

Conversation No. 18-66

Date: January 11, 1972

Time: 3:43 pm - 3:49 pm

Location: White House Telephone

Participants: Richard M. Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger

[See Conversation No. 312-26]

Nixon: Hello?

Operator: Dr. Kissinger, Mr. President.

Kissinger: Hello?

Nixon: Well, how's it going today?

Kissinger: Mr. President.

Nixon: You've got any more of your work done?

Kissinger: Yes, I think we are going to make February 8th now.¹

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: We are making good progress. We are doing about a chapter a day now.

Nixon: Boy! I know it's a terrific job. Well, the...

Kissinger: Yeah, but I think this time we'll get a much better reception. Last year we put it out in the middle of the Laotian period.²

Nixon: Oh, God, that's right! It was rough, wasn't it?

Kissinger: And—Well, they didn't attack it, but they sort of buried it, because they weren't about—

Nixon: Yeah—

Kissinger: —to give you credit for...

¹ Kissinger was referring to his work on the annual foreign policy report, technically the "Third Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy." The report was submitted on February 9, 1972 and can be found online at The American Presidency Project at UCSB: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=3736&st=&st1=>

² Kissinger was referring to the Lam Son 719 operation, which took place from February 8, 1971 to March 25, 1971. The United States supported South Vietnam's Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in an attack on North Vietnamese supply lines in Laos.

The "Second Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy," which was submitted on February 25, 1971 can also be found online at The American Presidency Project at UCSB: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=3324&st=&st1=>

Nixon: Well, I suppose this time there'll be a—that we may expect that they, they'll be banging around there in II Corps and a few other places from what Al [Haig] tells me, but—

Kissinger: Yeah, I think—

Nixon: —but, we aren't—we can't do anything about it, Henry. I mean, as Al was saying, you know, if the South Vietnamese can't handle it now they never will be able to.

Kissinger: Well, that's right. And—but that's where our move next week is going to help a lot, because if their answer to our peace offer is an offensive—

Nixon: Right.

Kissinger: —that should certainly help us in public opinion here.

Nixon: Yeah. That is why, I think, making it perhaps on that date—

Kissinger: It's, on the whole, the best date—

Nixon: —the 18th is better than waiting, because we just don't know when they're going to start hitting.

Kissinger: I think—

Nixon: Otherwise, it might look like a reaction to an offensive.

Kissinger: Exactly.

Nixon: And—

Kissinger: I think, basically, the Russians are putting them up to it to overshadow the—we have an intelligence report today—

Nixon: Um-hmm?

Kissinger: —in which one of their people in Paris says they're going to do it so that they, in February, so that they can overshadow your trip to Peking

Nixon: Uh-huh. Well, it won't do that.

Kissinger: I don't think they've got that much power.

Nixon: Yeah. It won't—

Kissinger: On the other hand, it depends—it's a double-edged sword for them, because if they do it at that time you're overshadowing their offensive.

Nixon: [chuckles] Ha, ha. Yeah. Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

Kissinger: I mean from what I hear from Haig, and you, of course, have had a chance to talk to him personally...

Nixon: Um-hmm.

Kissinger: ...and to the others. I don't think there's any question any more that this—that they're going all out to make—

Nixon: Oh, that's right. Right. I haven't talked to the others today, except briefly, but Haig gave me a rundown.

Kissinger: They've paid the price now, and they have no interest—

Nixon: Um-hmm.

Kissinger: —I mean if they were to make the trip a failure...

Nixon: Um-hmm.

Kissinger: ...they'd pay—they've already paid the price for the trip, so, uh...

Nixon: Um-hmm.

Kissinger: ...they've got it heavier—a heavier investment than we have in it—

Nixon: Sure. Anything further on your—with, with Dobrynin? Have you checked with him yet?

Kissinger: I've checked. He's coming in around the 15th.

Nixon: I see.

Kissinger: And I've left word that I want to see him as soon as he comes in.

Nixon: Um-hmm. Well, that's the way to leave it. In the meantime, you have pending the thing from [Maury] Stans, which—

Kissinger: Right. I'll talk to Stans again tomorrow, and—

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: But that thing is going. I have no doubt, Mr. President, [that] they are going to try to embarrass us at the Peking summit.

Nixon: Um-hmm.

Kissinger: They are really not so much attacking us as Peking.

Nixon: Um-hmm. I see. Yep. Um-hmm. Well, fine. Fine. Then you can [soothe] him. See him on the 15th and that's that.

Kissinger: I'll see him—

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: —[unclear]. I think—

Nixon: If he wants to, yeah. That's— Well, he'd want to—

Kissinger: [Between] the 15th and 20th—

Nixon: But he's already in—

Kissinger: [unclear] I thought that he'd be in. I—

Nixon: But he's already—He has already—They've already indicated he wants to see you and—

Kissinger: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They've already said he wants to see me as soon as he comes in.

Nixon: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

Kissinger: So, uh—

Nixon: Did you talk to anybody there? Just have him call Vorontsov or what?

Kissinger: No, I talked to [Yuly] Vorontsov.

Nixon: Oh, you did?

Kissinger: Yes.

Nixon: And, uh—

Kissinger: There's no—I have every, uh—

Nixon: How was his temperature?

Kissinger: Oh, he's very friendly.

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: They, in their turn, Mr. President, they're taking a cheap shot at the Chinese right now.

Nixon: Right.

Kissinger: But as soon as that one is over they're going to go all out on theirs.

Nixon: But they'll want to overshadow the Peking one, won't they?

Kissinger: Of course.

Nixon: That's what I would think.

Kissinger: I think they have too heavy an investment in theirs.

Nixon: Right. Right. Well, ok, Henry. We'll, uh—

Kissinger: So—

Nixon: I'll be out of touch now. I'm going to Camp David in a couple of minutes, and I'll be out of touch 'til Thursday afternoon. I've got to go and do some writing, so I won't—

Kissinger: I'll be back—

Nixon: But if there's something—If there's something you have to call me about, you call me, but I won't be calling you, ok?

Kissinger: Well, I'll be coming back Thursday—

Nixon: And the same with—

Kissinger: —Mr. President . I'll bring a draft of that other thing—

Nixon: The same with Haig, I'm going—I'm not going to talk to him, either, so if you let him know that, to get in touch with me if there's anything I need to know, but otherwise I haven't—I'm not going to talk to anybody—

Kissinger: We won't bother you—

Nixon: —because I'll have to—

Kissinger: [unclear]—

Nixon: —I'll have to concentrate on the domestic stuff in this [State of the Union] in the meantime. Haig was telling me that the Laotians want 3 ARVN divisions in there. Of course that's out of the question.

Kissinger: Yeah.

Nixon: First, the ARVN wouldn't go without our helicopters, et cetera, and we just aren't going to go into that right now.

Kissinger: No.

Nixon: It's too bad, but—

Kissinger: It's a tragedy, because we're on the verge of victory.

Nixon: That's right. That's right. What do you—What do you project in Laos? Just—

Kissinger: Well, I—

Nixon: —continued deterioration?

Kissinger: —I think they're going to [lose]. They're going to—I think they're going to make a major gain in the North, and they may have an upheaval in Vientiane. But, on the other hand, it's a sign of weakness on their part that they have to operate on the fringes.

Nixon: Um-hmm. Well, there'll be some discussion of Laos here, but let's face it, most Americans are going to say, "Stay the hell out."

Kissinger: Well, I think we'll be dominating the news now.

Nixon: Because when we—When we went into Laos last year we didn't go in for the purpose of Laos, you know. We pointed that out—

Kissinger: Right.

Nixon: We went in for our own purposes. Right. How's the weather, pretty good I hope?

Kissinger: It's warmed up. It's perfect.

Nixon: Isn't that good? Well, I hope you sit—

Kissinger: It wasn't like that last time—

Nixon: Sit out in your little patio there...

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: ...get a little sun.

Kissinger: Right.

Nixon: Ok, Henry. Goodbye.

Kissinger: I'll see you on Thursday—

Nixon: You bet.