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Averll Harriman's diplomatic activities of 1965, continued

[sync] Averell Harriman interview

Washington, DC

January 29, 1979

Interviewer: Stan Karnow

Harriman interview. Reel 4

Interviewer:

[sync]Where did you go after Warsaw?

Harriman:

[sync]I left the next morning and went to see my friend Tito. I had a most interesting talk with him. He'd been one of the non-aligned nations, seventeen I think there were...I'm not sure of the exact figure...that had urged a peaceful settlement. He said that...I asked him to use his influence...he said that he had...had some influence perhaps in Moscow which he'd use but...and the Chinese they look upon him as his worst enemy.

[sync]And he said you realize last week they called me a revisionist bandit. And I said, well that's nothing, they call us imperialist bandits all the time. "Oh, but you don't understand that revisionist is far worse a character than an imperialist." Tito had a certain sense of humor. But in seriousness, he did send word to Moscow, but he couldn't do anything, but he said you ought to see Nasser.

[sync]You know, Nasser was good friend...one of...non-aligned...and I wanted to get to...I wanted to get...I heard that there was a...a Russian group going to Hanoi. And I wanted to get word to uh the Russians...that a meeting in Tashkent...and uh...

[sync]I wanted to get word to my friend Kosygin that he should tell them to use their influence So I went to see...went to New Delhi next and I saw Shastri who was about to go and he agreed to talk...to them. And I saw General Ayib, President Ayub Kahn, President of Pakistan, and he also agreed. So both of them were on their way to Tashkent. They certainly talked to the Russians about this. And then I stopped to see the Shah, because I knew he'd be insulted if I didn't see him. I've known him for...so long. Then went on to Nasser. I had a very interesting talk with Nasser.

[sync]He said that the Chinese were very difficult. They were very much for the war and didn't want to interrupt it. Whereas, the Russians wanted to stop it. He confirmed again what I told you. He was well informed about it. He said he would take up the subject with both the Chinese and the Russians. He thought...the Chinese first, because they were the most difficult.

[sync]I got quite a different impression of Nasser. He was a very courteous. I spent the evening in his home. He was very courteous and made a lot of sense. There was nothing dramatic about it. He...talked about the situation in a very intelligent way. And then I went on. It seemed that I should...I stopped at Thailand...Went to Vientiane, Laos because I was in that area. But I went particularly to Japan.

[sync]I saw Soho who was the Prime Minister and they were very anxious to see the war stopped. I went to see my friend Menzies in Australia and he was for winning the war. He

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thought that Vietnam was...was just as important to Britain as Berlin was. He was very vigorous and wanting to continue it but...They had some soldiers there you know, and they were involved. [sync]Then General Dean, not General Dean, but Dean Rusk wanted me to join him in India and proceed together. He was coming out that way. So I went and joined him and we went on to the Philippines and on home. It was a fascinating trip and I got to know what different people thought about this all over the world...But the biggest impression that I had from all of them, not all of them... overwhelming majority of those that knew was that the Chinese wanted to keep that war going. And the South Vietnamese were influenced by them...whereas the Russians wanted to see...

Interviewer:

[sync]Sorry. Would you do that over again? The Chinese wanted to keep it going and the North Vietnamese not the..

Harriman:

[sync]The North Vietnamese.

Interviewer:

[sync]Yeah, you said South Vietnamese...

Harriman:

[sync]What'd I say, no the, one of the...North Vietnamese...

Interviewer:

[sync]Just take it from the beginning, would you?

Harriman:

[sync]The uh...

Interviewer:

[sync]Overwhelming impression.

Harriman:

[sync]The uh...Chinese wanted to have the North Vietnamese continue the war. They wanted the fighting to go on. And uh the Russians wanted to see it stopped. It was obvious at that time that the Russians were trying to expand their influence in the area and they thought it could be better done with a peaceful situation than with a war going on.

Interviewer:

[sync]Do you think that President Johnson understood the kinds of moves that were necessary to reach a settlement? Do you think he really wanted a settlement or was, were your searches for a settlement a kind of a way of placating his own doves?

Harriman:

[sync]I think that he had come to a point where he was very much concerned about the outcome. Things were not going as well as he had hoped and I think he did want to have...He wanted to do two things. He wanted to avoid all criticism that he was not making a real effort to have a settlement...And he knew to do that he had to be sincere in trying to get a settlement because he knew that he could not play a phony game and get away with it.

[sync]But, aside from that, I think that he wanted a settlement. He didn't really...hadn't really thought through what kind of a settlement he could get but...at that time he was very anxious to have the war reduced and negotiations started. And I think he felt his negotiating ability was pretty good and the strength of the United States was pretty good. I think he thought he'd probably get a pretty good settlement.

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[sync]And there were a lot of rumors as I've told you, from different sources. I've told you...from Algeria that they were ready...the North Vietnamese were ready to...wait for five or ten years before there was any question of, of uh unification. So, there were rumors in the air that made it look as if a settlement might be possible. That would be what Johnson would call an honorable settlement. I never spoke of it being an honorable settlement. I always spoke of it being a responsible settlement.

The search for a settlement

Interviewer:

[sync]What role did Henry Kissinger play in the search for a settlement?

Harriman:

[sync]Kissinger played a very important role in trying to get negotiations going. He had met a certain Frenchman, his name escapes me...they were...there was a...find them or not...but there was a...Frenchman...who met at...

Interviewer:

[sync]Markovich, why don't you start with...

[sync]Well, let's start it from the beginning. It was Aubrac and Markovich, wasn't it?

Harriman:

[sync]What were the two names?

Interviewer:

[sync]...Markovich, Markovich introduced him to Aubrac.

[sync]Okay, let's start again.

Harriman:

[sync]What were the two names?

Interviewer:

[sync]Markovich and Aubrac. A-U-B-R-A-C.

Harriman:

[sync]Mar-ko-vich, and what was the other name?

Interviewer:

[sync]Aubrac. A-U-B-R-A-C.

Harriman:

[sync]Aubrac. Aubrac was the uh, was the communist friend of Minh.

Interviewer:

[sync]That's right, Aubrac was the [inaudible]...

[sync]Yeah.

Harriman:

[sync]Uh, Henry Kissinger played a very important role and I was very much impressed with what he did. He had met a Frenchman by the name of Markovich at one of these Pugwash Conferences where the eggheads get together and try to settle the problems of the world. And Markovich told him he knew a man called Aubrac who was a great and close friend of Ho Chi Minh.

[sync]Uh, he talked to McNamara first and then McNamara sent him over to see me. And...he went back and talked to them. Chet Cooper was my assistant... went on one of the trips. And he

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had some very interesting talks. Aubrac went once to Hanoi and reported, he hadn't made any real progress but reported that if we would stop the bombing that he thought he would make some progress. And uh...we talked it over and gave him some encouragement.

[sync]And then he tried to go back a second time and Ho Chi Minh would not let him in unless there was an agreement that, that uh, that uh the bombing would stop. So it ended in nothing accomplished. But I was very much impressed...with the first time I met Mr. Kissinger. I was very much impressed with the way he handled the negotiations and...what he did about it. And I think Mr. Cooper, my assistant, felt the same way about it.

Interviewer:

[sync]Did President Johnson take Kissinger seriously? Was he aware of his activities?

Harriman:

[sync]I don't know. I didn't talk to President Johnson. I talked to McNamara. He took it very seriously...because he'd known Kissinger at Harvard.

Interviewer:

[sync]What was Operation Marigold?

Harriman:

[sync]Marigold was an operation that was started in...in Vietnam started by the ambassador there...D'Orlandi. D'Orlandi was his name... He was the dean of the diplomatic corps. And he talked to Lodge about it. And... he was...he thought that he had a friend, whose name, Chet, do you remember?

Interviewer:

[sync]Lewandowski.

Harriman:

[sync]What?

Interviewer:

[sync]Lewandowski. L-E-W-A-N...

Harriman:

[sync]Lewandowski.

Interviewer:

[sync]Yeah, who was the Polish head of the ICC.

[sync]All right, you better start again...

Harriman:

[sync]Lewandowski was uh, was uh...knew them and he felt they could achieve something real. This operation was called Marigold. And they made some progress but unfortunately when Lewandowski got to...Hanoi... the...we bombed Hanoi and that really discredited him. It was very unfortunate, orders had been given...instructions had been given or authorization had been given...that they could bomb when the weather was right...the electric plant there.

[sync]No one remembered that. Weather had been bad for a couple of weeks and suddenly...this bombing occurred without anyone knowing that it was going to happen...And I say anybody knowing, the President or McNamara or Dean Rusk...and this unfortunately...Marigold, I felt, was ended because of this bombing that took place unfortunately at the time they were there.

[sync]But...he had used...not only the Johnson, the Rusk statement, but President Johnson had developed... what was it called, Chet? the, the uh...in, in, in October he came out...with a program that had a special name...

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Interviewer:

[sync]Phase A, Phase B? The...Phase A, Phase B?

Harriman:

[sync]And then the other thing, the other one.

Interviewer:

[sync]There were uh...they gave Lewandowski some...

Harriman:

[sync]No, but what was the name of that position Le took. It was called.

Interviewer:

[sync]Oh, the San Antonio...

Harriman:

[sync]San Antonio Formula...

Interviewer:

[sync]Stan, pick it up with a question.

[sync]Let's go back and I'll ask you...

Harriman:

[sync]So that we uh...

Interviewer:

[sync]Let me just ask you the question so you can pick it up again. What kind of instructions was Lewandowski given?

Harriman:

[sync]Well, I don't recall the details of it, but I know that he was given uh the current position. One was Phase A and Phase B. Phase A was uh, that they'd stop all the bombing and there'd be an interval of time and it wouldn't appear as if there was anything to do about it. And then we'd have Phase B. We'd agree in advance what Phase B would be. The, the, the, the kind of negotiations which we'd enter into. So there'd be an agreement that the negotiations would start. [sync]We thought they would accept that. It was also given the San Antonio formula which President Johnson had developed. And the various points that...were in the...Secretary Rusk's positions. And these were all developed and they were...interest was shown but they never got any...they never got any definite word. And the North Vietnamese called off negotiations when our bombs came in and bombed Hanoi the very night that...day...that this man was there. So that stopped. And it was ended because of the bombing.

Interviewer:

[sync]Was that, when we had bombing in the middle of attempts to find settlements, was that, in your opinion...

[sync]Hold it...airplane...

Harriman:

[sync]Could you talk a little louder, I can't hear.

Interviewer:

[sync]When we...

[sync]Just wait...

[sync]Ready?

[sync]Okay.

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[sync]When we had bombings in the middle of efforts to find a settlement, do you think that those, that bombing was simply a mistake or was it a question of some kind of uncoordination in Washington or was there a deliberate effort on the part, do you think, maybe of the Pentagon to sabotage peace efforts?

Harriman:

[sync]No. This particular Marigold, I know, was just an accident...which occurred. They had been authorized to hit this target a couple of weeks before. There had been a couple of weeks of bad weather. I'm sure the Pentagon forgot they had this authority and it just happened to come off. It was an accident...which was too bad.

[sync]As a matter of fact, we felt so badly about the President and McNamara felt so badly about it...they put a zone of no bombing within a radius of ten miles. And they hoped that would get the negotiations back on the track. It was an indication of sincerity on the part of Johnson's...President Johnson's part. And certainly on the part of McNamara who was very keen to have negotiations.

[sync]But that didn't do any good. No, there was no sabotage and there was no attempt to use bombing...there was no stupid attempt to think that by bombing we could scare them into it. The thing that...unfortunately this bombing made them more and more determined. But it was bad luck and um, bad bureaucracy. They didn't have a computer on it in those days.

Interviewer:

[sync]During the Nixon Administration, did you ever discuss the Vietnam situation with the Russians?

Harriman:

[sync]Never.

Interviewer:

[sync]And so, there was no role that you played at all during the Nixon Administration?

Harriman:

[sync]I did see Mr. Nixon, Mr. Kissinger. I came back in December after the election, because I was Chairman of the President's Human Rights Commission, which was celebrating the anniversary of the United Nations...United Nation Declaration. And I saw...Kissinger and he took me to see Nixon and that was the only time I ever saw Nixon.

[sync]I did see Kissinger several times. I was...he said he wanted to keep on touch with me and get my advice. But he didn't take my advice and so I stopped seeing him. But I thought the general idea that...we should...come to an agreement...settlement when we had 500,000 troops not when we had no one...I was very unhappy that President Nixon kept the war going for three years. Forty percent of all the people who were killed, American soldiers killed, were killed in that period. And we were in a worse position, I thought, to make a deal with the...at the end of our withdrawal than at the beginning.

Interviewer:

[sync]Was that your advice to Kissinger? What kind of advice did you give him?

Harriman:

[sync]Well, I told him that I felt we ought to come to an agreement right away. And, I don't know who was responsible and I'm not blaming, I'm not blaming anybody because I don't know the slightest idea whose idea it was to keep the war going. But my impression of him was that

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Kissinger wanted to stop the war, himself. But he evidently didn't have a strong enough voice...or change his mind. I don't know.

Sihanouk and the Cambodian conflict

Interviewer:

[sync]Since we're going to get, just, we're going to have one show on Cambodia, I'd like to get your opinion of Sihanouk. When did you meet him and what did you think of his policy?

Harriman:

[sync]I went to see Sihanouk because he was a member of the Geneva Conference... I first met him in Laos. He came to see...it was a wedding or a coronation...a wedding, I think...one of the family. And then I saw him...I went to Cambodia several times in my trips to that area.

[sync]I thought...and he was always very courteous. He did the honor once of asking me, or Mansfield to mediate something because...he had confidence. I had struck up a good friendship with him...a good relationship with him. I found him... really...for the area...a very good ruler. He was...a bit of a playboy, he liked music and he liked to have a good time...people loved him and they would've elected him over and over again. And he was a real neutral.

[sync]I remember he used to...rather say disagreeable things about us for a while and he'd say a little bit less disagreeable things about Russia because Russia was a little closer. And then he'd say something not quite flattering to the Chinese. He kept revolving and then he would say...kept us quiet, reasonably quiet. But I thought he was an ideal neutral. And I thought it was a great tragedy that he was dropped out of the situation...and the military took over. It was not a useful thing for the...welfare of the area.

Interviewer:

[sync]What was your opinion of the Nixon Administration's invasion of Cambodia?

Harriman:

[sync]I'm not...of course, utterly opposed to the expanding of the war. We had, I remember somebody told me, that...compared it to, to...the Germans invading Belgium, invading a neutral country. I don't know whether that was fair or not. But I didn't get that idea. I was very much surprised that they should've invaded Cambodia. This idea that you could knock out a few North Vietnamese by invading a neutral country was, I felt, a mistake.

Interviewer:

[sync]Governor, I have one last question. When you look back on Vietnam, what kind of lessons do you think we have learned or we should have learned from Vietnam?

Harriman:

[sync]One is not to be so quick to use American troops. The uh, Truman d...

Transgression of the Truman Doctrine

Interviewer:

[sync]Wait a second. Can I start you again...? Start by saying, The lessons of Vietnam.

Harriman:

[sync]Well, these lessons of the Vietnamese war are rather hard to define. I think, number one, it really had nothing to do with the Truman Doctrine. The Truman Doctrine provided we should

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help people that were under communist attack who wanted our help, and that the legislation specifically provided that we should never send troops. We could give military...economic and military aid and send advisors but no further.

[sync]And therefore, its very unfair to Truman Doctrine to compare Vietnam to it. And we shouldn't be afraid to do that. I think that the communists in the world are trying their best to support liberation movements unless somebody...They pour money and they pour men, and they pour all sorts of ways to undermine the established government. And I think that we ought to take an interest where people really want us to help them. But we should not send troops.

[sync]And I think it's...one of the major lessons we've learned. The other is, of course, that you can't fight guerrilla warfare with a regular army. The local people have to deal with guerrilla warfare. It's interesting that as a result of the advice and assistance we gave to Latin America, Castro wasn't able to penetrate a single country in Latin America.

[sync]And most of it was overt. We trained the armies to deal with guerrilla warfare. We had a school to train the police. And, incidentally, one of the things we tried to indoctrinate on them was that torture was the surest way to build up martyrism...was a great mistake aside from its inhumanity. And that was a useful institution. And there are other ways that we helped the Latin Americans do it.

[sync]And we shouldn't be afraid to do it. If we bow out, it'll leave the Russians, the uh, an open field to help liberation movements wherever they want to. And countries can be taken over by a small group of people that are minority if they get the outside help to do so. So, I think one of the lessons of Vietnam is that we shouldn't be afraid to do what's right and proper in terms of helping the people of the world defend themselves against communist aggression. But we shouldn't put American troops in.

Interviewer:

[sync]I think that's it.

[sync]Cut.

Harriman:

[sync]Do you think, is there anything I left out, yes.

Interviewer:

[sync]Yes, there's one problem. And that is um, the um, Marigold discussion. The uh, the last few sentences that you uh, had on Marigold, you mentioned the San Antonio Formula. That was a year later.

[sync] End reel 4.