

Meeting began: 6:21 p.m.
Meeting ended: 7:20 p.m.

116

MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH REUTERS
REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 29, 1968

Those in attendance: The President
 Gerald Long - Reuters
 H. Stuart Underhill - Reuters
 Pat Heffernan - Reuters
 George Christian

Question: How does the President view relationships between the United States and Europe developing, and, more particularly, between the United States and Britain? How seriously does this country take the British role?

Answer: U. S. policy towards Europe remains very steady:

-- The security of Western Europe is a matter of primary concern to the U. S., and NATO retains its full importance. Many interesting things are happening in Eastern Europe; but the simple fact is that Warsaw Pact military capabilities are rising. There is no rational basis for our breaking up NATO. We would, of course, be prepared to see mutual troop withdrawals from Central Europe.

-- We still believe that the U. S. -- and the world -- needs a unified Europe to assume its full capacity in dealing with all the world's great problems. The kind of technology that is emerging; the kind of problems we all face in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America; the problems of moving towards a stable peace, all require a strong European voice and presence if we are to be successful. The lesson of recent years is that the individual countries of Europe cannot be fully effective acting alone on the basis of old-fashioned nationalism.

-- So far as Britain is concerned, our ties are deep and abiding. Everyone knows that we hope to see Britain in the Common Market; but this is a matter which can only be settled in Europe by Europeans.

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-- Although we can understand the historical reasons that have led to this phase of European isolationism and a focusing on Europe's affairs, there is some danger in Europe's leaving a disproportionate amount of the burden in world affairs to the United States. Old-fashioned isolationism is not strong in the United States. But the feeling that Europe is not carrying its fair share of the world's burdens is strong. Neither Europe nor America should take each other for granted. We must work every day to nurture every strand of partnership, either in monetary affairs, aid to developing countries, trade, security matters, or helping build a stable peace.

Question: Does the President think there is a serious possibility of productive talks taking place with Ho Chi Minh leading to a peaceful settlement in Vietnam?

Answer: We simply do not know whether there is a serious possibility of productive talks leading to a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. We can see many objective reasons why the possibility should be real. Hanoi's behavior in the first month after the President's March 31 statement is not particularly encouraging; but we shall persist.

Question: How does the President see the future of Southeast Asia and will the United States play a continuing role there?

Answer: U. S. interest in Southeast Asia -- as a major area of strategic interest -- is deeply imbedded in our national life, going back to President Franklin Roosevelt's reaction to Japanese takeover of Indo-China. It is a major region in its own right; the flank of the Indian subcontinent which contains perhaps 20% of the human race; and it is important in terms of transport routes, natural resources, and so on.

-- Specifically, the U. S. has treaty commitments under the Southeast Asia Treaty;

-- The U. S. is greatly encouraged by the economic and social vitality of the area; its determination to maintain its independence; and the beginnings of regional cooperation.

-- Therefore, the President expects that the U. S. would continue to play a role in the region, but hopefully a diminishing role as the countries of the area gather strength, learn to cooperate, and handle an increasing proportion of their problems themselves.

Question: Does the President think the steps taken recently to sustain the western world's financial system will be sufficient, or is some further drastic action going to be required? This might have more relevance because of the disappearance in March of the U. S. trading surplus.

Answer: Although the U. S. has a bad month with respect to its trade surplus in March, the over-all results of the President's January 1 balance of payments program are reasonably encouraging. The critical requirements now are two:

-- That the U. S. take action via taxes and expenditure reductions to cut its deficit;

-- That the world community move forward rapidly to provide the Special Drawing Rights under the IMF so that we can assure adequate reserves to support the continued expansion of world trade.

In addition to these questions, the President also noted that we are entering the fifth week of the bombing pause, and have given Hanoi 15 choices for a meeting place against their two choices. He said he would be willing to go anywhere to talk about a site, in private, but Warsaw would be extremely difficult because of discrimination against our allies and the recent anti-semitism in Poland.

The President also discussed the tax bill, commenting that if he were a dictator he would have a two hundred billion dollar budget and a twenty billion dollar tax bill. He pointed out the gains in health, education, job training and anti-poverty spending during his administration.

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George Christian

MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH
RICHARD WILSON

MAY 20, 1968

rec'd 5/22/68
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Mr. Wilson is doing a piece for Look Magazine on Vice President Humphrey. He is requesting the President's assessment, not for attribution, of Mr. Humphrey.

The President described the Vice President as "the man of all the people I know in either party that I thought in 1964 was best equipped to be President." He said his recommendation of Humphrey had cost him dearly from Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy, both of whom wanted the nomination.

Other comments by the President about Mr. Humphrey's qualities:

"The greatest coordination of mind and tongue of anybody I know."

"Genuine.....depth of sincerity.....real compassion."

"I'd be happy to have him run my affairs. He doesn't have a lazy bone in his body, and not a dishonest bone."

"He is truly a happy warrior. Maybe he doesn't have enough reserve because he feels very deeply about human problems. I have noticed that people from Minnesota have a propensity for talking. But he is very courageous and cautious about big things. The tougher it gets, the better he is."

The President said that when he was Vice President he disagreed with President Kennedy on three or four basic things, but never publicly. He said Humphrey has also disagreed with him, "but there is a difference between disagreement and disloyalty."

In answer to a question, the President said he had no plans to endorse the Vice President, that in Texas there was an unwritten law that politicians do not endorse other politicians. He said he trusted the judgment of the people, and the best way he could help the people exercise good judgment was to run the country properly and work for peace and stability.

The President said that he had told the Cabinet that he considered himself to be a "B" Vice President, and he rated Humphrey an "A" or "A plus" "if you didn't think he was going overboard."

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118

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH KEN CRAWFORD OF NEWSWEEK

May 23, 1968

Mr. Crawford asked the President's thoughts on the political situation.

The President said he had not talked to anyone recently except Mayor Daley, and this was on another matter. He said the Mayor said in passing that he was not going to do anything until the Convention.

The President said he had more than he could do and was not going to worry much about politics. "Everything I say is interpreted as getting into the political race."

On the Paris talks, the President said he does not see any progress. He suspects the enemy is trying to influence negotiations by creating a lot of casualties. The President said Ambassador Harriman has done an exceptional job.

On the Poor People's March, the President said extreme care must be taken in dealing with the situation. He said he was in Washington during the Bonus March and did not want a repetition of that. He said he was thankful that in all of the racial strife the Federal troops have been responsible for only one death.

Mr. Crawford said he believed the riot in Washington was handled "just right."

On Secretary Katzenbach's China speech, the President said it reflected no major new shift in American policy. He said China was trying to keep North Vietnam from negotiating.

Mr. Crawford asked the difference in importance between \$4 billion and \$6 billion on the tax bill.

The President replied: "If I were a dictator, I would have a \$190 billion budget. We are feeding 18 million school kids, and only 2 million are poor, yet there are 10 million who need feeding. It hurts us to put off \$4 billion in needed programs, but \$4 billion is not as bad as \$6 billion. The deeper you get, you start going downhill on social programs. I hate to cut Head Start, I hate to cut programs that eliminate German

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measles, I hate to cut adult education. I don't want to give you \$4 or \$6 billion, but if you give me \$10 billion, I will take it."

The President said he wanted to recommend a tax bill in 1966 but got no support from the business, labor or Congressional leaders. He said he had reported this in a Press Conference on March 31, 1966. "In 1967 we got a little help."

The President was asked if he derived any pleasure from DeGaulle's situation.

He replied: "I am sorry for him. I hope some of the advice he has been giving us will work for him. But people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, and I guess I live in a glass house."

The President concluded the interview by showing Mr. Crawford a recent letter from Captain Charles Robb.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Christian', written in a cursive style.

George Christian

117

MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH
ROBERT SPIVACK - MAY 23, 1968

The President invited Mr. Spivack and George Christian to have lunch with him.

Mr. Spivack said that sources had told him that Senator Kennedy was buying California voters on street corners. He said he knew people who were earning modest salaries in Washington who were now going out to California at \$50,000 salaries to campaign for Kennedy. He said the Kennedy campaign also offered to pay delegates' expenses to Chicago.

Mr. Spivack also advised the President that Doubleday wants to do the President's memoirs. He said this firm published Eisenhower and Truman.

The President said he had turned all the publishing offers he has received over to a lawyer, and decisions would be made later.

Mr. Spivack suggested that the President appoint a columnist or two on the Presidential commission to study the office of the Presidency. The President said he would give thought to this. He said he was going to try to get a task force of scholars, then bring others in like Murphy, Clifford and Rowe, who have had a lot of experience with the Presidency. He said the University of Texas would probably do the staff work, that antiquated statutes would be pulled together to see how the President could take better advantage of his councils. He said the main work won't begin until September 1969.

Mr. Spivack said Senator Kennedy said even though the President urged people not to badmouth the U.S., he was going to point up his shortcomings. Spivack asked the President if he intended to point up shortcomings.

The President said he thought it was important that the people know what the country is doing, that it's doing many good things and failing to do many good things.

The President predicted that "the people who support moderation will prevail in 1968." He said many of Kennedy's supporters and Humphrey's supporters are not extremists, and could be expected to keep the country on an even course.

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