

MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH
HUGH SIDNEY OF TIME MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 8, 1967

This was a general discussion on American involvement in Vietnam.

The President said that President Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson had done everything possible since 1954 to avoid armed involvement in Indo-China. He said Eisenhower had told Kennedy he was going to have a serious decision to make in Vietnam, and that Kennedy did everything he could until the 1963 agreements to avoid armed intervention. But the North Vietnamese ignored the agreements on Laos, and everyone knew that American help was going to be necessary to prevent a Communist take-over in the area. The President said he had ascertained this in a visit in 1961, and a similar report came from a mission by General Taylor and Walt Rostow.

From mid 1961 on, Kennedy also faced a decision on whether or not to bomb North Vietnam, the President said.

"The first day I was in office I saw Ambassador Lodge, and told him we wanted to live up to our commitments but were going to avoid using Americans as combat troops as long as we could. So we used the enclave from November 1963 to February 1965. All this time we were pleading with them to stop their aggression but telling them we were not going to run if they persisted.

"By February it was everyone's opinion that we either had to bomb to keep up the morale of the South Vietnamese, to make North Vietnam pay the price, to require them to divert labor -- or we would pay a much greater price in lives.

"We haven't destroyed cities like we did Dresden in World War II. Of course we have killed some civilians, but we have tried to carry on the most selective careful effort to deprive the enemy of the substance of his aggression without waging war on civilians.

"I've repeated the Baltimore proposals time and again. We don't want anything in Southeast Asia except peace and self determination.

More

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"We are in touch with Hanoi in many ways. They want secrecy. Why would you, Hugh, want to send me a message through Reuters tomorrow when you are talking to me face to face today? This government has the best intelligence of any. We don't have 128 people around the world for nothing. "

The President said that opponents of the war go on "jags" which pretty much originate in the Communist world and eventually find their way to American critics. One jag will be that we are killing civilians, the next one will be we need a bombing pause.

The President said he called the first bombing pause after a Communist diplomat talked to some influential Americans. "Bobby Kennedy sat here and told me if we would order a pause something would happen. This was the same time he recommended Bill Moyers for Secretary of State. I did order a pause. We were willing to see if it did any good. We delivered a letter to the North Vietnamese, and they threw it back the first day. But the pause lasted five days.

"On pause number 2, Morse came in and told me the Soviet Ambassador said that such and such would happen if we would stop the bombing. They were telling the same thing to Fulbright, Clark, Mansfield, Church and some others. McBundy had lunch with Dobrynin, and he became an ardent advocate for a pause. Then McNamara came to Texas and said it would be a good idea. Rusk was a hold-out. I thought it was wrong, that it would make us look like a weak sister.

"Rusk finally said Tommy Thompson had talked to Dobrynin, and that he (Rusk) would hate to see history record that we stood in the way of a peace settlement.

"I had a meeting here, which included Fortas and Clifford. Fortas was against it. He said it would telegraph a signal that we were too anxious, and that the oriental mind would decide this was the time to hold out. Clifford was also eloquent against a pause. McNamara told me I had brought in a couple of ringers. Taylor and Wheeler did not recommend a pause, but thought it could be lived with since the planes were needed in Laos.

"We gave the Russians and our allies notice before the pause was announced. Then the tourists started coming into North Vietnam. It took us 37 days to get back in business between the tourists, after nothing came of the pause.

"Now we have got some new jags this year -- neutralize the area, remove the Ky dictatorship."

The President said there was an elaborate arrangement of following down every possible source. He said Kennedy in France had gotten an impression from a Frenchman who had an impression that North Vietnam might talk if the bombing stopped. The President said there was nothing to this matter.

"But we follow these things up if it's a whisper in Hanoi -- even a third foreign officer we follow up. We check every ambiguity in their public statements.

"There is an absolute lack of a substantive response on anything that would do if we stop the bombing. We've had maybe 200 flickers and Harriman tracks down every probe, but so far there has been nothing."

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J.C.

SERVICE SET

August 7, 1967

NOTES ON PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH VIRGINIA PREWETT OF
THE WASHINGTON DAILY NEWS, MARCH 14, 1967

The President discussed with Miss Prewett the Summit Meeting in Punta Del Este. He pointed out that the President of Argentina proposed the meeting, and that he (President Johnson) had also talked to President Diaz Ordaz about the conference and he thought Latin American nations should do more planning for the future. The President said he had bilateral talks on the possibility of a conference and sent Lincoln Gordon and Sol Linowitz south to talk to all the Presidents and then the Foreign Ministers met and the conclusion was that it was time for a Summit.

The President said we are now preparing the third major step in Latin American development. The beginning was in 1959-60 with the International Development Act under Eisenhower. The second step was the Punta Del Este Conference in 1961 under Kennedy.

Miss Prewett discussed her proposal to raise the job of Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs to the Under Secretary level. The President said this was a thoughtful idea, but he did not commit to it.

The President promised her to help the Committee for the Organization of American States, which is being organized by her husband.

He also said that her writings had been a great comfort to him during the Dominican Crisis.


George Christian

SERVICE SET

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

April 4, 1967

SUBJECT: Talking Points for your Meeting with Alastair Burnet, Editor of the London Economist, Bryan Beedham (Foreign Editor) and John Midgley (their Washington Editor) -- 5:30 PM, Wednesday, April 5.

Their main interest will probably be U.S.-European-Soviet Relations; U.S.-UK relations; and VietNam. (As you know, The Economist has been the strongest voice outside the U.S. for our VietNam policy.)

On Atlantic matters you might make the following points:

1. Atlantic relations are basically in good shape. We have our problems, but:
 - NATO has survived the deGaulle attack,
 - In the Trilateral talks, we are working out realistic agreements on force levels and financial arrangements,
 - Germany is going through a period of transition, and some soul searching. Basically, we are optimistic about the new government, and respect and support its new Eastern policy.
2. There are two important items on the economic agenda: the Kennedy Round and the International Money negotiations:
 - In the Kennedy Round, we are in the 9th inning. It is essential that there be a successful conclusion.
 - The money talks are reaching a critical stage. We must agree on a contingency plan for a new reserve asset by the September Bank-Fund meetings in Rio. We cannot let a few countries stop us.
3. Europe must increasingly turn its attention to the really fundamental problem of the world -- development of the poor countries: India, Pakistan, Latin America, Africa. This means more aid, both money and food. Europe must play its part.

On the UK future and U.S. -UK Relations

- We wish the UK best of luck on entry into the Common Market. We hope you will keep at it, even if it doesn't work out this year.

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- We are not worried that the UK will turn her back on the U.S. by going into Europe. The "special relationship" rests on tradition, language, history. We need the UK in Europe to help Europe play a world role.

On East-West Relations

- We are encouraged by the Kosygin reply on ABM. We want frank discussions and hope to avoid another step-up in the arms race.
- We must conclude a non-proliferation treaty. We understand that this is hard for some of the Europeans. However, the future of mankind may depend on keeping up the momentum which produced the test ban treaty, outer-space treaty, etc.
- U.S. is also pushing ahead with other steps to improve East-West environment and help the process of growing out of the cold war: East-West Trade Bill, Consular Convention, Air Agreement, etc.



Francis M. Bator

August 7, 1967

NOTES ON THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH THE FOLLOWING
REPORTERS ON APRIL 5, 1967, 5:30 P.M.

Alastair Burnet, Editor, The London Economist
Bryan Beedham, Foreign Editor, The London Economist
John Midgley, Washington Editor, The London Economist

On Vietnam the President said we are making slow, steady, satisfactory progress. He said there are thirty to forty thousand North Vietnam troops above the DMZ, and that they could over-run our six thousand troops south of the line. He said he would be glad to stop the bombing if Hanoi would tell us these men wouldn't move.

He said he was willing to enter negotiations with conditions or without conditions. "I would be willing to just meet and talk." However, the President said he is not going to endanger the lives of U. S. troops by tying their hands. He said that he had no indication that Hanoi is ready to talk.

"General Westmoreland will be here in a couple of weeks and we will review our plans," the President said. "We will send out our best tank commander General Abrams, and I have already sent General Palmer."

The President said the objective is to deter the aggression with a minimum loss of life to ourselves and to their civilians. He said he is very cautious and methodical in this program.

The President expressed gratitude for "your enlightened and gracious attitude."

On non-proliferation the President said this is an agreement the world must have as it must carry on the momentum of the test-ban treaty and the space treaty.

On the Kennedy Round the President said he has had numerous consultations with European leaders and that we are in the last lap. He said the Vice President had reported encouraging developments in Europe, and that he enjoyed his relationship with the British leaders.

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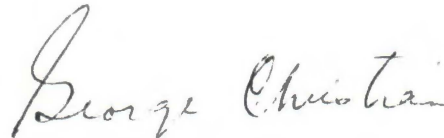
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On NATO, the President said it had been estimated to cost one billion dollars to take NATO out of France, but it actually cost one-hundred fifty million. DeGaulle took one country, and we took fourteen, the President said, and NATO has survived.

The President said the biggest problem to Europeans is to think more about others: find some way to do more for under-developed areas. He said Europe must play a part in the development of India and Pakistan and other countries.

Despite all our problems, the President said, we have a great deal to be thankful for. He pointed out that better East-West relations have brought the Civil Air Agreement, the Space Treaty and the Consular Treaty. He said there will be times of crisis and, "some fellows who lose their lunch easily are going to get upset," but "things will come out pretty well."

The President reviewed the attached paper with these newsmen.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Christian". The ink is dark and the signature is centered on the page.

George Christian

Attachment (Talking Points from Francis M. Bator)

SERVICE SET

August 7, 1967

NOTES ON MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, IN HIS OFFICE
APRIL 7, 1967, WITH:

Charles Bailey
Cowles Publications

Mr. Bailey queried the President on his plans for the Punta del Este Conference.

The President said that he hoped to confer with each of the Presidents at some time during the conference for bilateral talks. The subject might be a road, a dam, screw worm eradication or almost anything that particular country is interested in. He said he would explore with them my pets -- education, health, recreation, food, scientific development.

"I won't take the lead, but I will go into everything with them. The conference was on their initiative. I don't want to be like the oldest son who wouldn't come to the family reunion."

The President noted that military expenditures in Latin America are down \$40 million. He said we have to be careful about things like this, as reluctance might topple the government, but he was opposed to heavy arms spending in Latin America.

"I want the conference to be a success. I think it can be. But I am not the lead horse. I want the lead horse to be the Latin Americans. Out of the conference may come a sense of some reforms. Some countries are having good growth rates. We want to help them think in terms of food and population and health."

Bailey asked if there is more of a feeling of one continent, the President replied, "More than ever."

The President added: "I am listing everything we can think of to make this hemisphere better."

The President said failure of the United States to act in the Dominican Republic would have resulted in another Castro, and that the threat of communist aggression and of subversion exists throughout Latin America. He said 12 countries were in danger in 1963, and the total is down to 4 or 5 now, but there are still many problems.

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SERVICE SET

Bailey: "Why are the farmers riled up?"

The President: "I never saw a farmer who wasn't. They are not getting their share of the gross national product; they are not getting their share of the dollar. While they get more net income per farm, that is not the full story. They have a martyr feeling because they are going down in population. They don't like Freeman, but he is the best we had since I have been here -- 36 years. I think most farmers know the differences between Republican policy and Democratic policy."

The President indicated he thought the next election would be close, but that every place he goes he sees people who want to help. He said there is a tendency to work harder when there is adversity.

On politics, the President said: "The important thing is not how good we do in an election, but how good we do."

George Christian

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George Christian