

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON



November 25, 1969

SECRET ATTACHMENT

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Jeanne W. Davis *JWD*

SUBJECT: Minutes of Review Group Meeting on Sino-Soviet Differences

I attach the minutes of the November 20 Review Group meeting on Sino-Soviet Differences. They have been reviewed by Hal Sonnenfeldt and John Holdridge.

Attachment

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DECLASSIFIED  
Authority  
By *MM* NARA Date *11/19/05*

SECRETNSC REVIEW GROUP MEETING 4963

Thursday, November 20, 1969

Time and Place: 3:05 P. M. - 4:00 P. M., White House Situation RoomSubject: U. S. Policy on Current Sino-Soviet Differences  
(NSSM 63)Participation:

Chairman - Henry A. Kissinger	JCS - Rear Adm. Frank W. Vannoy
State - William I. Cargo	OEP - Haakon Lindjord
- Donald McHenry	
- Miriam Camps	USIA - Henry Loomis
Defense - Richard A. Ware	NSC Staff - Helmut Sonnenfeldt
- Y. L. Wu	John Holdridge
	Richard T. Kennedy
CIA - R. Jack Smith	Jeanne W. Davis

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

It was agreed that:

1. the problem should be considered by the NSC even though there was no immediate operational decision to be made;
2. for purposes of the NSC discussion, we would distinguish between neutrality on the Sino-Soviet dispute and neutrality in our relations with China and the USSR;
3. the basic paper would be carefully reviewed by the NSC Staff and any proposed restatements would be discussed with the State representatives;
4. following this review, suggestions for handling the paper in the NSC would be discussed with the RG members early next week;
5. if desired, the oral presentation for the NSC will be discussed with the State representatives;
6. the considerations in the Defense Department supplementary paper will be brought before the NSC in some form or other.

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Mr. Kissinger opened the meeting saying that the group was considering a longer range version of the paper considered at the previous Review Group meeting. He posed the usual questions: (1) should the paper go before the NSC, and (2) does the paper adequately and properly define the issues -- is it what we want to put before the President? He noted that he would return later to the DOD supplemental paper with a view to fitting it in in some way. With regard to an NSC meeting, while there was no immediate operational decision to be made, he thought it would be useful for senior officials to address the problem. His personal recommendation would be for an NSC meeting.

Mr. Cargo agreed that while we had no immediate operational decision, the general situation would not go away.

Mr. Kissinger asked if all agreed on an NSC meeting. All consented. He asked for the views of the group on the way in which the issues are posed.

Mr. Cargo said that the original paper was considered to be oriented too much on presumptions of U.S. policy although these presumptions were thought to be correct ones. The present redraft had been cast more in the options mold.

Mr. Kissinger asked for views on how the options are stated.

Admiral Vannoy said the JCS had no problem.

Mr. Smith questioned the wording of Option A. He asked what new opportunities might be open to the Soviets.

Mr. Cargo said that the wording was intended to reflect a Soviet response of displeasure. He thought there would not necessarily be new opportunities but that the general fallout of Option A would be Soviet hostility.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the Soviets were not doing anything now that they could do if they became annoyed.

Mr. Cargo mentioned further penetration in Eastern Europe.

Mr. Smith added Berlin, but noted that it was not mentioned.

Mr. Kissinger asked if, leaving Berlin aside, we considered that the Soviets were operating at less than full capacity.

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Mr. Smith thought they might intensify activities in Africa and Latin America.

Mr. Kissinger agreed that they could move more actively in other parts of the world.

Mrs. Camps thought, in general, they could agitate more noisily.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the Soviets made more noise, would not the effect be to drive Western Europe more toward the U.S.

Mrs. Camps thought the Soviets would be even more nervous about the situation in Western Europe and would likely review their options in Western Europe with a view to intensifying their efforts. She thought the Soviets would undoubtedly be more concerned about a Western Europe allied with the U.S. in active support of the Chinese.

Mr. Kissinger commented "unless you assume they do not want a Western Europe allied with the U.S. at all." He thought the Soviets were at the maximum of what they can feasibly do. If we actively support the Chinese, the Soviets would undoubtedly be much angrier but he did not know what they could do operationally.

Mrs. Camps thought that they would be more concerned with regard to Western Europe and those countries bordering China.

Mr. Cargo asked if it would help to change the phrase on page 3 of the paper from "increasing their efforts to detach Western Europe from the U.S." to "increasing their efforts to weaken the U.S. position in Western Europe." He personally doubted that the Soviets are moving at full intensity.

Mr. Smith agreed this was true worldwide.

Mr. Lindjord thought that the use of "detach" was a problem but said OEP had no other questions on the paper.

Mr. Ware had no comment on this issue.

Mr. Wu thought Soviet reaction would depend on the time and circumstances. He thought the Soviets under pressure, while annoyed, might react in the opposite direction from that indicated in the paper.

Mr. Loomis had no comment on the paper.

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Mr. Cargo asked if the revision that he had suggested would meet the concerns expressed.

Mr. Smith thought it would help.

Mr. Kissinger said he had no major problem with this formulation. However, he questioned the posing of the options, commenting that the only realistic option seemed to be C.2. With regard to Option A, he thought the political issues stated were the extremes. To support Chinese border claims would be practically to declare war on the USSR. He thought even to support the moves with regard to the GRC without undertaking the anti-Soviet moves would be pretty extreme. He had no objection to including the Option if it were understood that these were extreme cases. He thought, however, we could have a more subtle policy short of overwhelming provocation of the USSR. If the principals saw Option A as the only version of support for China, it would be too easy for them to reject. The same was true of support for the Soviets. He thought we could find ways of leaning toward the Soviets without taking the view that China is the aggressor or without supporting the Soviets in Western Europe. He found the Soviet case less extreme, however. He thought we could state our support for either side within a framework of a policy that we have no interest in measures that would bring about war. All-out support for China might produce a Soviet preemptive move. If we undertake all-out support for the Soviets, they might take this as a signal for them to take care of China and might then make a preemptive move. He thought we should, for the principals, flag the conditions under which support for either side might produce preemptive action, without at the same time rejecting a policy of support for either side.

Mrs. Camps said that the summary of the options was not adequate and that any paper for NSC consideration must be expanded to reflect the full flavor of the options as stated in the full paper. Each option contains sub-options involving questions of degree. It was difficult to analyze every conceivable sub-option and very hard to define what the limiting factors would be.

Mr. Kissinger noted that the options as stated might always produce an attack on China; it would be very hard to produce an attack on the Soviet Union.

Mrs. Camps thought that Option C.2. leaves room for movement in our relations with China.

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Mr. Kissinger recognized the problem and agreed that it would be a mistake to redo the paper to include every conceivable combination of measures. He thought it would be possible to add some material to define limited cases -- that gradations were possible within the statement of consequences. He thought Option C. 1. combined the disadvantages of every course and that it would be considered more threatening to the Soviets than to the Chinese. He thought we needed a subtler approach.

Mr. Kissinger moved to the question of the U. S. position in the event of hostilities. He thought it was hard to believe that the Soviets would want more from us than neutrality. Neutrality would, in fact, equal support for the Soviets. Support for China might achieve nothing and might find us backing a losing cause. There was also a question of the limited degree of support we would be willing to give. Anything more than that would require massive activity. He noted statements by the Secretary and Under Secretary of State to the effect that neutrality resulted in support of the Soviets. He admitted that while he understood the question, he did not know the answer.

Mr. Cargo agreed that we were imprisoned by this.

Mr. Kissinger asked what our attitude would be in the event of a Soviet preemptive strike. Would we say "a plague on both your houses"? Would we condemn the move? Would we do more than condemn?

Mr. Cargo thought we would suspend the SALT talks.

Mr. Kissinger surmised that if the Soviets should undertake a preemptive strike against China, they would claim in the SALT talks that they had done our work for us. Should we not resist the principle of such unilateral action even though it might be advantageous to us?

Mr. Sonnenfeldt commented that the WSAG had agreed this would set a bad precedent.

Mr. Cargo agreed that the analysis was correct. Since China is the weaker power, a stance of impartiality would be more favorable to the Soviet Union than to China. He thought there were still sensible alternatives. A minor injection of U. S. sympathy and support for China would be ineffective and would only irritate the Soviets. Massive U. S. support of China, with the implication of military support, was not thinkable as U. S. policy.

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Mr. Kissinger agreed with Secretary Rogers' television statement that our essential position is and should be one of neutrality. He asked whether it was not possible within the spectrum of neutrality to carry out policies slightly leaning to one side or the other. He thought the President wished to indicate the existence of a Chinese option although our declaratory policy would be neutrality. He thought opening up certain exchange possibilities would not necessarily mean giving up neutrality.

Mrs. Camps thought this was adequately provided for in Option C. 2. The concept is that since one starts with a different relationship with China than with the Soviet Union, actual neutrality would require doing some positive things with China. On the other hand, since we already have some relations with the USSR, it would involve primarily pursuing these relationships in Berlin, SALT talks, etc. We now have relations with the Soviets; we do not have relations with China.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt thought we should distinguish between the question of neutrality on the merits of the Sino-Soviet dispute itself and neutrality on our relationships with each country.

Mrs. Camps thought this had been done in Option C. 2.

Mr. Kissinger thought C. 2. would make this possible. He noted, however, that the NSC principals would be coming fresh to this discussion. He thought we might handle this concept in the oral presentation at the NSC meeting and offered to discuss this presentation with Mr. Cargo and Mrs. Camps. He thought the other options (A and B) might be stated as extremes without foreclosing the possibility that we could take measures leaning toward one side or the other without becoming involved in the dispute. He thought we could lean toward China but that it would be extremely unwise for us to get into the border dispute. He agreed with Mrs. Camps that there was a question of how one defines neutrality. He thought Option C. 2. could be interpreted two ways: (1) stay out of the dispute but pursue U. S. interests with both countries, or (2) stay neutral across the board. Options A and B called either for taking a stand on the dispute or at least leaning aggressively toward one or the other side. We could take steps toward China which would annoy the USSR but could still stop short of the big issues. For example, we could promote maximum trade with China without getting involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute -- still throwing our weight toward China.

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Mrs. Camps thought it would be unrealistic to go very far toward China without some reciprocity.

Mr. Kissinger asked then what was the meaning of Option A.

Mrs. Camps commented that the steps described under Option A would have to be extreme if they were good enough to bring Chinese support.

Mr. Kissinger agreed on the question of reciprocity but thought leaning toward China with reciprocity would be Option C.2. He thought Option A had been stated as an extreme, but was impressed by Mrs. Camps' arguments on the question of reciprocity.

Mrs. Camps reiterated that the summary was not adequate and that the paper should be read carefully. She thought the nuances that Mr. Kissinger sought were present in the paper and that fiddling with the options would not make the issues any clearer. She suggested that the summary be dropped.

Mr. Kissinger said he had skimmed the full paper but had read the summary carefully.

Mr. Cargo thought they could not do much better with the paper if they presented options that are discernible. He thought there was a spectrum of steps toward China and Soviet reaction to them. The lower end of the spectrum of Option A is incorporated in Option C.2. -- neutrality but pursuing our own interests. He thought the options were more easily seen at the upper end of the spectrum. For example, some policies under Option C.2. would constitute support for China. He considered the present division of the options not a bad one.

Mr. Kissinger agreed to read the paper carefully, saying he thought all now understood the problem.

Mrs. Camps assured him that the full paper would meet his preoccupations.

Mr. Kissinger agreed to read the full paper and, if he thought any restatements were required, to discuss them with Mr. Cargo and Mrs. Camps. For purposes of the NSC meeting he thought we should distinguish between neutrality on the dispute and neutrality in our relations with China and the USSR. Neutrality on the dispute would not necessarily preclude our leaning toward one or the other. He agreed we could not go far with Option A without reciprocity. If there were such reciprocity this would mean a diplomatic revolution. This might result in our foregoing our neutrality on the dispute -- that is, of forcing us to take a position on the dispute itself. He thought this should be stated clearly for the President. On the

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other hand, support for the USSR would not result in a revolution of the same magnitude. He agreed that any significant revisions of the paper would be discussed with all RG members.

He then turned to the Defense Department's supplementary paper. He thought this paper was based on a different set of assumptions and in a different time frame. He thought the views of a senior department must go before the NSC for consideration with equivalence to those of other departments. He thought the DOD paper saw certain cataclysmic events taking place beyond the options stated in the paper.

Mr. Ware said the DOD paper went a step beyond the basic paper. He referred to some of the questions on page 4 of the DOD paper which he considered not unrelated to some of Mr. Kissinger's comments. The DOD paper raised the question of how to get concessions from China, given the pressure they would be under. He thought we should not dismiss the possibility that a worse situation might be created on the mainland of China. The DOD paper attempted to explore what should be U.S. attitudes: (1) at the existing level of Soviet-Chinese relations; (2) in the event of a preemptive strike, and (3) in the event of protracted conflict. He said he did not know how these could be blended into the existing paper.

Mr. Kissinger noted the questions raised on page 4 of the DOD paper, commenting that these did not include the question of what unilateral policies we might pursue for our own objectives. What would we expect in return?

Mr. Wu thought we could ask for certain quids pro quo.

Mr. Kissinger asked if it would be in terms of "if we move into Option A, this is what we could expect to get for our position."

Mr. Ware noted, however, that even in a situation of U.S. neutrality the Chinese might fear that we could not remain neutral.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt thought this would depend on their judgment as to what U.S. neutrality means.

Mr. Wu noted that the various options stated would have to be applied within a certain environment of relations between the two countries: the present situation, increased pressures, hostilities, or preemptive strike. They would have to be considered in relation to whether the Soviets had succeeded or not.

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Mr. Kissinger thought we could take care of some of the DOD points by expanding the present discussion in the paper.

Mr. Wu thought this would require extensive rewriting.

Mr. Kissinger said an alternative would be to make the DOD supplement an annex to the basic paper.

Mr. Ware suggested that two summary paragraphs be inserted in the summary of the basic paper to note the existence of a supplementary series of comments, then send the supplementary paper forward to the NSC.

Mr. Kissinger said that ideally the paper should have some interdepartmental sanction; however, he could not refuse to let the DOD paper go before the NSC, either as an annex or otherwise. He saw the major thrust of the DOD paper to be consideration of a major war or a possible cataclysmic breakup of China and of the sort of concessions we might get in this situation. He had no problem with a presentation of these considerations. He asked if the question of U.S. policies in the case of major war or cataclysmic changes inside China might not possibly be more useful as a contingency study?

Mr. Wu thought cataclysmic change might include support of a pro-Soviet China without actual war.

Mr. Cargo thought the question was how the DOD paper impinges on NSSM 63 or on the WSAG exercise. He could not say there was no possibility of the occurrence of the conditions described in the DOD paper. He did question whether they were possible enough to warrant the time required of senior people for lengthy analysis. If it was agreed to pursue these considerations, he thought the first step should be to get an intelligence estimate as to their likelihood.

Mr. Ware expressed the view that the Soviets might like to see internal change in China.

Mr. Kissinger asked why the U.S. should support a pro-Soviet government in China.

Mr. Ware asked what we would do under those conditions.

Mr. Kissinger asked what could we do?

Mr. Kissinger said that if the Secretary of Defense wishes the paper to go before the NSC it will, of course, go. He thought he owed it to the Defense Department to find a way to integrate the DOD paper as a possible approach.

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Mr. Ware offered to sit down with State Department representatives in an attempt to work out means of incorporating or adding the DOD considerations to the basic paper.

Mr. Kissinger thought this would be difficult since the DOD paper operated on different assumptions in a different time frame.

Mr. Smith agreed with Mr. Kissinger that the DOD paper might be considered in the contingency context.

Mr. Ware thought the DOD paper was more than that since one alternative therein dealt with the existing situation between the USSR and China.

Mr. Kissinger agreed to study the basic paper carefully and to come back to the RG members early next week with suggestions for handling the paper in the NSC. He thought the discussion has been useful in clarifying the issues and assured Mr. Ware that the Defense considerations would be surfaced one way or another.

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