

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

NOTES ON INFORMAL COFFEE IN THE FAMILY
DINING ROOM - JANUARY 31, 1968

Present:

The President
George Christian *GC*
Hugh Sidey - Time
Carroll Kilpatrick - Washington Post
Merriman Smith - UPI
Frank Cormier - AP

Main points covered by the President:

1. His visit to the Vatican resulted in a one day extension of the Christmas truce, and the Pope's agreement to press for better treatment of prisoners.
2. The Vietnam situation was serious, but our military people feel it can be handled. The President said he had been assured by the Joint Chiefs that Khe Sanh could be defended.
3. On Korea, the President read Clark Clifford's statement to the Congressional leaders a day or two before, outlining the nature of the Pueblo mission and the reason the ship could not be better protected.

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MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH
CHARLES BARTLETT - FEBRUARY 13, 1968

George Christian

Mr. Bartlett began the conversation by saying it was good to see the President taking the pressure so calmly. His first question referred to the President's statement in the State of the Union message about restlessness in the country.

The President: We live in a world clouded with uncertainty. It directly affects the action of people in many countries. Israel is troubled because of its fears about its security. In Germany the young Nazis are the problem. In England, France and India, etc., there is this restlessness.

Young people in this country are restless not because they are not doing well, but because of the uncertainty that exists in the world. They want to improve their lot. Vietnam contributes substantially to it -- maybe 65% of it -- then you add in things like crime, LSD, the ghetto problem, and they all add up to an insecure feeling that we have problems yet unsolved.

I just talked to John Gardner, who is going to head up the Urban Coalition. He says that he has some ideas on how to get to some of these problems.

Roosevelt said that one of the biggest problems was that two-thirds of our people don't know how the other one-third live. (The President cited the health, education, social security budget increases of \$19.3 billion in 1961 to \$23 billion in 1964, \$42 billion in 1968 and a projected \$47 billion in 1969. He said Eisenhower spent \$9.5 billion on poverty in his last year, Kennedy \$12.5 billion, and Johnson \$28 billion. Manpower training cost from 3 to 4 to 12 billion in the same period.)

The President: It is not right to say that we are not moving fast enough because of Vietnam. After you deduct pay increases, retirement increases, and higher costs, Vietnam is costing about \$17.5 billion. If Vietnam ended today, the first thing Congress would do is pass a tax reduction; the next thing is cut some of the budgets.

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That's why I've got Gardner out trying to convince people how serious these problems are.

Mr. Bartlett: How do you account for the restlessness in Congress - the torn-up situation in the Senate?

The President: Some is political and of course this is a war year. You have this sort of thing in war periods. But it hasn't been reflected so much in the Senate. I saw an analysis of Senate votes on key administration proposals and most of the Senate vote was 75 and better. Mansfield was best at 91.

The House is more of a problem. In the Senate we got all of Model Cities, poverty, housing, conservation and other bills, although foreign aid was treated roughly. But I can't fuss at the Congress. This hasn't been an 80th Congress. This year I'll go from 42 to 47 on HEW; I think I'll get it in the Senate but Ford won't like it.

I think we have made progress, but I know there is still a lot to do.

There isn't a city in America that is doing 50% what it should be doing; but not a city that isn't doing 50% more than it was three years ago.

I have serious political problems in the South. You remember Bobby Kennedy's speech about the fact that I was elected by the biggest vote in history, and I was willing to spend that popularity for programs that were right. We had to have three Civil Rights Bills, and got two of them. That made it impossible for people in Mississippi to be for Johnson.

In 1964 I got 36% of the Republican vote. Now the polls show that this is down to 19%. That is result of \$186 billion budget.

But back to the young people. Everybody is always worrying about the youngsters going to hell. But the questions I got last night from the kids in the Yellow Oval Room would put your colleagues to shame. They know what is going on and are a lot smarter than we were. Gale McGee told me he had been on 169 college campuses. And outside Ivy League, students stand two to one and three to one in favor of our Vietnam policies. In the Ivy League it was maybe 50-50.

Mr. Bartlett: What is the best advice you have heard on how to deal with city problems?

The President: To show we are working on it - that we are conscious of it, that Congress should fund our actions.

In conclusion, the President briefly discussed peace prospects in Southeast Asia. He said that since American advisers went in under Eisenhower, not once has Hanoi given any indication it wants to negotiate. "The woulds, coulds and wills are pure tapestry," the President said. "They answered us this last time with a cannon shot."

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MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH MR. ST. CLAIR
MCKELWAY OF THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE ON
FEBRUARY 15, 1968.

Mr. McKelway: I have been on the New Yorker since 1933. These days I am a free writer on the staff. A lot of our people have been gloomy, but I think it's lifting a little. I finally said to hell with editorial detachment. I'm for the President and want to see him re-elected. I feel I might be of some assistance here and there.

The President: That's very much appreciated. No one can say with any accuracy what's going to happen in Vietnam. Most of the expert people have said the enemy has been trying to reverse its strategy the last two months. Now our intelligence is showing movement away from Khe Sanh. General Westmoreland feels we must not be over-optimistic. He told us the enemy could inflict much danger, but not the military victory they wanted.

Mr. McKelway: I am not a soldier, but I am not disturbed by the military situation. I think you know what you're doing. I'm more concerned with these people who want to pull out. What bothers me are these people who are so gloomy about the situation.

The President: That's characteristic of our people. In Korea we tried to measure those people by our standards, like we do in Vietnam now. We ought not to do that. We've got to be wise enough and cautious enough not to provoke China and Russia into World War III.

McKelway told the President a story about a luncheon he had with Robert Lovett after the 1960 election. Lovett told him he had recommended Rusk and McNamara to Kennedy. McKelway said he asked Lovett who he voted for and Lovett replied "I voted for Nixon, but it was to keep Schlesinger out of Washington." McKelway also told the President that the last time he was in the Oval Office, he was a boy of 5 and sat on the lap of William Howard Taft.

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George Christian

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH MR. NORMAN
COUSINS, EDITOR OF THE SATURDAY REVIEW - MARCH 15, 1968

Mr. Cousins said there is much wavering in the educated community, and noted that while our population is up 7%, college enrollment is up 102% in the past ten years. He said he thought efforts should be made to get this community back on board on the war, and that the Vice President could play a big role by involving him in negotiations.

Mr. Cousins also suggested that the President make an appearance at the United Nations and take advantage of International Rights Year by speaking on "Human Manifesto."

Mr. Cousins said that when he went to the Far East with the Vice President two years ago, Mr. Humphrey told him to improve his contacts with the East European countries, which he did. Cousins said his best contacts were in Warsaw. He said he thinks if the President wants the Vice President to meet with representatives of North Vietnam, it could be done secretly in Warsaw in conjunction with a Vice Presidential visit to Poland.

He said U Thant believes that a bombing pause of 3 or 4 days will produce arrangements for talks between the Vice President and these representatives.

The President said that both suggestions are pleasing to him and asked Mr. Cousins to reduce them to writing and send them to George Christian.

However, the President expressed these views to Cousins:

1. Hanoi is not interested in negotiating until after our election.
2. Pauses in the bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong for 6 1/2 months last year, coupled with many approaches to the North

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Vietnamese produced no results.

3. The President feels Ho Chi Minh is farther away from negotiations than he ever was; his views seem to be we cannot defeat him, he can defeat us, and we will not stay the course.

4. The San Antonio formula is the most reasonable thing we can come forth with, and we must convince Hanoi they cannot have a Panmunjon.

The formula was devised last August in consultation with people of many viewpoints, and presented to Hanoi; in September it was publicized at San Antonio.

Ho Chi Minh has rejected the formula and feels he is just around the corner from victory.

On the Human Manifesto, the President said he would get Goldberg's thoughts.

Mr. Cousins suggested that the President hammer every day on negotiations. He said he does not feel the issue now is between the doves and hawks but "does the government know how to handle the war."

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NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH
MR. JIM LUCAS - MARCH 18, 1968

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Mr. Lucas asked the President for assessment of manpower needs in Vietnam. The President said General Westmoreland's needs are unlimited but what will be deployed has not been determined. He said it is his judgment the South Vietnamese will try to add the 18 and 19 year olds soon, that he thought we would have a Thai division by July 1 and possibly will get another ROK division.

For ourselves, he said, what Westmoreland really needs is 7, 8 or 9 battalions over a period of the next few months. The President said this would be 25,000 to 45,000 men and more depends on what the enemy does. Mr. Lucas commented that the Viet Cong pulled their elite cadres out of the country for the Tet offensive and a lot of them had been killed.

On the matter of negotiating, the President said he did not see much chance of settling the war by negotiation this year. He said Hanoi thinks the administration will lose its horsepower.

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J.L.