

Tel Con
Theodore White/Mr. Kissinger
9:23 a.m., May 15, 1973

K: Hello.

W: Hello Henry.

K: Teddy, how are you.

W: How are you. I hate to bother you with this at this time.

K: That's all right, Teddy, I got your letter and I was very touched by it. I mean, this country is in a suicidal mood.

W: I don't think you know how bad it is.

K: Oh.

W: It is suicidal, Henry, you've got this God damned thing in New York where I know the pressure you are under. But people who telephoned me, important people, who say get him, get him, get him. As if they were gladiators that wanted to kill.

K: And as if it weren't their President.

W: It's unbelievable, I've never lived through anything like this. Bloodlust, that's what it is.

K: Yeah.

W: However. We didn't call up to talk about that, and I know how you feel.

K: Well you know four or five years of amassing capital in nickels and dimes is being squandered in thousand dollar bills.

W: Is the _____ that badly overseas.

K: No, but they will if things keep going like this.

W: It has to.

K: Not yet, but you know it's already starting in the monetary field.

W: It's a kind of a thing that I've never seen before. The only thing that could possibly go well is that they finally get bored with it. I don't think there could be much more to write about.

K: That's what I think everyday and then some other horror emerges.

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- W: Look, people have told me to withdraw the book from publication. I can't publish anything these days. You know, this man Nixon is not a villain, period. I think he's got a great foreign policy, what the hell.
- K: And even these transgressions are gonna be seen in a, you know, they are not going to be excused but it takes a much more complex analogy of what really happened. You know, there's a Walter Middy quality, because if you really analyze, I'm speaking as a friend.
- W: Of course.
- K: I mean who would burglar a psychiatrist's office. A psychiatric record is what the defense uses, not the prosecution. I mean supposing you find that Ellsberg is crazier than loon. What the hell can you do with it. And when makes this transgression explicable. From the point of view of the government it was better to have him sane.
- W: You see, other media, I've got a question of Howard Hunt's books here. They are crazy. This is a nondiscript little CIA employee who from his books himself seems unbalanced.
- K: So you know, if you compare the risks that were run--
- W: Would it embarrass you if I tell you how I'm treating Watergate. _____ in the whole chapter. And they are right, I can't write about it.
- K: No, no, you've got to do that. It's part of the campaign.
- W: I'm starting it off actually with a preoccupation, almost an obsession with foreign affairs. Will the systematic leaking, assault, the protest of the Australian government that the leak, the Pentagon papers, I'm gonna call it "Obsessed" whether I get sued for libel or not. To say that a government has to protect itself in some way but the authority to protect the government, you just can't give it to two lunatics in the basement.
- K: Yes.
- W: And go on from there.
- K: I think that's right, that is the problem.
- W: What.

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- K: That is the problem, people forget what it was like here.
- W: I have SALT, I have the Pentagon and the Bangladesh papers. Is there any way we could embarrass you, Henry. Can you talk over the phone. If not, let's cut this conversation off.
- K: No, no, I can talk on the phone. Well there were constant, there were leaks of NSC discussion, who said what--throughout the administration.
- W: It seems to me--to keep the government from doing it's ~~business~~ business. You see, I want to make clear distinction between these things. The leakage, between the fund raising which was really mad, Henry, someday I'll tell you about that. And then the accords. These are absolutely different things.
- K: Totally.
- W: But the red stuff now on the public mind is something--incredible.
- K: And the legal efforts, now you probably see it in the paper today, now their are going after what the FBI did to protect leaks. Which is totally different. It was always done in a legal framework.
- W: Rot. The word is inadequate. I saw FBI chaps at the beginning of the administration, was the king in those days.
- K: Of course.
- W: The matter is, let me if you have time to chat, let me first got through this prologue thing with you.
- K: Well let me go through, I've read it.
- W: Did you get my apology to you.
- K: Oh, it isn't even necessary because it doesn't look strange to me.
- W: The architecture of my book was, there are three great issues in this country, foreign policy, economics, and race, and to each there is a chapter. The chapter on foreign policy is the prologue. That's the grand architecture of the campaign speech. I have to cut that down now ~~to~~ because just to 8 or 10 pages. But I'd hoped to be able to use 30, and I feel I'm taking a lot of your time but this is _____.
- K: Oh, Teddy, you had no choice, so don't worry about it. Now I

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really have only one place where I want to cut.

W: Page ~~40(2)~~ 10.

K: These pages don't seem to be numbered.

W: They are very faintly, you tell me where.

K: You know, where is says where you quote my comments about Thieu and McGovern.

W: Yes, yes, yes--

K: I want that cut.

W: All right.

K: I mean y ou can say he was impatient with the government Of Thieu, I don't object to--

W: Impatient with ~~the~~ Thieu and with the government.

K: I don't mind your saying that if you take out both quotes.

W: All right, it's at the top of page 10.

K: That's it yes, I found it. Top of page 10.

W: All right.

K: Then in the next paragraph, this is not something that you need to do but simply for correctness sake. You say when Nixon first came into office and he, Kissinger, had joined the administration, the policy planning staff of the State Dept had prepared a set of study papers for them. That isn't true. Various elements of the government, you know, ~~w~~ach agency was asked to do a paper.

W: Various agencies, huh. Because I have in my notes which say, I soon as I got back--I jotted it down in my memory.

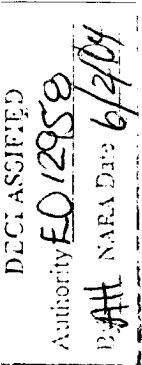
K: Well, if I said it I spoke loosely.

W: Well, let's get it correct. When Nixon first came into office, various agencies had prepared study papers for him.

K: Right

W: All right. On the Mao-Chou conversation, I don't think I blew anything.

K: No, where are they, can you give me--



W: Pages 6 and 7. That basically is, Nixon himself copy and then

K: You got that from the President didn't you.

W: Right. All those quotes are direct quotes from the President. I don't think ~~h~~ he gave anything away, I think it reads well both there and here. And then on page 8

K: That doesn't bother me.

W: That doesn't bother you.

K: There was only one point in there about Russia--no, no, that's all right. You can carry it.

W: _____ said that to me twice.

K: Yeah, but that doesn't make it politic to say.

W: _____ he talked to Vietnam _____ of Russia.

K: No, no, that's okay.

W: Anything else that you want to add to that, I'd love.

K: No.

W: Well, is this set okay with you Henry.

K: Yeah.

W: Can I hold you on the phone for a few more minutes.

K: Sure.

W: What's the situation there at the White House. _____ is madly.

K: Well, you have a group of people who believed in administrative loyalty but not in substantive loyalty. You know, they are not devoted to a cause but to a structure, and that structure has now disintegrated. So they are unguided bullets.

W: Haig at least has integrity as far as I know.

K: Oh, Haig is magnificent.

W: He'll be okay.

K: Haig will be all right. I'm talking about the old group. Haig will manage to pull it together.

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W: Did you ever know Dean ~~Forrest~~ yourself?

K: He was a figure I saw sneaking around, you know walking around the halls. And so I knew him, but I didn't know his name, and you know I never put his name with his face. I'd occasionally get a legal paper from Dean, signed Dean, but I never associated the young kid I saw running around with that name. I never was at a meeting with him. And I never heard him recite, I mean I'm not talking about Watergate I never heard him recite on any subject. So I have no feel whatever for his cast of mind.

W: I sort of--let me go on and you know how to guide yourself. I have tremendously troubled mind. I liked John Ehrlichman.

K: I do too.

W: I want to say a good word for him. You know, you used the word "compassion".

K: I agree, I still maintain it.

W: I think that of all the guys involved, he is the guy that most deserves compassion.

K: I agree.

W: I mean, ~~xxx~~ in a human sense, do you--would you agree with that.

K: Totally.

W: It exposes me enormously, but what the hell.

K: I totally agree with you.

it followed

W: I think what he did is inexcusable. Because/those plumbers, as soon as they raided Ellsberg psychiatrists office.

K: No question.

W: But I think he did a lot of good on the way somewhere.

K: You see, the weird thing is, I know Krogh, I happen to know him because he was in the Bahamas once when I was there. Now what is so amazing is he is a God fearing, decent, middle American. This is not a nut. And he's dull, boring, and if you had told me 6 months ago that he would burglar an office, I would have told you that you had lost your mind.

W: Were you aware of a plumbers operation going on.

K: No.

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W: You were unaware of it.

K: I was unaware of the operation. A member of my staff left me, when I was on my secret trip to China, and joined Ehrlichman's staff. Physically moved in there. And I thought for the first three months he was working on classifications. And he did, there was a study of classifications generated by the Ellsberg papers. After that, I didn't know what the hell he did. But I had never heard the word "plumber", the content of their operation, and the first thing I heard about it was in April.

W: This April?

K: Yes. You know, when it came out in the newspapers. Nor did Haig ever hear of it.

W: It conceivably could be Haldeman certainly knew.

K: I just cannot judge.

W: You can't.

K: You know, I cannot imagine--the unprofessional--forget the morality of it, now why anyone would think they could get away with forging a cable from Kennedy to the field when the former Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Cabot Lodge, and others are still alive. It just boggles your mind. Apart from the total immorality of doing it. But I mean supposing they were going to give that cable to some newsman, how long do you think it would have lasted.

W: You probably know more about this than I do, but

K: I don't know a God damned thing about it.

W: Well, I'll tell you, you see when Joseph Kennedy died, Bobby asked me to go through his papers with a view to ~~public~~ publication. And I've gone through all the papers. They all advised Bobby and Jackie, but for Christ sakes if you publish these papers, you are going to blow Kruschev papers, DeGaulle correspondence, no foreign chief of state is going to talk to an American President again because _____ blows everything wide open.

K: That's right.

W: So at best, it would 20 years to publish the papers, and some of that stuff is marvelous reading. In there, I saw some of the cables to which they refer.

K: Look, there is no doubt that we triggered the coup. That doesn't mean we ordered the assassin --

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- W: The key cable is one from Henry Cabot Lodge.
- K: Oh no, those cables--I've seen the actual cables.
- W: Yeah. You see, we don't know what the hell is going to happen if this coup goes ahead, it's unpredictable.
- K: Well noone has denied that we triggered the coup.
- W: But there's nothing that _____ did, nothing whatsoever, of that kind.
- K: Look, there is no motive, there is no possibility that Kennedy would order the assassination of _____. Apart from the morality of it, it is no doubt that we triggered the coup.
- W: The thing is to me ~~was~~ totally unbelievable. I still think my approach to the Watergate theft has to be that this comes out of an obsession with national security and the foreign policy on Nixon's part. He finds himself operating in a goldfish bowl. The Bangladesh of course blew sky high. It would have blown me sky high. I mean he then has to do something, and then being uninterested in administration, he himself was, Nixon,
- K: Right.
- W: He turns this thing over down the line to Ehrlichman, Ehrlichman to Krogh, Krogh to these two nuts.
- K: Right.
- W: That's--later on the thing becomes a cancer.
- K: That's right.
- W: As for the cover up, I'm not going to talk about it at all, I can't understand what happened yet.
- K: Nor can I. Okay, Teddy. Teddy I think actually if you write a--I think a lot of people are going to feel very sheepish a year from now.
- W: Well, I'm going to do my best. You simply have got to understand the pressure on me and my publisher, and my staff.
- K: Look I have no question. There are two newsmen here in town who are doing a book on me, and their publisher trying to keep my good will asked them to delete any reference linking me to Nixon.
- W: Oh, for Christ sake.

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K: (Laughter) You know that's sweet, it's touching.

W: Yeah.

K: And also to list, to compress the chapter, they had a chapter of 80 pages on Vietnam, and they were asked to compress to 15 because that publisher didn't want to have me linked to Vietnam. You know, I am flattered, he did it to protect me. So I understand what New York must be like.

W: Crazy. Listen I take it you are going off to Paris this week.

K: Tomorrow.

W: If on your way back you come to the house and have a drink, I'd love it you know.

K: Okay Teddy.

W: Please try.

K: Good, bye.

W: Bye.

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