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By JB NARA Date 5-9-01

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

October 31, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: My Conversation with President Ceausescu
Tuesday, October 27

In accordance with our discussions in the morning on October 27 I met with President Ceausescu at 12:30 pm at Blair House. Attached at Tab A is a full memorandum of our conversation.

I opened by telling him that you had asked me to clarify three specific points to avoid any misunderstanding.

First, with regard to a coalition government I explained that there was a misunderstanding on his part as to what the North Vietnamese were willing to accept. Aside from the one part of the coalition which would be made up of members of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, the North Vietnamese want to be able to have a double veto over the other two-thirds of the coalition. They would be the only ones that could determine who was for peace, independence and neutrality and also whether it was genuine.

Ceausescu replied that he had received direct information that other than Thieu, Ky and Khiem, any other member of the Saigon Administration could be considered. He also stated that they were prepared to accept a coalition government comprised of many elements of the society.

I assured Ceausescu that if the other side was willing to enter serious discussions we were also, and that we had a very real interest in finding a settlement that they would maintain.

Secondly, I stated that it should be clearly understood that if the North Vietnamese tried to force a military solution on South Vietnam we would respond with extremely forceful measures and that they should be under no illusions on this point.

Thirdly, I relayed to him that you had wanted me to reiterate our interest in establishing political and diplomatic communications with the Peoples' Republic of China. I explained that such communication could be free from

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any outside pressures or questions of prestige and that we do not believe that we have any long-term clashing interests.

Ceausescu said that my second point was not very helpful since it combined a threat with an offer to negotiate. On the third point he said he would inform the Chinese leaders of our conversation and would pass on any communication from them as he had done in the past.

I closed with a personal note emphasizing that time after time we had met the North Vietnamese requests but that they have never entered into serious negotiations. I made it clear that they could not continue to deal with us in this manner.

The meeting closed with my relaying to him how much you valued his friendship and he closed by saying he hoped we would continue to approach the Vietnam situation in a positive spirit. I assured him we would.

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

TIME: 12:30 - 1:00 p.m., October 27, 1970

PLACE: Blair House

PRESENT: Nicolae Ceausescu, President of the Council of State
of the Socialist Republic of Romania
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Sergin Celac, Interpreter
David R. Young, Notetaker

Dr. Kissinger: President Nixon was very pleased with the discussions yesterday. He has asked me to come over and to clarify three specific points to be sure that there is no misunderstanding.

I.

You mentioned yesterday the problem of a coalition government in South Vietnam. You said that the other side has said that they would accept people from the present Saigon Administration in the coalition government. This is a misunderstanding on your part. What they have said is that the coalition government would be composed of three parts:

-- One part would be members of the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

-- The second part would be members of the present Saigon Administration other than Thieu, Ky and Khiem that "genuinely" stand for peace, independence and neutrality.

-- The third part would be persons who "genuinely" stand for peace, independence and neutrality but who are not connected with the Provisional Revolutionary Government or the present Saigon Administration.

The problem here is that only Hanoi can say who stands for peace, independence and neutrality. And in addition, if someone claims to stand for peace, independence and neutrality but is not one whom they like, they will say that he does not stand for genuine peace, independence and neutrality. What they are therefore asking is to nominate one-third of the members and to have a double veto on two-thirds of the coalition. We are not that naive. What they want is to compose the government; they do not want to negotiate.

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(Dr. Kissinger - continued) My purpose in explaining the foregoing is that President Nixon wanted you to understand what it is we are rejecting.

President Ceausescu Apart from reading the communique of the National Liberation Front on this point, before leaving Bucharest, I received certain direct information.

The main problem of the NLF is that they are not prepared to envisage the participation of Thieu, Ky and Khiem in the coalition. Any other member of the present Saigon Administration can be considered if, of course, such person is willing to be a part of the coalition. The coalition would organize an administration and supervise elections.

Dr. Kissinger As one who has studied Marx and Lenin I must say that the sharing of political power is not the most obvious conclusion that one is driven to from such a study.

President Ceausescu In this particular case, however, we are not considering Marxism or Leninism but a concrete issue.

My impression is that there is distrust on your part of the real intent of the National Liberation Front as to whether they are prepared to accept a coalition government. They are prepared and such a coalition would be comprised of many elements of the society such as well known neutralists, Buddhists, Catholics, etc.

Dr. Kissinger We do not have time to engage in a long discussion on this point but I can assure you that if the other side is prepared to discuss seriously with the present Saigon Administration we are likewise prepared to enter serious discussions and to seek a solution that gives the NLF a fair chance at sharing power. We have a very real interest in arriving at a fair solution since after everything is settled and we have left the other side will still be there. It is therefore in our interest to have a settlement they will maintain.

II.

My second point is that on the other hand it should be clearly understood that if the North Vietnamese think that they can force a military solution on South Vietnam we will again face the problem that we faced last year and which we talked to you about at that time. If they step up military actions we will take extremely forceful measures and they should have no illusions about this.

III.

My third point relates to your conversation with President Nixon on the People's Republic of China. The President wanted me to reiterate that

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we have great interest in establishing political and diplomatic communications with the Peoples' Republic of China. We do not believe that we have any long-term clashing interests. We are prepared to set up channels to the Peoples' Republic of China which are free from any outside pressures and free from any questions of prestige.

If the leaders of the Peoples' Republic of China want to tell us something through you and your Ambassador brings the communication to me, I can assure you that such communication will be confined to the White House. (Or if you wish to communicate with us through any other emissary, that is also acceptable.)

President Ceausescu On the subject of Vietnam, I must regretfully add that the last part of your communication is not very helpful. It adds a threat while proposing negotiations and this does not leave much room for an acceptable solution from the other side's point of view.

With regard to China we will inform the Chinese leaders of our conversation and if there is any communication we will pass that to you as we have in the past.

Dr. Kissinger I would like to add a personal word on Vietnam. In 1967 I was one of the people that was influential in bringing about the bombing halt. Since that time on seven different occasions we have been promised that if we did something we would have meaningful negotiations. As yet the other side has not responded in a meaningful way even though we have on each occasion met their request. I can assure you that if the North Vietnamese meet us in serious discussions we will make every effort to reach a peace but they cannot continue to deal with us as they have over the past few years.

I think that you and I understand each other and that there is probably not much point of continuing this part of our discussions.

President Ceausescu There is no point in continuing this type of discussion in the short time available though I would like to have a longer talk if it were possible.

I am persuaded that the North Vietnamese do wish to negotiate and that their proposals, perhaps combined with some of President Nixon's recent proposals, could form the basis for a settlement. If these points are discussed a solution may be found.

I told President Nixon that at the beginning of November we would be sending a delegation to North Vietnam. If any new questions arise at that time we can always communicate them to you. What has been brought up today is hardly new

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Dr. Kissinger But it is serious

President Ceausescu Our sincere wish is that negotiations will start and that a solution can be found.

Dr. Kissinger You should understand how much we value your contact and exchange of views and how much President Nixon values your leadership and friendship.

President Ceausescu I hope that President Nixon and you will proceed to approach the Vietnam situation in a positive spirit.

Dr. Kissinger I can assure you that we do and that we will continue to approach it in a positive spirit.

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