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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Gerald R. Ford
 Hugh Sidey, TIME Magazine
 Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
 for National Security Affairs
 William I. Greener, Jr., Deputy Press Secretary

DATE AND TIME: Friday, December 12, 1975
 11:35 - 12:25

PLACE: The Oval Office
 The White House

Sidey: Has the world improved over the past year?

The President: I inherited a fine foundation. We had to build from there. We had to convince our NATO allies I stood for American strength. Now the Alliance is stronger and our relations bilaterally are better than ever.

Also it was time to solidify our relations with Japan. U.S. -Japanese relations are now the best ever. My trip and the Emperor's trip here.

The Middle East -- the aftermath of the October war. We need to keep moving. We were disappointed in March but we have it now and the situation is better. There were some problems in the UN. The Sinai agreement lowered the danger threshold, but we can't rest.

In Southeast Asia, we have lost Indochina, but my trip in December was very helpful in convincing them that the U.S. continues to be an Asian power and we will resist expansion.

In Portugal, the situation is moving toward a solution. It is much better than several months ago.

In Spain, there appears, with Juan Carlos and the new Cabinet, to be a movement toward moderation. This will be a help in reentering Europe.



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~~TOP SECRET~~
CLASSIFIED BY A. ROBERTSON

With the USSR we have a chance for a SALT II agreement. We made headway in other areas. The five-year grain deal was good. There are many exchanges. But we do have serious differences: Portugal, Angola. Kissinger has spoken strongly on the Soviets in Angola and I support him.

Sidey: Are the Soviets cheating on SALT?

The President: I don't believe they are cheating. There are ambiguities and we have sent them to the SCC. There is an inevitable gray area.

Sidey: Is your relationship with Brezhnev good?

The President: I think it is a good candid working relationship.

Sidey: Does he have the people's interest at heart rather than just his personal power?

The President: He appreciates the danger of confrontations with the U.S. I think there is realization on both sides that we must try to find a way to avoid confrontation.

Sidey: Are you encouraged by the attitude of the Western Alliance leaders?

The President: Yes. They have their differences, but they are honest ones.

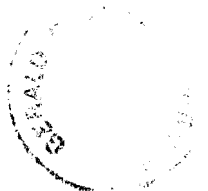
Sidey: Now do you see the outcome of U.S. -Soviet competition other than military?

The President: Aside from the military, I think our country can more than hold its own in economic or other competition with our free system.

Sidey: What are your foreign policy nightmares?

The President: The danger of some miscalculation by some nuclear power which could start a nuclear conflict.

Sidey: What if Israel should become a nuclear power to stabilize the Middle East?



The President: It wouldn't be helpful.

Sidey: Won't nuclear weapons inevitably be used? Kennedy thought so.

The President: I am not pessimistic from the leaders I know; it doesn't have to happen.

Sidey: Do you have enough power in foreign policy?

The President: There are frustrations. [Off the record] Angola is very frustrating -- it is so useless.

Sidey: Your religion. What has all this power done to that?

The President: I still pray. I think there is a higher order of things.

Sidey: Where does the U.S. stand in terms of power?

The President: In economics, the U.S. has proven our system works.

Sidey: Do you use the Hot Line?

The President: We have good means without that. I haven't used it.

Sidey: Does our agriculture power give us a blue chip advantage?

The President: It is helpful for others to know we have these reserves to help -- our friends and our opponents. I don't think we should use it in a crass powerseeking way.

Sidey: Can you trust these foreign leaders?

The President: No one has violated my trust thus far.

Sidey: How about the third century?

The President: The first hundred years stabilized the government structure. The second gave us the industrial corporation. Now we have new problems. Everything is big -- it tends to smother the individual.

Sidey: Have the attacks on Kissinger been unfair?



The President: In many instances, unfair, inaccurate and harmful.

Sidey: You are hard to parse. You are conservative in budgetary terms, yet pursue detente. How do you define yourself?

The President: I grew up in an isolationist, Fortress American environment. World War II showed us that the world was different. I became convinced of the role of the U.S. in the world.

Sidey: Why this foreign policy revolt?

The President: I think it is an outgrowth of Vietnam.

Sidey: Why do you have to see these leaders personally?

The President: I think it very important to have a personal relationship so you know what the words mean, what the matters mean, etc.

Sidey: What is the most encouraging thing?

The President: The incidents: Vladivostok, Sinai, Mayaguez. Otherwise the growth of personal relationships.

[The above are informal notes.]



P/Hughes Sidney (Personal notes)
11:35 12:15 20(?) Dec 75 ✓

S. Case would improve over a past yr.

P. I inherited a fine foundation - had to build from there. Had to convince NATO allies I was for strong strength, now alliance is stronger & our relations of bilateral ~~and~~ are better than ever.

Also strong to steadily solidify relations w/ Japan. US-Jap relations are best ever.

This trip & E trip were.

ME - aftermath of Oct war. ~~is~~ needs to keep moving. Disag. in war but have it now & sit to better. End jobs in CN. Syria lowered a danger threshold but we can't act.

In SEA, we have lost Indochina, but my trip was very helpful in convincing that US continues an Asian power & we will resist expansion.

In Port, a stand ~~strong stand~~ & sit is moving toward a resolution - much better than several months ago.

In Spain, there appears, w/ ~~the~~ Carls & Cabard, a movement toward moderation & help in settling E. Eur.

W/ USSR we have a change to Salt II, Arabs looking in other areas. Iran deal was good.

Travel & change, etc. are phases - but we - to have serious obj: Kostyol, Angela. K has spoken strongly on Arab Secs in Angela & I support him.

S. All Secs cheating on Salt

P. I don't believe they are cheating. There are ambiguities & we have sent them to SCC. There is a limited gray area.

S. Is your relationship w/ Buz good?



P I think it is a good candid working relationship

S Do we have some people's interest at heart rather than just his personal power. P He speaks a language of cooperation w/c US. I think there is nothing on both sides that we must try to find a way to avoid cooperation

S Are you encouraged by the attitudes of a Western Asian leaders.

P Yes. They have their differences, but they are honest ones.

S How do you see a continuation of US - Sino cooperation in the ~~future~~

P Aside from what I think some entry into more than half a dozen in economic or other cooperation w/our free system

S What are your F.P. nightmares

P Danger of some manipulation by some unreliable power which could start a nuclear conflict

S Should I be concerned more power to stabilizing NIE

P Wouldn't be helped

S What are your inherently desires? Kennedy that

P I am not pessimistic from a leader I know, it doesn't have to happen.

S Do you have any power in F.P.

P Take one frustration (offered) Argentina is very frustrating - it so useless.

S You explain. What has all this power done that

P I still pray. I think there is a higher order of things.

S Where does a US stand in terms of power

P Even, a US has power over system works.



S Do you use a Hot line

P We have good means w/o that. I haven't used it

S Don't you give us a blue chip advantage

P It's helpful for others to know we have these resources to help - our friends & our ~~partners~~ ^{opponents}. I don't think we should use it in a press promulgating way

S Can you trust these foreign banks.

P ~~Do you trust your counterparts~~ We can't have violated my trust this far.

S How about Fed entry

P The 1st hundred yrs stabilized - good structure. Ten year gave us industrial eng. Now we have war jobs. Everything is big - trends & smoother & aided.

S How a attacks on K have exposed

P In very extensive repairs, maintenance & overhaul

S You are hard to parse. You are inconsistent in budget lines, yet pursue details - How do you define yourself.

P I grew up in isolationist fortress America. I think WWII showed me a world we can't do. I would encourage of a role for US in a world.

S why this = P revolt

P I think it's an outgrowth of V.I.

S why do you have to do these lectures personally

P I think it's very important to have personal relationships so you know what a word means, what a matrix means, etc.

S What is current meaning of this.

In words: Glad, since my agency. It's a historical & present of personal relationships.

