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1973/05/25

MEMORANDUM

Authority E.O. 12958
By WDP NARA Date 5/3/01

THE WHITE HOUSE

SECRET/NODIS/XGDS

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Kenneth Rush, Deputy Secretary of State
Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Chief of Staff
Leonard Garment, Counsel to the President
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE & TIME: Friday, May 25, 1973
11:00 a.m.

PLACE: The Cabinet Room

SUBJECT: Dr. Kissinger's Cabinet Briefing

Kissinger: Let me discuss first the forthcoming Brezhnev visit and then our European policy, and then Vietnam.

First, the Brezhnev visit. It was set last May and has been on course ever since.

Nothing has changed as a result of recent events.

Secondly, our European policy. The reason the President decided a new American initiative was necessary was our belief that the pattern of relationship set in the '40s and '50s no longer fits current realities. There is a procedural problem. We deal in different forums and different approaches: In the economic area, there is the European community and U.S. In NATO we deal with each other multilaterally. In foreign policy, we deal with each other bilaterally.

With Vietnam and the Soviet and Chinese summits behind us, it was time to address these European issues. Therefore I made a speech in New York in April.

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Since my speech, we have heard various comments from allies on our approach. One thing they objected to was that I said Europe has emphasized a regional rather than global approach. They think I was relegating Europe to a regional role. In fact, the opposite is the case. Second, they complain about our linking economic and defense issues. But they are linked by reality, not by our preferences. Finally, they think we are aiming at a perpetuation of U.S. hegemony. This is not our objective at all.

We have a massive psychological problem. It is easy to get dramatic PR from talking with opponents, but talks with allies are technical and complex. If we did not reaffirm the Atlantic relationship, we could get into the position where the European leaders can't afford to cross the Soviet Union. We want to create political common objectives which will anchor our relationships. We want to create a work program for the remainder of this Administration.

Pompidou is the key to getting Europe on board.

On Vietnam, you may use my airport statement. This was cleared by the DRV. North Vietnam doesn't want any speculation beyond this. We are working on a new document which is an improvement.

The President: The violations in South Vietnam have been dropping

In statements by all of you, you should say:

- The agreement was a good one.
- It has brought back the POW's and our troops.
- We didn't make peace just to get our troops out. We want the Agreement to work in order to strengthen the chances of peace in the area.

Cambodia is the most complicated situation. The U.S., PRC, DRV, and Laos are all involved there.

Kissinger: There should be no comment about Cambodia. Laos we can get under control.

The President: There is a tendency for lesser powers to think we are preoccupied with the Soviet Union and China. We must get across the point to these people that we love them -- stroke them a lot.

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Rush: (Deputy Secretary of State) Secretary Rogers trip is being distorted here. It is going very well.

The President: All of you in the Cabinet, when you consider trips, don't overlook Latin America.

We must take initiatives on energy next week -- what we do and how we do it. We are consulting with many people -- including Connally.

On Alaska, the issue is not Alaska versus Canada for the pipeline -- it is that we need it now and Canada could take years.

I am not satisfied with what we have produced on energy and the cost of living.

(The President departed at 12:10 p.m.)

Al Haig: There are things we can stress:

- (1) The President is here to stay and we want to get on with the work before us.
- (2) We have established a new relationship with the Cabinet. There is a lower profile of the White House Staff and we have elevated the Cabinet's status. Portray this if you believe it.
- (3) We are making progress with Congress, especially on the Republican side.
- (4) Within the White House, we have moved on personnel, with greater Cabinet role. We still have to do more within the White House.

I want Len to talk about the Watergate problem and explain the May 22 statement.

Garment: Let me say first what the statement is not. It is not a political or PR document. It is not designed to please everybody or be factual where the facts are not known.

Now let me say what is is. It is meant to be a counter to the floods of speculation in the headlines. It is to protect national security matters

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from further disclosure by disentangling national security from Watergate matters. It is to deal with the issues accurately in terms of facts, putting things in perspective, and not pre-condemn persons who may be subject to court action.

Don't debate over the facts. It's too much guesswork and it's a lot of speculation involved. We don't know all the facts.

The secrecy issue. On national security aspects, and the President's concern thereon, these are legitimate to discuss. Use his statement, and his remarks to the PLO's yesterday.

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