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August 5, 1967

NOTES OF MEETING OF PRESIDENT WITH MEL ELFIN,
NEWSWEEK: JOHN STEELE OF TIME: JACK SUTHERLAND
OF U. S. NEWS, JULY 28, 1967

The President had a general discussion with these three magazine writers on the Detroit riot and civil disorders in general.

On the question of Urban problems, the President said the Government has a rich background in that field, thanks to task forces and sociological studies.

He said he concluded that Congressional Committees don't show much sign of expertise in this field, hence his attempt to appoint a Commission which can go into the entire matter thoroughly.

"This problem has built up over the decades. It is not going to be solved in a few days."

The President reviewed the qualifications of the Commission members. He pointed out Governor Kerner's experience and the good record on civil rights, and said that Mayor Lindsay is a man who is close to the people in the ghettos and has a general understanding of the whole picture.

On Roy Wilkins, the President said he considered him to be the best man from the civil rights area. His organization is in every community, as compared with the limited coverage of other civil rights groups.

The President predicted that there will be considerably more trouble. When someone is kept as a slave, he said, there is a minimum of trouble. As suppressed people begin to rise from prejudice and discrimination there is naturally going to be more problems.



George Christian

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NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT
WITH HUGH SIDNEY

Time Magazine
in the
Oval Office

August 9, 1967
2 - 3:30 p.m.

The President, in discussing recent crises, said he remembered the first few months in office when troubles seemed much more severe. To put problems in perspective, he recalled the situation when FDR closed the banks, and when President Kennedy faced the Bay of Pigs and the Vienna Conference. "We don't spend enough time remembering back, and not enough time looking ahead." He said he recalled that in 1948 only two members of the Texas delegation were willing to ride on a train with President Truman, and that Truman was the only man who thought he would win.

He said he didn't have as much trouble in Detroit in 1967 as Roosevelt had in 1943. He recited the success in which General Throckmorton took over the riot control and prevented wide-spread shootings.

On the plus side, the President listed these "breaks":

- (1) No President has ever had eighty months of sustained prosperity.
- (2) The Congress is cooperative. The GOP gets a little political in the House, but all in all it has been a good Congress.
- (3) We were able to meet numerous challenges in Europe, such as prevention of war over Cyprus, prevention of a break-up of NATO when DeGaulle ordered the troops out, the trilateral talks with Germany and Britain, and the Kennedy Round.

He said the African countries are far from stable, but the Communists had lost ground there. He said there were twelve trouble spots in Latin America when he took office, and now there are only about two.

In Southeast Asia, he said that this country is doing what President Kennedy and Attorney General Kennedy recommended -- to keep the South Vietnamese free. "We're gradually moving up, and they are gradually getting weaker." On his critics, the President said every President has had a half dozen volunteer Secretaries of State. He said he isn't worried

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about the criticism, so long as it doesn't mislead the enemy.

The President related his efforts to improve life in the cities, pointing out that one move is to get policy salaries at a decent scale.

The President said his personal assets, as he neared his 59th birthday, included the best family anyone ever had, the best physical constitution, the best friends, and personal prosperity.

On the state of the Nation, he said: "I just don't think this country is going to hell."

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MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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August 12, 1967
11:00 a.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bob Fleming

Attached are notes on your conversation with six columnists and commentators on the White House balcony on August 11, 1967.

Those attending were:

The President
Bill White
Richard Wilson
Roscoe Drummond
John Chancellor
Bill Lawrence
Dan Rather
George Christian
Walt Rostow
Bob Fleming

The President joined his guests at 6:20 p.m. The session ended at 10:00 p.m.

Attachment

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NOTES ON THE PRESIDENT'S CONVERSATION

WITH SIX COMMENTATORS

August 11, 1967

John Chancellor asked the President if he was pleased with House action on his District reorganization plan. The President said it seemed another case of going from the frying pan to the fire, but that he was pleased with the plan and felt it a good one, but now had to find good people for the key jobs. Chancellor asked if the search would center on city managers. The President said city managers, mayors, governors, ex-mayors, and other experienced men would be considered and that the two appointive positions would cause him to seek men whose abilities would complement each other.

Bill Lawrence asked for the President's views of comments on the Hill that were critical of the Thieu-Ky attitude toward the South Vietnam elections.

The President said some mistakes were being made, but that we might be surprised there were not more. Even in our country, he said, we've had some elections with doubts or questions about them. He said he felt our enemies were trying to hurt the election process any way they could, but it behooves us to get the best elections we can. He said he'd urged that goal, that Secretaries McNamara and Katzenbach had taken that message to Saigon, and that hardly a day passes but that Ambassadors Bunker and Locke aren't working on the matter.

He said the opposition to Thieu-Ky is naturally critical of the generals. He said that sort of thing happens here, too. He said Senator Aiken was an honorable, experienced Senator but he could smell elections coming here, so he said we'd increase taxes by 20% after the elections because the administration is juggling figures now. The President said Senator Aiken let go, had not checked his facts, but later told Senator Mansfield that he had not issued a statement but merely talked to a radio newsman. If this can happen with Senator Aiken, it can happen in Vietnam, the President observed.

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He said some Congressmen had called to say they wanted to make a statement on the elections out there, but they didn't really want to see him - they wanted to get out a statement, and they did.

He said there had been some slip-ups in planning by Vietnam officials and some impatience from the civilian candidates. He told how winds had forced a planeload of candidates to be diverted from Quongtri to Dongha, but before motor transport could be arranged to carry the candidates to their destination, they'd decided to return to Saigon. He said Ky's statement on a military take-over if civilians won the election was misquoted, that he'd actually said that any government which did not serve the people would be overthrown and this would be true if he and General Thieu won but did not govern wisely.

The President read Ambassador Bunker's comments on the election campaign, saying that Ky naturally was taking advantage of his incumbency but was seeming to heed our warnings. The President read a message he'd sent on June 9 saying that Thieu and Ky were to be told that honest elections were essential to his (the President's) continued support. There was abundant proof, the President said, of his views in instructions to Bunker and Locke, and their actions further proved our devotion to honest and democratic elections.

White asked if Ky and Thieu were taking much advantage of their incumbency. The President said they were, and there was a further problem in their use of our language in talking to the press. He said Vietnam elections were now our greatest hurdle out there.

He noted that in our country, we'd had our revolution in 1776 and had no government established till 1789. He said we went to Honolulu last year to help them begin, so that actually they were moving surprisingly fast.

On the language matter, he cited a parallel: When President Eisenhower was asked what decisions Vice President Nixon had participated in, he said that if he had a week, he'd think of some. The President said he felt sure that President Eisenhower wasn't criticizing Nixon, but it certainly read that way.

He said he was sure the Vietnam generals knew our views, that the July 9 message was unlike any he'd ever sent.

The President said he noted criticism of the elections as part of a pattern of criticism: first our critics were urging that we stop

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bombing now, then they said the war was a stalemate, now they were criticizing the elections, probably next they'd be urging that we negotiate with the Vietcong.

He said we may not have the election we want but it might be better than some we have - Powell in Harlem, or Daly in Chicago, or some Mexican border town.

Rather asked about reports of new peace feelers - is there any daylight in sight now? The President said No, that Reston could have come in and asked and we'd have told him No. Any exchange with the other side, he said, produces the request that we get out, or short of that, stop our bombing. We'd do that in a minute, he said, if we were sure that it would lead to productive conversation and that they'd stop killing our people. We'll say we'll ground our planes if they won't use that as a chance to move in on us and kill our men. The President said he didn't want a headline saying "Lyndon Johnson kills 30,000 American boys." That could happen, he said, because the enemy has 62,000 men along the DMZ against 30,000 marines.

The President said he thought their policies were based on the belief that their will to fight would out-last ours, and when they hear eight Senators and 52 Congressmen saying "re-appraise," they do doubt our will to fight.

He said the South Vietnamese were trying for victory; General Ky had reduced the draft age two years in the election year -- the President said he wouldn't want to reduce the draft age here next year -- to get 65,000 more men, and he'd put 25,000 more into pacification. He read reports from Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland on the ARVN military effectiveness.

Wilson asked the President's reaction to urging that he extend the bombing and expand the target list. The President said such decisions were matters of judgment. He said the Joint Chiefs had recommended 242 targets, and all but 39 had been authorized. Those 39, he said, were in the buffer zone along the China border; the generals are ready to bomb there but I'm not, the President said -- there's a difference in judgment. He said we'd already hit two Russian ships in the Haiphong harbor, and he feared that if we hit more, we'd get more trouble than we get gains.

He said we'd bombed Hanoi within half a mile of Ho Chi Minh's house. (The President pointed toward the Washington monument as he said "That's as close as those people down there, and him sitting there on his front porch.") The President said he felt that was too close. Then

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he cited the Doumer bridge target in Hanoi. He said the military had been urging him to approve that target, so he'd finally done so after warnings that the bombing must be accurate to take out the bridge without killing many people. He reviewed decisions on POL bombings, told how he'd approved them in January under certain conditions, but that it was months before the men and the planes and the weather were properly combined to permit the action.

Some MIG fields might be targets, he said (Senator Symington had come in to say he'd go bomb them himself) but he wanted to be sure that the gain would be greater than the cost.

He said Admiral Sharp had a target list totalling 442, but the JCS said 40 of these were insignificant. He said the buffer zone targets were under consideration, that he'd felt that there were risks in hitting China, but General Wheeler had said planes could go parallel to the border and thus cut that risk.

The President said if he felt all-out bombing would bring them to their knees, there'd be reason to take a new look at plans, but we lost 10,000 people last year, and a President has to remember that.

Wilson asked about Soviet -American relations since Glassboro. The President said progress on the non-proliferation treaty was one that developed at 5:45 this morning.

He said he felt that there were some three products of the Glassboro talks (1) Kosygin got a different image of the United States and its leadership (2) possible progress on non-proliferation and perhaps AMB agreements, and (3) a mutual interest in a Vietnam solution. The President said he could not brag about these, since Kosygin has his problems, too. He has many problems, the President said; his intelligence on the Middle East was all wrong, while our was all right; he needed to re-coup at the UN, and didn't; he wanted to get us into talks, and we asked what would be covered, and he said Latin America, and non proliferation -- (At this point, the President answered a telephone call; he did not resume the pre-Glassboro narration.)

The President said he was wary of the Soviet Union and its leaders. He said it took two meetings at Glassboro to see that Kosygin did not have full authority to talk for his government. But Kosygin learned

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that I'm not stopped by Fulbright or Kennedy or other critics, the President said. He observed that if he had read the kind of things about Kosygin criticism that Kosygin could read about the President, he'd have doubted the use of a meeting. Instead, the President said, he thought Kosygin got a new evaluation. He thought I was sort of a cowboy with six-guns, the President said, but we got acquainted with each other, and talked about our families, and he could see I wasn't scared by all the criticism I get, and he changed his mind about me.

On criticism at home, the President observed that he never thought much of a man who gives him advice through a mimeograph machine. Advice was much more worthy of attention, the President said, if the man giving it came in and said he wanted to talk quietly and frankly.

(The President had a comment about Gromyko asking some agreement on bombs or bombing; airplane noise blanked out the remark.)

Drummond asked amplification of the President's comment about the influence of Hanoi's will to fight versus our will. He asked if the President worried about criticism from Senator Lausche, Bishop Sheen and Senator Cooper. The President said those three didn't worry him, nor could he really worry much about criticism in itself. He said public opinion polls rose and fell - his rating might go down to 5, he said -- but he still had to examine his options and make his decisions. He reviewed the Tonkin Gulf resolution in the Senate, to point out that opinions change, and those who advise withdrawal now had voted 82-1 to support him then.

He re-asserted his view that if we pulled out of Vietnam now, as some critics want, there'd be trouble in Thailand in 30 days, in Philippines before long, and we'd still have the same kind of a world.

He said critics seemed to consider three options. Senator Symington wants one - to blow them out of there; some say get out entirely, and others say fight a little here and there. The President said the latter group talks about enclaves, saying we should not go out at night, should get up at dawn, and let them use their heavy mortars against us.

But he reaffirmed his belief that we should be helping South Vietnam to freedom, should help them get a government, land reform and a sound economy. As long as I am in this office, he said, our actions will be honorable; we'll talk when talk is useful, but we won't quit in dishonor.

White asked whether a civilian government, elected in Vietnam, asked us to stop the bombing, would we do so. The President said he did not think so, that he'd tried pauses before, and felt pressure was the only way to force the North to the peace table.

Chancellor asked if the President thought victory would be won in the north or the south. The President said both, and explained some signs of the pressure: old women and 14-year-old girls being used as labor, many trucks parked under trees at Hanoi because they weren't operable, etc.

On domestic matters, Wilson asked the President's views of recent civil rioting. The President said sometimes he felt the whole world was in riot. He discussed the Michigan experience and explained the history of use of federal troops. He went on to say the current activities showed little connection between unemployment and riots: there are thousands of jobs unfilled in the Detroit area, he said, and of the first 400 rioters arrested, 300 were over 30 years of age and earned more than \$100 a week.

Bad housing was more of a factor, he said - poor housing, expensive, over-run by rats -- and feeling against the police seemed to step up the tensions. Many police are poorly paid, the President said; police need better training and better communications, but the House seems to think Federal aid ought to go through Governors rather than to cities. The President said few governors had experience on police problems, but that was the House decision.

The President said he'd asked for 50 bills concerning cities and had gotten 36, but still had problems on action or money for law enforcement, rent supplements, rat control, model cities, food stamps, teacher corps and other matters. He said he doubted that the Republicans would want to go to the country with their record on urban matters, and said he had told Governor Rockefeller that some Republican votes were the best way to help good urban programs become realities.

The President volunteered that we'd had quite a succession of crises in recent weeks, and that some were not over yet, but that he felt the nation had generally fared well. He cited the rail strike, the Middle East (commenting that the "hot line" exchange was about the toughest ever exchange between heads of governments), Newark and Detroit, the Congo, Social Security, foreign sale of arms, foreign aid, his tax bill -- there were not many quiet days, the President said.

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The President was asked his reaction to General deGaulle's recent actions, including the Canadian incident. He said he knew deGaulle was cantankerous and set in his views, that the President doubted his ability to change deGaulle's views so he had not tried to do so. When de Gaulle told us to move NATO, we moved it, and we had 14 nations and he had France, the President said. He also said that he'd given Secretary McNamara one order on the matter: if de Gaulle said get out by 11 p.m., I want all our men out by 10. The President said he didn't believe in visiting a man when the man didn't want you as company.

The President was asked about his suggestion of Kosygin's role in the Soviet Union. He said he wouldn't be surprised at changes there, that the Soviets had changed on Khrushchev to show they could change. Kosygin's period has seen failures in Latin America, Africa, Indonesia and the Middle East, along with China problems, the President observed. He also offered the view that trouble in the Middle East was not over, that the Arabs had suffered humiliation that they did not want to accept, and that new problems would almost inevitably arise in that area.

Wilson told the President that "your good friend Bill White often writes 'If you run again' ". Wilson asked the President whether he would run again. The President said he hoped all present were good friends, but he didn't feel the time had come to answer Wilson's question. He said he'd held no council of war, but didn't think it was appropriate to make such an announcement on the back porch.

He went on to say that he was not sure how many people want to stay in the government (he stressed "want") but some feel they have a duty. He said he didn't keep the Kennedy Cabinet just because he didn't want to see them go hungry, but because they were good men, the best. He said it might be that some of the new appointees, such as Ramsey Clark and Sandy Trowbridge, might be eager to go on, but most Cabinet members stay on because the President and the country need them.

The President remarked about a CBS report that Clark Clifford would become Secretary of State. Rather asked him to expand. He said he was not looking for a Secretary of State, that he had one, and felt Mr. Rusk was the best man in the country for the job. He praised Mr. Clifford's counsel and guidance, and said he served his country well without being any more in the government than he is now.

The session ended at 10:00 p.m.

NOTES ON PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH


Richard Valeriani
Dan Rather
Bill Lawrence

August 15, 1967

In discussing the conversations with Chancellor Kiesinger, the President said troops constituted only a small part of the discussion. He said the Chancellor told him that even the most extreme people who believe it will be desirable to reduce the German forces indicated it wouldn't be under 15,000 men. The President said he believes we need all the strength we have, we are not going to tell the Germans how to handle their budget.

The President listed these good things about the Germans today: their sense of social conscience about undeveloped countries; their attitude of self-reliance. "We don't want to be the mother hen to the rest of the world." ; Kiesinger is decidedly frank in his discussion on DeGaulle and the Soviet Union and thinks he can make progress with the Eastern countries. The President said the Chancellor wants to be a healer of European conflicts.

George Christian



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NOTES ON PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH

Chuck Roberts
Hugh Sidey
Jack Sutherland

August 16, 1967

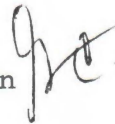
Sutherland asked the President about the signs that would indicate progress in Vietnam. The President quoted General Larson's Report for II Corps and Westmoreland's cable of August 11. He said General Johnson had visited every area in the country and was most optimistic.

Roberts raised the question of a confrontation with China. The President then discussed the systematic bombing program, which he said was designed for maximum effectiveness and minimum danger. He said we have confined most of our effort to the transport system, oil supplies and power.

The President said six out of seven targets recommended by the Joint Chiefs have been authorized. He said we are careful to put ourselves in the other fellow's position before authorizing a possible risky target.

The President read Ambassador Bunker's latest report to the three newsmen.

George Christian



SERVICE SET

July 2, 1968

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH BOB THOMPSON OF HEARST
August 21, 1967

Bob Thompson: How are you bearing up under your problems?

The President: That's what Presidents are for. My problems vary. I thought the first few weeks in office were the worst. We had the Warren Commission, the men being held for ransom in Bolivia, the shootings in Panama, and Castro cutting off our water at Guantanamo. Not long after that came Cyprus and the Dominican Republic.

We have had a busy summer -- the railroad strike, the Middle East crisis, Glassboro and the United Nations, Newark and Detroit.

We are doing pretty good on the Hill. The Republicans aren't able to cut our social security recommendations. The Consular Treaty was defeated 2 to 1, but we passed it 2 to 1. We got the draft bill passed, and foreign aid.

You have to remember that Kennedy had Berlin, Laos, the Bay of Pigs and the missile crisis. You can say that when things were all happening like this, things are going to hell, or you can keep up your spirits and do the best you can.

Bob Thompson: The cities problems are hard to solve.

The President: Almost as bad as the Civil War but when I think back to 1937 when I came here, we had problems then too. We were refusing to fortify Guam, Hitler was threatening the world and we had sit-down strikes and the big depression. Today our employment is okay, and if we can go to November, we will have our 80th month of prosperity.

The way I am about problems, we may stumble for a moment but we will get up.

Bob Thompson: Is there a breakdown of communications with the public?

The President: Eighty-five percent of the papers are Republican. Communicating -- that is a popular term that's developed in the last few months. I have explained Vietnam fifty times. It is hell when a President has to spend half of his time keeping his own people juiced

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up. But it doesn't matter whether the poll is 10 or 40, I am going to try to do the right thing.


Bob Thompson: What about Fulbright's attitude?

The President: Fulbright has never found any President who didn't appoint him Secretary of State to be satisfactory. I recommended him to Kennedy to be Secretary of State, but Kennedy told me he had a good view of Europe but nothing else, and that he was parochial in his views.

You can be sure we are going to have some rough days ahead but I am much more philosophical than I was twenty years ago.

Bob Thompson: What can we do about the racial situation?

The President: We had emancipation 100 years ago, but not really. We have to have justice in the courts and education. When you take the chains off, sure you are going to have problems. There are going to be mistakes and we will slip some, but we can't stop. .



George Christian

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 25, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR FILESPRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH CHUCK ROBERTS AND MEL ELFIN
AUGUST 24, 1967

Newsweek is doing a piece on "The President In Trouble." The tone of the interview was to ascertain the President's views on the difficulty of the job, the problems related to lessened public support, and growing criticism.

The President pointed out that he had "been at this all my life" and the current criticism does not depress him. He said that a lot of people jumped on a man when they think he's down, but the only thing that this accomplishes is to give solace to the enemy.

Asked about his opinion on the polls, the President expressed the opinion that President Kennedy won in 1960 by judicious manipulation of the polls, however, the President said you cannot put too much stock in polls, and recalled that when he ran for the Senate he had 5 points and his opponent had 40.

He pointed out that a President suffers from everything that goes wrong in the country, that if a big storm wiped out New England the President's poll would go down.

He acknowledged that the Detroit riots affected the polls, yet in Detroit "we did everything right and I would not change anything."

The President discussed the recent crises -- the Middle East, the hotline conversation, the United Nations debates, Glassboro, the Congo, the rail strike, the Draft Bill and Vietnam -- but said it must be remembered that every bit of history has similar crises. He said he thought these were all handled reasonably well.

The President showed Roberts and Elfin charts indicating that his popularity had only changed two points -- from 43 to 41 -- since March. He said the polls went up after the Glassboro conference, which happens frequently when people think something big is about to happen. He noted that President Kennedy's poll went up 10 points immediately after the Bay of Pigs then plunged 12 points when the crisis was over.

More

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Roberts and Elfin

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The President also pointed out that in a head-on popularity choice, he rated ahead of everyone in the Republican party except Romney, and when you look at Romney's poll he has not changed significantly in recent months.

On his critics, the President said he wishes he didn't have critics and for that matter wishes he had a 60% poll, but he recalls that Senator Fulbright had criticized his predecessors much more harshly than himself, and said every President has been attacked by critics.

The President went over his program for the cities, and pointed out the political practicality of trying to get programs passed before coming in with big new ideas with no chance of enactment.

George Christian

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