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E COUNSELOR
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Secretary's Meeting with the General Advisory Committee
on Arms Control and Disarmament

DATE: January 6, 1976 7.
TIME: 11:00 a.m.
PLACE: Secretary's Conference Room
PRESENT: State Department
The Secretary
Helmut Sonnenfeldt
Leon Fuerth, Notetaker //

GAC Members

Harold Agnew, Chairman
Gordon Allott
James Floyd Chambers, Jr.
Edward Clarke
Lane Kirkland
Carl Marcy
Joseph Martin, Jr.
Dr. John Wheeler

ACDA

Dr. Fred Ikle
Dr. John Lehman
William Stearman
Harry Marshall

Kissinger: In looking at SALT, we have to be conscious that there are negotiations between powers who can destroy each other and indeed humanity, but we also must conduct them without weakening ourselves.

Agnew: One question we never discussed with you is whether we will ever include China in such negotiations. Will there ever be three actors?

Kissinger: China is infinitely weaker than we all think. I just read the Luttwak article. I don't always agree with him, nor he with me, but this article is fascinating. The Chinese will regret they invited as sophisticated a group as Schlesingers'. Their analysis indicates they are exhausted and weak even if they are a minor nuclear power. When I was there last, there was a US group of arms controllers lecturing Mao, et al on arms control. This is absurd. To the Chinese this is the quintessence of naiveté. So, is it really in our interest to get three players?

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In thirty years, maybe. But for now they have to stay a functioning weight in the scale, even though they are only a minor factor today. So I wouldn't try to talk them into arms control negotiations with us. They would construe it as a means for obtaining intelligence information that would exhibit their weakness. It is necessary to be supercareful with China, not to give them the impression that we are colluding with the Soviets to dominate the world. It is in our interest to keep China in play as something the Soviets have to worry about. The strategic arms race is a diversion of resources. Tactical force imbalances may begin to tell, however, especially as a younger Soviet leadership comes into office. This is why we have to keep the Chinese in play. An academic symmetry -- getting the Chinese into play in strategic arms control -- would not be worth it. Their strategic force is negligible. Ten years from now it might be different.

Agnew: What about oil? I am convinced the PRC have a potential here.

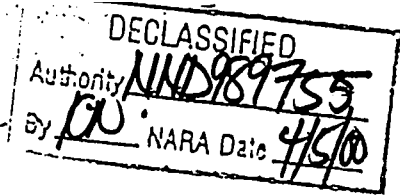
Kissinger: To give a simplistic view, there are two major players: Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran is getting most of the significant arms. But contrary to popular belief, I don't believe -- and I never have -- that Iran is in substantial control of oil prices. Under the best of circumstances, they can produce 800,000 barrels of oil a day. At that rate, they cannot affect oil prices. They can, however, provide intellectual leadership for high prices in OPEC, although they can't back it up with physical capacity.

But Iran has been the one country in the Middle East with views compatible with our own including the survival of Israel. They oppose domination of Pakistan by India. In every negotiation in the Middle East, Iran has used its influence -- even by moving its forces -- to try to neutralize Iraq. I would be in favor of keeping Iran strong, even if it did not have oil. In this connection, I am getting very worried that if the US cannot move its own forces, or support others who may be willing to do so, we will not be able to sustain the balance of power.

With the Saudi Arabians, the situation is different. Above all, we have to maintain enough influence on their feudal ruling family, which has had an influence for moderation. A Kaddafi type regime in Saudi Arabia would be a global nightmare. Now that I am leaving office, I can say that I don't think we could tolerate it. What we do about it, however, I wouldn't want to discuss.

The Saudis have been on the side of moderation in every negotiation in the Middle East. Under Faisal, they kept

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their tracks well covered. Under Khalid they are more to the forefront -- which may not be too wise for them. But Saudi Arabia is an element of moderation. I really hope that arms sale policy will be looked at by the new Administration in a non-doctrinaire fashion. We cannot make the Saudis into a power capable of militarily threatening the region. The damage to us from loss of political good will in Saudi Arabia would be much more severe to our interests than the effect of arms sales.

I have always believed that the strengthening of China is important. They have so far to go. China could not realistically be a danger to us for ten to fifteen years. But if thirty years from today, they were to acquire power equivalent in some respects to that now possessed by the Soviet Union, given their superior mental abilities and ruthlessness, we could have one hell of a problem, and at that point Russia could be driven to a real accommodation with the West. We may have a 15-20 year window for dealing with the Chinese.

As for the oil question, they will never trade oil for weapons. They don't do business that way. But we can give them technical know-how to strengthen their military capabilities. Even that process has to be without fanfare.

At some point down the road we'd have to slow down and try to reverse, but right now the inequalities between the Chinese and the Soviets are too great.

Allot: Do you foresee a period of great political unrest in China?

Kissinger: We are in such a period. The widow of the departed Chairman is arrested on the day the official mourning period for him ends. Look at the turmoil since I came to China in 1971. The Defense Minister and the number two man are accused of plotting. All the Chiefs of Staff have been removed since 1971. The Prime Minister and the Chairman have died. The man designated to replace Chou was disgraced and is now coming back. We have all this about the perfidious Group of Four. There is massive instability. How this must translate in the provinces -- it must produce extraordinary confusion and instability.

I have been struck by the amazing continuity of basic patterns in China. There is something to be said for the view that Maoism is Confucianism with Marxism attached. The idea of the State inducting a whole population into a canon of behavior is not new in their history. The problem is that the effort required for such a process creates a Mandarin class which in itself becomes a burden.

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I believe that Mao was right. In a country with a population of nine hundred million, and a bureaucratic population of thirty to forty million, if you don't shake them up every decade or so, you get a privileged class with a life of its own. The trouble with Mao's conception is that this would keep China perpetually weak. It couldn't modernize. In this respect, the Luttwak article is fascinating. With capital valued at zero, there is tremendous waste. Provincial autonomy develops because of the weight of the system. Strife is built in. I believe that the military and the modernizers will try to modernize China. That means they will be easier to deal with than when they are weak; harder when they are strong. It is a rickety system, impressive as they are. A strong China is in our interest, however. If the Soviets were able to shift the forty two divisions they have along their border with China, and place them in the West, it would have an enormous effect.

Marcy: What do you think about the Pipes report?

Kissinger: I do not think it is wise to get an outside group and make them the official critics. Or at least there should be more than one group. Intelligence analysis should not become a political football in a process which involves terrorizing the intelligence community.

My own estimate is that I don't believe that there is basic danger to the US in the field of strategic war. If we behave with a minimum of prudence, I don't believe that the Soviets would risk all on a single toss of the dice. Even their civil defense program poses no major problems. Assuming they could evacuate their cities, the US could move to launch on warning.

But even if you accept that they might reduce their prompt casualties to only nineteen million, "only" nineteen million people represents what they lost in the whole of World War II. The situation is manageable. It is not the strategic area where the US will suffer political penalties, providing we do not permit any really obvious gaps from developing. I don't believe that the Soviets are building towards some target date, like Hitler. They accumulate power. A fixed percentage of their GNP is going into military force, and as their GNP grows, so do their forces. Given that US personnel costs are twice those of the Soviet Union, they get more equipment on the same amount of money.

A consequence will inevitably be that regional forces will begin costing more and more. However, we have to strengthen our capabilities for regional defense together with Allies. There

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are some important corollaries. The defense budget is too service oriented, and too little oriented towards doctrine. It is dangerous to the world balance if regional balances are permitted to grow more and more out of line, and this is a point which policy should support.

The essence of Marxism is to convert quantitative into qualitative change. Therefore, the probability is for more erosion of the non-Communist world. Military capability is not good if you don't know what to do to resist. I was practically alone in the government in advocating that we resist in Angola. All the great worriers about SALT affecting our national security were silent. The margin in SALT is substantial. It would take a heroic effort to manage the SALT negotiations in such a way that the outcome would materially diminish our security. But for the US to permit 15,000 Cuban troops to operate in Africa is a first magnitude geopolitical change, which is bound to alter the political landscape in Africa, in the Carribean, and in Latin America.

We can't neglect strategic forces. But we have to have some overall understanding of the forces at play. We shouldn't have another Vietnam, but new problems should not be permitted to become unmanageable. We would have Namibia and Rhodesia settled today if we didn't have 12,000 Cuban troops settled in Angola.

Wheeler: What do you think of the Soviet shelter program?

Kissinger: There are two aspects: strategic and moral responsibility to a portion of the population. In strategic terms, the shelter program does not give the Soviets a decisive edge, except perhaps command and control. It is sort of a wierd system to plan for the death of tens of millions in a nuclear war, but not to plan how to save your society. I have always thought that World War I was a watershed in European political life. The results were so incongruous. In July 1914, who could have envisaged the deaths of millions, in a war which would go for years, and which all would be powerless to stop? In the inter-war period, no European government could conduct serious policy. World War II was different; it dealt with a monster, and all understood the need to fight -- but a nuclear war -- I think that concerns about Soviet civil defense are overdrawn in terms of strategic consequences. It is an incongruous situation for a country to plan for nuclear war and not to save its society. What do you think, Fred?

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Ikle: There was a study. We could make reasonable progress in limited protection for our population. We should also use our organizations for natural disasters rather than keep them wrapped up with planning.

Kissinger: There is no civil defense program I can think of that can affect strategy in a general war.

Wheeler: In World War II backyard shelters in the UK may not have offered much real protection, but some say they were important for morale.

Agnew: It is important to secure the means to rebuild. The Soviets may have done that.

Kissinger: We shouldn't underestimate the capacity of governments to keep programs going just because they exist. I don't believe that Soviet leaders are master planners, having met them. They are master manipulators of the Soviet bureaucratic system; dogged accumulators of power. A younger generation of leaders could be different. Another Mid-East crisis could be decisive in such circumstances. I can't see how the Soviets will indefinitely tolerate having their equipment scooped up. Soviet parachute divisions could appear on the scene. If they got away with that, it would whet their appetite. Hal?

Sonnenfeldt: There is a kind of peasant mentality which hoards for no particular purpose.

Kissinger: Over a period of time it becomes very dangerous.

Sonnenfeldt: They have a very powerful military-political complex.

Kirkland: What about non-proliferation?

Kissinger: As an historian, I am convinced that some nuclear spread is extremely probable. As a policy maker, I feel we should move heaven and earth. Even if we can buy only a decade its worth it to prevent it. Until now, nuclear weapons have only been in the hands of countries with well developed command and control systems. There is no question of their use in domestic strife. But in other areas, there could be really tremendous consequences, which we should avoid. While I do not believe their use in third countries might immediately involve the security of major powers, use in a war, for example, between India and Pakistan, could increase temptations for their use elsewhere. Israel could use them before permitting itself to be

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treated like Labanon. If survival is at stake -- Israel cannot imagine life under the Arabs; South Africa under native control.

The danger is that if we go too far in the non-nuclear direction with the Soviet Union, it could open up an avenue for exploiting conventional weapons. Although I have had some doubts about limited nuclear options, I believe the Soviet Union should not get the idea that they have a free ride in Europe. For that reason, I don't believe in defining thresholds too clearly, and I prefer keeping weapons on the Continent rather than at sea, even if they could be more effective there.

Wheeler: Do you see the Soviets reluctant to have the US withdraw from the continent?

Kissinger: If every US withdrawal would be equalled by a German build-up, the Soviets would rather have us. But if the Soviets thought they could get our troops out without an FRG build-up, then they would want it. In terms of Euro-communism, one third of the FRG is Communist. If the GDR ever does manage to present an acceptable image of itself, we will have a Euro-communist problem in central Europe. The more acceptable we make Euro-communism in places like Italy, the bigger the problem can be in central Europe. Not with Schmidt there -- but if I can't hold onto my job, can he? (Laughter)

Lehman: How should we move to redress the theater imbalance?

Kissinger: We now have to have long-term policy. The British over a period of centuries knew that Antwerp could not be permitted to fall. The UK would tilt toward a weaker European coalition regardless of what they thought of it. There is a moral question here, yes. And we need a moral policy. But the question is how to bring our objectives into line with our capabilities. We need to be militarily strong. We have to have political strength too. We have oscillated in the post-war period between extremes. We must deal with the reality of Soviet power over the long term. We needed detente in order not to let the question of the government's dedication to peace be a domestic issue. The American people had to perceive at all times that our government was dedicated to peace. But that's not enough. We need a strong military posture, and to maintain the world balance of power. The tough guys were never willing to weigh in where it really counts. SS-19 throw-weight is an important issue, but quite soluble. We made the low throw-weight decision ourselves in any event. We decided unilaterally. If we are not

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sophisticated enough to negotiate with the Soviets and at the same time to resist them, we will be caught further on in contradictions. We will not be able to hold our alliances together. The domestic debate in the US over the last few years has been very unfortunate. We can't escape our strategic problems with one tremendous effort. It needs a sustained policy. The Soviets can do it. They don't kid themselves that detente is the end of the process.

Agnew: We appreciate being with you today, and your candor. We are grateful for the cooperation we have had from your people and from Hal Sonnenfeldt. We wish you and Hal the very best for the future. Please call us if we can ever be of service.

Kissinger: It is one of the strengths of our country that outsiders will give their time to check the thinking of those in government. I have greatly valued my personal association with you, and I hope it will continue in various capacities in the years to come.

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