

TELECON
The President
5/17/72 9:52 a.m.

P: Hello.

K: Mr. President.

P: Hi Henry, how are you?

K: I'm fine.

P: Been plowing through these books. My God you gave me enough work for two months here.

K: Well I thought I'd . . . we'd make them a little full.

P: Yeah. No, no, it's an excellent job.

K: To give you the flavor of it because contrary to the Chinese, as you discerned yourself when you read the conversations, this fellow isn't really a very conceptual guy so he will be learning a lot of positions.

P: That's right.

K: And he won't necessarily know where he's going in the way Chou En-lai did.

P: Right, right. I understand.

K: So where the Chou En-lai meetings were very philosophical here I thought you needed to know . . . you don't have to touch on it, just if he raises an issue so that you have a feel for some of the details.

P: Sure, sure. Incidentally, one small thing I wanted to mention. Be sure you ~~warn~~ warn Gromyko and obviously Brezhnev that they've got to be very careful not to talk about the special channel where Rogers is involved.

K: Right.

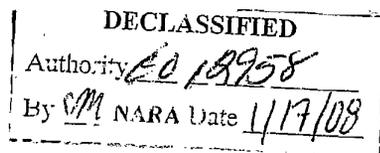
P: See what I mean? Because then we'd have to explain what the hell it is to him

K: I think they understand it but I'll make absolutely sure.

KP: You can see why.

K: Oh yeah.

P: So when you talk to Dobrynin, you just say now look . . . talk about the communication that Brezhnev and I have but let's not be . . . let's just be, you know, it's just one of those things. Somebody might drop a hint with regard



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to 'we'll do this in the special channel' and then Rogers will want to know what the hell it is and we just can't get this thing involved in that. / Well, you getting all prepared for yourself. ^{We're coming along.}

K: Oh yes, I saw the Chinese yesterday and gave them a rundown of what was . . .

P: Oh did you. Good.

K: And on your behalf went through the thing. ~~Was~~ And we will send them a letter later this week just before we go; I didn't want them to have it so they could show it around just before you're in Moscow.

P: Right, right. Well that's good; that's good. They're probably appreciative . . .

K: Oh very much.

P: Yeah, yeah.

K: They were mumbling around about Vietnam, just repeating their formal governmental statement.

P: Yeah. But you ~~was~~ mumbled back I presume.

K: Oh yeah. I just said . . . they didn't say . . . even mention mining as such. They were just talking about American military activities.

P: Yeah. Well anyway, one thing we can be sure of Henry -- there's no decision that's been made in the post-War period that's been more difficult or more necessary.

K: And more courageous.

P: Yeah. But we had to do it.

K: Because now it all looks, you know, as if we can have the best of all worlds, but the fact is we did this . . . you did this . . . assuming that the summit would be cancelled. For all you knew it would ruin any chance of re-election and you were doing it for the sake of the Presidency.

P: Well anyway . . .

K: Against total domestic opposition.

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P: You know I think perhaps the major by-product of this is . . . well there are two or three. One the morale of our own country, I mean the fact that you know by two to one people approve it -- you know, they're a little proud again.

K: That's right.

P: And second, the morale of the South Vietnamese. I think their morale is stepping up some, don't you think so?

K: Absolutely.

P: Based on what we've heard; I mean . . .

K: Absolutely.

P: ^{X?} Abd seems to feel that they're fighting better.

K: They're fighting much better; they're fighting much more aggressively. They're now clearing the road to An Loc and we expect that to be open in another 24 hours.

P: I guess Kontum is now the next point of attack.

K: _____ and that you have to expect that we will lose, but we must also keep our sense of perspective. We've always, even before we knew that the attack would take this form, did we think that Kontum would be lost.

P: That's right.

K: And it's now getting very late in the dry season for them to go very far from Kontum.

P: After they get it where the hell are they going to go?

K: ~~They'll go to Pleiku, and that's another two weeks, three weeks,~~ and by that time they'll be closed in. And it's not yet a hundred percent sure that they'll get it. I mean this could be like Long Tien.

P: Particularly with the air that Abrams . . . going to run 1200~~0~~ sorties tonight.

K: That's right. I expect them to get it, Mr. President, but I think that these people are getting hurt.

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P: Well whatever we do we want to be sure we continue to crack them in the North. ~~They get~~ ^{Take out} the balance of that bridge and whatever else is necessary.

K: Well, we're going to do that. These god-damned Air Force hasn't hit in the Hanoi area now for three days.

P: Weather?

K: Yeah, so it's now getting. . . It wouldn't be good to put everything in there just because . . .

P: Oh, I don't mean to put everything; everything should go on the battlefield/ first, but the point is they gotta get their 200 sorties in there as soon as it clears.

K: Oh yeah.

P: And

K: But all over the north, I mean all over the area. If they put them all into Hanoi itself it's going to be g too much noise.

P: Yeah well I understand; I understand. But they gotta get in there . . .

K: They've got to hit that bridge . . .

P: Let 'em know that we're still around.

K: Also we authorized a bridge 12 miles from China for just one strike just enough to get it dropped.

P: You don't think that's too close?

K: Well it's pretty close but I think at this stage it's more important to get these rail lines knocked out.

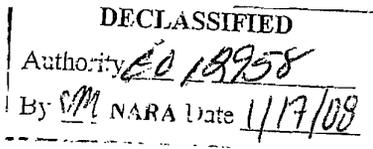
P: Right, right.

K: I mean we can't do it day after day but I think we can do it once before they get anti-aircraft in there.

P: Well, the way our friend Mansfield is acting he'll go up the wall again, but God damn him, he just does nothing but cut us up.

K: That's right.

P: Unbelievable.



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K: He's been incredible.

P: Yeah. Unbelievable. He's delayed this amendment, all that sort of thing; it's really something.

K: But we've got all the negotiations in good shape now Mr. President; I mean they're all concluded except the maritime agreement. ~~It's~~ ^{Smith} is unbelievable on SALT, incredible.

P: Yeah?

K: After screaming about 62 boats, he wasn't satisfied with accepting the Brezhnev formula; he's now come up with one of his own, that would enable the Russians to get up to 70 boats.

P: Jesus Christ.

K: For mere self-will, just to have proved another gimmick.

P: Well, just pin it down.

K: Well, we've pulled it back. He'd already offered it to the Russians; now of course the Russians like his offer better than theirs. Why not! Well, I'm going to get it pulled back, but it's an ~~absurd~~ absurdity. But I think we'll have that done by Sunday.

P: And so you're still planning the little trip from Salzburg.

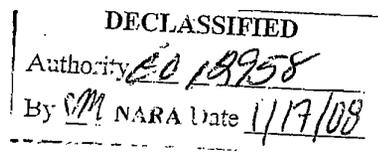
K: Well, I haven't had an answer yet. I think the chances are 50-50 that it won't come off. But then we can say we offered it.

P: Oh sure, sure. Well the point is we say we offered that and that we doing anything else with the Russians before we go. We're not going to agree to any damned plenary session though.

K: No, I think Mr. President, I've just rewritten one of the pages on Vietnam. The strategy with Brezhnev has to be the only way we will get them involved is not by protesting our good faith but by telling them one way or the other we are not going to end it.

P: Yeah.

K: By giving them the sense . . .



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P: Oh hell, I'm not going to protest good faith you know. That's the wrong way to do it.

K: The only interest the Russians have is the feeling that they will be confronted with one miserable choice after another for nothing.

P: Right.

K: If they get that sense then they'll settle.

P: Right, right. If you keep talking about withdrawal and we're ready to negotiate and withdraw . . .

K: That we can throw in too, but the major thing . . . the first thing to establish and this is where you were so wise when I was there in making me take that hard line, is to make clear that we are utterly determined, and by this time they believe things you ~~ya~~ say, threats you make. Then you can give them flexible possibilities. Another thing that's come up is that apparently State is again talking to the Russians and the Germans about signing the Berlin agreement while we are in Moscow. And I just think that's a mistake.

P: Just . . . sit . . . and we'll put out a . . .

K: I'll take care of it.

P: Just say that from me, I do not want any agreements . . . I don't want anything done except by ourselves, I don't want anybody else there.

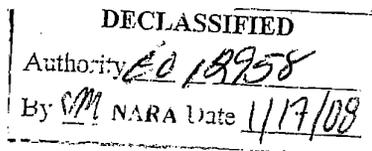
K: Yeah, well the present plan is for Rogers and Gromyko to come back to Berlin, but it would . . . I don't see why we should do that. We can do it later. Of course the treaties may not pass in time. There's another chance now to pull another little wrinkle which we've discovered which is that the German upper house we thought it had automatically to vote on it on Friday but we found that if there's one German state that wishes a delay in the debate they can delay it. So now we're looking around whether we can find a state that can ~~ka~~ ask for a delay without our getting caught at it. Because that's the best insurance you have for good Soviet behavior.

P: You will come with Dobrynin tonight after the dinner with Stewart Alsop?

K: Yeah, it's Stewart Alsop's birthday party; Joe is giving it for him. And I'll come up around midnight.

P: With Dobrynin.

K: With Dobrynin.



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P: Fine. We'll have a . . . we'll put you in Dogwood, the two of you.

K: Good. I think that's very nice.

P: And you're coming up late; we'll have breakfast say at 8:30 in the morning.

K: Good, Mr. President. 8:30. We'll come over to Aspen.

P: Fine, fine. We'll just keep the way things going and the . . . I don't think there's any reason . . . I know there are all these problems of trying to prove that the Commitment in '68 is not relevant to the situation today and all that sort of thing. I just don't think it all matters any more.

K: I don't think so. I'll be glad to meet with any group of people that you think . . .

P: Oh, but I think that the point we made that we don't need with anybody. Just let it through.

K: I think after the summit, Mr. President, if you want to, there's about a two or three week period in which I could with good effect get the word around how you orchestrated all of this. And I think that might . . .

P: But I don't think before the summit because that might jeopardize us

K: After the summit; after the summit.

P: What do you think?

K: I think after the summit

P: Because all these, these. I would think these damned _____ writers are climbing the wall anyway, aren't they.

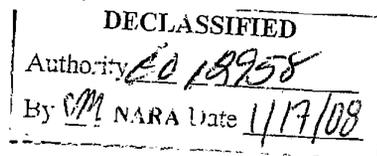
K: Oh they're going out of their minds.

P: Are they?

K: Oh yeah.

P: Yeah. They don't know how to judge this. They say the President was very rash ^{and} the Russians saved the summit, Jesus Christ, that's a great line isn't it.

K: Well, but even that . . . that is the sort of thing I can knock down, but it's better to do it after the summit.



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P: Right, give the Russians all the credit in the world at this point. Afterwards we don't have to worry about them.

K: Right, right.

P: Right. Okay.

K: I've been working with the speech writers this morning to make sure they get the right tone ~~in the~~ into your speeches.

P: Who you . . .

K: Safire, Andrews, and Price.

~~OK~~ P: All three of them work hard. It will come out; it will come out.

K: Oh sure.

P: I just . . . the one I hacked up . . . of course ~~that~~ particularly is that damned television thing. As I said, not a word over 1800 to to 2000 words. 2000 absolute maximum; preferable 1800 so that you don't go more than 30 minutes.

K: I couldn't agree more.

P: And that's what it's going to be

K: Right.

P: And everything else short, as short as possible. They can just not give me great long, I mean the toast should be 150 words, things like that. And that way it will force them to think more precisely and they don't say too much and yet they say enough.

K: Exactly.

P: Right. Okay, fine. Brevity is the thing. But I don't want any supplemental notes or anything of that sort because most of these things I'm going to read anyway because of the translation problems. I'm going to read the toasts and so forth and so on cause Brezhnev will read his, won't he?

K: Almost certainly, I would say ~~c~~ertainly.

P: Well, if that's the case -- you can discuss that ~~WX~~ with Dobrynin, say if Brezhnev and the Russians are going to read their toasts the President will read his so they don't think we're one-upping them. But then tell our people the main thing is Henry they gotta keep them short. Like for example, a toast or statement,

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so forth has got to be, since you've got to read it and then have the translation -- you've got to figure what we're talking about basically, 450 words maximum. Because 250 words means that it will take six minutes with translation and that's long enough, don't you agree?

K: I agree.

P: All right/

K: Good Mr. President.

P: All right, bye.