exactly.

VM Chiao: So both sides, particularly for our side, will have to make a very careful study of this, and after that I will have to report to Premier Chou. And then we can meet again.

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Dr. Kissinger: This is fine. I am getting somewhat concerned for bureaucratic reasons about how we will bring this process to a conclusion.

VM Chiao: What is your idea on this?

Dr. Kissinger: And incidentally, we will study this also, keeping in mind what you have said, and see what can be done. It's . . . it will, based on past experience, take you several hours to study this, will it not?

VM Chiao: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: Then we have a session this afternoon and a banquet this evening, and will be in Hangchou tomorrow. And so I don't know how this will work out in terms of time.

VM Chiao: I am just expressing my thinking. The ideal thing is for both sides to use the greatest effort to see to it the substantive parts are agreed upon in Peking.

Dr. Kissinger: That is exactly our view.

VM Chiao: If we are able to succeed in that, then you can tell your press we will have a communique. Yesterday afternoon the Premier instructed us to complete it last night. But neither of our sides were able to complete that task.

You blame me and I blame you.

Dr. Kissinger: But you are wrong.

VM Chiao: What do you think of this?

Dr. Kissinger: I think we should finish it today. It would help us with our own bureaucracy. Incidentally, in the spirit of frankness with which we have dealt with each other, I want you to know what we have done in our government. We have given the Secretary of State the draft you handed us yesterday morning -- the old draft, which is almost the same as your first draft, not the one of last night -- simply so that he knows from what base we were operating when we came up with something better, and so that we can show him that you have made significant concessions yourself. So if he mentions anything to your Foreign Minister, it is the old version that he has seen. But only on Taiwan -- nothing else has been shown to him because we have a serious internal problem on it, as you know. To help

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your thinking, you consider "premise" too strong and "looks to" too vague. As we try to work on this we cannot both weaken "premise" and strengthen "looks to" so maybe a compromise can be found by finding a formulation where one or the other gets improved or both get improved a little bit. But if one becomes more specific, the other has to get a little stronger. I am just telling you the philosophy with which we approach it. For example -- and now I am thinking out loud completely and it may not be approved by the President -- I could imagine that it could drop the word "premise" and "hope" and simply say "with this in mind, the United States looks to . . ."

VM Chiao: That's one way of thinking. I also think out loud.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes.

VM Chiao: That is to say, as I said to you many times, if there is no mention of a final withdrawal, it will be impossible for us to . . . But then on your side, if there were "final withdrawal" to be mentioned, then as to how you should look on this final withdrawal is your difficulty. From your point of view that must be put in a loose way. So I am just thinking whether it is possible to put words "ultimate objective" before, in front. Just thinking out loud.

Dr. Kissinger: Absolutely, but the reason why this is so helpful is if we go off and write something and you go off and write something without knowing our thinking, we may be exchanging papers . . .

VM Chiao: I have no complete formulation in mind. Just thinking if we consider putting words "ultimate objective" in front and then as to the verb which will characterize the progressive reduction, your verb is "look to" -- our verb is "will."

Dr. Kissinger: Well, "progressive reduction" we don't mind being more specific about. It's the "final withdrawal" that we want to be vague about.

VM Chiao: So in that case, if "ultimate objective" is placed in front then the verb which would describe how you take the action of progressive reduction would be stronger.

Dr. Kissinger: That's right.

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VM Chiao: We know that your difficulty lies in this "final withdrawal." Because otherwise you will find it difficult to account to your opponents. But if it were not for the word "final withdrawal" for us we could not make an accounting to our people. That is where the difficulty lies.

Director Chang: (whispers to Chiao, unintelligible)

Dr. Kissinger: Does he want to accept it?

VM Chiao: Collude with you against me.

Dr. Kissinger: That's my dream. Mr. Lord says he is already on your side anyway. Judging by the quality of his work I have already suspected that.

VM Chiao: in your own collapse.

BREAK -- 10:15 - 10:37 a.m.

Dr. Kissinger: We think we could, for example, change the word "premise" to "prospect," "with this prospect in mind . . ." It's a little stronger than "hope" and a little weaker than "premise." And just again thinking out loud, to indicate a direction and since this is of such great domestic importance to the President -- you understand that I will have to discuss this with him when he returns -- we could, for example . . . "with this prospect in mind, the U.S. anticipates . . ." Anticipates means it will happen; we look forward to its happening.

VM Chiao: With this prospect in mind . . . but so far as progressive reductions is concerned, you just say "anticipate" -- that is too light. "With this prospect in mind . . ." that's too light. I will study that again. I would now like to have some comments on . . .

Dr. Kissinger: Let me tell the Vice Minister this, the following. We can reduce forces on Taiwan and we intend to during the next year, for example, or certainly as Vietnam diminishes. To the extent that the President can say it is not based on an agreement and that it is a unilateral decision based on our judgment of the situation. This is why we want to say something other than "will." Could I have your other comments?

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VM Chiao: Let us think about various possibilities. First of all, our comment on your formulation. The word "premise" is indeed a very strong word, and speaking from the point of view of logic, "premise" is inseparable from consequence.

Dr. Kissinger: A Hegelian student.

(Laughter)

VM Chiao: The point is that if that is the premise, then that means that a peaceful settlement had already been brought about between us and the Chiang Kai-shek regime. If that is the case, how is there a question of progressive reduction -- it will not be a question of withdrawing. If we are to consider accepting the word "premise" then it should be like this: "Based on this premise, the United States will withdraw all its forces and military installations from Taiwan." That is one possible formulation.

Dr. Kissinger: Good, "based on the premise . . ." Just so we understand each other, because we will have to explain it to the press. If this were one proposal and we accept it, then we say to the press in case of a peaceful solution, we will withdraw all of our troops. Is that correct?

VM Chiao: Withdrawal of all your forces.

Dr. Kissinger: So you say it's possible, thinking out loud, that if you were to accept the word "premise" we should then just say "will finally withdraw all our forces." In other words, "based on this premise, the U. S. will withdraw all its forces."

VM Chiao: That's one possibility. And then another possibility is to delete the word "premise." Something like this: "With this prospect in mind, the U. S. will progressively reduce its military . . . something like that . . . with the ultimate objective Just some thinking on this matter.

Another possibility is to delete "premise" and say: "With this prospect in mind, the U. S. will progressively reduce its forces on Taiwan with the ultimate objective of total withdrawal," something like that.

And then a third possibility, "It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question, by the Chinese themselves, and accepts the

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ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Taiwan. With this in mind it will progressively reduce its forces as the tension in the area diminishes.

Dr. Kissinger: Give me the other possibilities so I can take them up with the President.

VM Chiao: "Based on this premise, the U.S. will withdraw all its troops and military installations from Taiwan." And, "With this prospect in mind" -- weakened "this premise" -- the United States will progressively reduce its troops and military installations on Taiwan with a complete withdrawal as its ultimate objective.

Neither of us are committed. I aim to find something mutually acceptable.

Dr. Kissinger: I think we are heading in the right direction.

VM Chiao: What other business?

Dr. Kissinger: I suggest that you might wish to consult with the Prime Minister. When shall we meet again?

VM Chiao: We will tell you about the time.

Dr. Kissinger: It would be good if we could perhaps . . . I have one other idea . . . there would be a certain advantage -- thinking out loud about time -- if we could get the Formosa part settled before the session this afternoon -- we could move the session to 4:00 this afternoon.

VM Chiao: We can suggest that to the President and Prime Minister.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, and finish the rest of it after dinner tonight.

VM Chiao: We hope. But both you and he have to . . .

Dr. Kissinger: But if you should be instructed before the President returns from the Forbidden City, let us meet anyway. Because I will have your suggestions and I can take them up with him immediately. I am just thinking how to save time.

VM Chiao: Yes, we will consider that and we can do that.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, so as soon as you are ready, please notify us and we will handle our internal things.

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VM Chiao: Just one more thing on which I would like to speak to you alone.

(Chiao takes Dr. Kissinger to other side of room and they confer alone with only the interpreter present about a second meeting between the President and Chairman Mao.)

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