

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~ ~~SENSITIVE~~

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Monday, September 25, 1967  
9:00 a.m.

*Pres. file*

Mr. President:

Herewith what may be very near the end of the Kissinger exercise in Paris; although you will wish to consider the state of the play carefully.

I myself lean to recent Soviet advice that we try to develop a Saigon-NLF contact.

We shall also have to be facing soon the question of the bridges and thermal power plant in Hanoi.

W. W. Rostow

Kissinger/Read Telecon, Sept 24, 1967

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NQ 94-400

By RLN, NARA, Date 4-5-95

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Kissinger/Read Telecon, Sept 24 (pm)

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-402

By iso, NARA, Date 3-24-95

Bo called M at 1300 on Sept 23 and asked M to come over. M met with Bo for more than an hour, starting at 1800. Bo Read the following message to M, which M took down in his own notes and read back to Bo to check for accuracy:

"1. The whole world knows that the US has pursued a constant policy of escalation against North Vietnam.

"2. After Hanoi was bombed, US planes hit Campha and Haiphong. As regards Haiphong, US planes have bombed it several times in a row and very violently. In addition B 52's have violently attacked the DMZ and Vinh Linh Province.

"3. As a result every one agrees that the bombing has been intensified in recent weeks.

"4. Washington's explanation about the bombing of Haiphong cannot be received.

"5. These are the circumstances under which you have suggested contacts with Kissinger. I accept your expression of confidence in Kissinger, but at the moment when US is increasing its escalation, it was not possible for me to see him.

"6. Turning to more general topics, I have spoken to you of the two-faced policy of the US.

"7. What has happened has confirmed me in that opinion for the attitude of the US exhibits all kinds of contradictions. It is possible to highlight this by a few examples:

(a) Together with the message of August 25, Kissinger has let me know through you as intermediaries that the US has stopped bombing of Hanoi for 10 days; then for 72 hours, and now the US tells us that the bombing of Hanoi is suspended without time limit. What do you think of the assertion that the USG of its own free will has suspended the bombing without setting a time limit?

(b) In fact what has happened is the stopping of bombing of Hanoi but the intensification of bombing elsewhere as in Campha, Haiphong and Vinh Linh Province, where the bombing has the character of extermination and systematic destruction.

(c) To say that by stopping of bombing of Hanoi the US has wanted to create better atmosphere is not true.

"8. With respect to the August 25 message, the essence of the US position is to offer to stop bombing with conditions.

In a message delivered by sealed envelope the US has replied that the offer is without conditions while asserting that the message of August 25 is still valid. 2

"9. As far as you and A are concerned, I have received you any time you have requested. I listen to you. I accept messages from you. I transmit them. I report fully to Hanoi. I call you when I have something to say. I believe that this demonstrates our good will sufficiently. However, as I have pointed out earlier, we have no illusions about American policy. What do you think of all this?"  
(end of message)

/(a)

In reply M said he would leave his role as messenger and state his own view that ~~fix~~ each US message had been accompanied by new escalation. With respect to Haiphong M only knew what K had told him, which was confirmed by the press: the US attacks had as their targets communication links, not the systematic destruction of the town itself. Still, M had to admit, American actions had made discussion more complicated. (b) With respect to the suspension of bombing of Hanoi, first for ten days, then 72 hours, then without time limit - this was not so much a contradiction in the evolution of American policy as a revelation of conflicting tendencies. (c) With respect to the message of August 25, M wanted to find out whether a reversion by the US to the level of bombing in early August would permit the initiation of discussions. On the last point Bo replied that Pham Van Dong had already answered that question. (K later asked M to seek elucidation on this comment by Bo.)

Finally M put a question to Bo, which K had asked M to do at an earlier meeting but M had not found it feasible to ask until the meeting on Sept 23. M asked Bo to ascertain from Hanoi whether M and A had correctly understood Pham Van Dong's remarks to M and A in July on the following exchange, which M read to Bo. (That exchange follows: Dong: We want an unconditional end of the bombing. A: Does that include a public declaration by the USG? Dong: We would prefer a public declaration but understand it would be difficult to give, so we will accept a de facto stoppage. A: Would there be a six month delay until talks? Dong: There is no question of a delay. We know how to meet each other). M told Bo there had been a stenographer at the July talks. Bo said Pham Van Dong's reported statements to A and M differed from public DRV statements, but Bo would send the exchange to Hanoi and ask if it was a true representation of Dong's position.

Bo again enjoined M to use greatest secrecy.

M related the foregoing account of his meeting with Bo on Sept 23 to Kissinger at the Paris airport on the morning of Sept 24. Kissinger criticized M strongly for having dropped his intermediary role and given Bo his own (M's) feelings on the bombings. Since K suspected that M's answer to Bo was probably even less sympathetic to the US than reported by M in section (a) of his answer, K asked M to seek a meeting with Bo later on Sept 24 and give him the following message from Kissinger:

"(1) I will transmit to the appropriate Washington officials later today the message you (Bo) gave M yesterday. (2) I see no point in trading charges and countercharges about past activities. In fact Washington has offered to stop bombing based on the assumption it would lead to prompt, productive talks. That offer remains open. It was made sincerely. If accepted, there will be no need to discuss escalation or bombing problems. (3) The exchange indicates that Washington and Hanoi have great difficulty understanding each other's thought processes. This makes direct US/DRV contact essential. Intermediaries, no matter how trustworthy, are not satisfactory substitutes. (4) American military actions during the past month reflect in part the extreme secrecy with which Washington has handled this exchange. The USG has considered it unwise to change decisions made prior to the report of M and A's trip to Hanoi, except in regard to bombing Hanoi itself, because it wanted to keep the circle of awareness of this exchange as small as possible to avoid premature public debate. (5) The difference in the positions of the two governments could be summarized as follows: Washington has indicated its readiness to stop bombing and has only asked to confirm its understanding of Hanoi's view that this would lead promptly to productive negotiations. Hanoi has implied that an end of bombing would in fact have this result. If this is indeed the view of both governments, the remaining obstacles to direct talks can be overcome. I am certain that the above correctly reflects US views. Could Bo confirm that it also reflects the view of Hanoi. (6) If Hanoi gave any sign that this exchange would lead promptly to productive negotiations reciprocal action by the US would not be lacking."

This point  
was dropped  
before message  
delivered to Bo

As noted on the preceding page, K also asked M to obtain Bo's clarification about the comment dealing with an answer by Pham Van Dong to the question of whether the resumption of the early August bombing levels would ~~xxxx~~ permit talks.

Comments by Kissinger: (1) K takes Bo's Sept 23 statement to constitute an answer to the US message of Sept 13. (2) It seems much less intransigent than the Sept 11 message; almost plaintive in tone. (3) It leaves the door wide open for a reply.

Note: Although Bo's reply again charges that the US proposal of Aug 25 contained conditions, those conditions are never

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identified. K thinks they may be reading the end of the first paragraph in the Aug 25 message as constituting conditions and believes it would be useful once again to advise Bo that no such conditions were intended or posed. K and M believe Bo acted on instructions on Sept 23. Future Procedures: For sending messages to Bo: (1) hand carry by Kissinger (on weekends) or by Cooper or otherwise; (2) Cable Embassy Paris the text of the message and have K phone M to tell M to pick it up at Wallner's residence. K will encourage M to call K when M receives a message from Bo and deliver it to Wallner for transmission.

Late Item: From a phone call late on ~~Sept~~ 24, K learned that M had been unable to deliver K's message today, and M has an appointment with Bo at 8.30 am on Sept 25 to make delivery. Because of the ambiguity and conditional phrasing of K's point 6, K will ask M to drop that point from the message actually handed Bo tomorrow.

BHR

Benjamin H. Read