

FAR EASTERN

FCN1193/250

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Formosa.

FROM Sir P. Dixon,
New York.

TOP SECRET

No. 1071
Dated Sept. 21.
Received in Registry— Sept. 22.

Conversation with President Eisenhower
on the situation over Quemoy
and Matsu.

References to former relevant papers

MINUTES

Repeated to Peking, Tamsui, Singapore,
Bangkok, Paris, Moscow, USSR Nats, Hong Kong
(see FO. tel. 787 to Peking).

(A) Washington tel. no. 2567 of 22/9

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cpd) Prop. Nos: NATO 347;
Paris 536; Baghdad 204.
Hong Kong Sept. 23.

Tel. 487 to Peking
Sept. 23.

Rpd) Tamsui 198;
Moscow 1873; Singapore 1532;
Paris 2412; NATO 1592;
Bangkok 132 saw;
W'ton 4585 saw. New York 1863.

~~American~~ Sept. 21/10
~~Northern~~ Sept. 21/10 (particular para.)
of New York tel. 1071.)

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(Index)

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References to later relevant papers

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FROM NEW YORK TO FOREIGN OFFICE
(United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations)

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Sir P. Dixon

No. 1071

September 21, 1958

D: 4.12 a.m. September 22, 1958

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22 SEP 1958

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Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 1071 of September 21.
Repeated for information to Washington.

Following from the Secretary of State.

At my meeting with the President this morning he began by saying that he did not see a solution to the problem of the off-shore islands that made sense. The Nationalist position on the islands was militarily ridiculous. Even if they wanted to invade the mainland, possession of the islands did not help. What they needed for that purpose was a good amphibious potential. He had offered that to Chiang provided the islands were evacuated, but without success. In saying that, the President did not indicate that he thought there was any sense in Chiang acting against the mainland, or that he had encouraged this. The President, however, was ready to "bribe" Chiang in any reasonable way to remove his forces, but Chiang always replied that if the Nationalists left the islands, he himself would go. The United States had been considering whether it was possible to have an independent régime in Formosa without Chiang, but they had not found suitable people for it.

2. I asked him about the supply position on Quemoy. He said that it was not immediately critical. They were now landing stores by use of amphibious tanks and L.S.Ts, each tank containing 5 or 6 tons. The Communists were hitting one occasionally but it was the best way of circumventing the bombardment.

3. I asked what would happen if the Warsaw talks broke down. The President did not reply. I suggested it would be much easier for the allies of the United States if the United States offered further talks at a higher level, for example, between Foreign Ministers. The President said that the United States public would not stand for him taking part in a meeting with the head of the Chinese Government, but he did not exclude the

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possibility of a Foreign Ministers' meeting. I reminded him of Geneva, 1954. I suggested that it might be possible to have a meeting, say, of the United States, the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R. and Communist China with, perhaps, the Indians present. On this issue I thought the Indians might be helpful at such a meeting. The President said that he had read Nehru's strong speech against Communism and it might well be that they would help in negotiating some settlement. I repeated that the Warsaw talks might fail and the situation grow worse. If real hostilities were in prospect the United Kingdom and European public opinion would not understand United States failure to attempt a higher level meeting. The President appeared to agree. He said that he knew that he had not got United States public opinion behind him in the way, for example, that he had had it over Lebanon. He said that a democratic Government could not go to war without the support of the bulk of its people.

4. The President then said he thought it was time that they and we really "talked this thing out" with all its basic problems and without anyone abandoning their responsibilities. I told him of my talks with the Japanese Foreign Minister. He said that discussions of issues like the effect of a new policy on the Overseas Chinese was exactly the kind of issue he had in mind for discussion. He then referred in parenthesis to some proposals which, he said, the United States had made about two years ago to the Nationalists as to how to maintain their position with the Overseas Chinese.

5. I asked him about the nature of United States military action should it be necessary. He said that they would proceed by stages and he implied the same kind of stages as Mr. Dulles did in his last conversation with me. I returned to the topic more than once and eventually he said very firmly that his own personal view was that it was out of the question to use nuclear weapons for a purely local tactical counter-battery task. If nuclear weapons were to be used, that should be for "the big thing". He said "When you use nuclear weapons you cross a completely different line". I said that I was very much relieved to hear him make this statement about counter-battery action. Action with conventional weapons against the Chinese batteries shelling the islands and supplies coming into them was one thing. I think it would be understood by people much more easily. But if, as he had put it, the line was crossed and

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nuclear bombs were used we would be in a very different, and much more dangerous, situation. The President was very clear and decisive as to his own view on this point, although he did make a passing reference to conditions being different if the 7th Fleet were itself attacked. He did, however, say that this attitude about the use of nuclear weapons was his personal view and not necessarily the advice that he would get from the Service Chiefs.

6. When talking about Formosa I said that I wondered whether its future could lie in some form of guaranteed independence. Chiang's army was getting more and more Formosan and the Formosans themselves might very well like to stay independent. The President said that one difficulty would be how to keep them independent without a Great Power counter-poise to China in the area. I said that I thought an international guarantee might be the answer to this. The President said that it would be very easy for the United States to keep such an independent Formosa economically alive. Their present overall support was at the rate of \$700 million a year, a large proportion of which was military.

7. With regard to Khrushchev's Note, the President said there was a limit to what he could agree to accept. The Note was so full of distortions and untruths that he had had to return it. He said he was at a loss to understand Khrushchev. He now felt any statement of Khrushchev's was a lie. I said that I wondered whether Khrushchev had some personal chip on his shoulder, for example, annoyance that he had not yet met the President face to face at a Summit talk. We had some reason to believe that he was annoyed because his visit to the United Kingdom had not yet been repaid. The President repeated that he could not understand Khrushchev's behaviour. Mr. Dulles was going to make a statement tomorrow repeating the United States position in answer to Khrushchev's latest Note.

8. The President repeated his gratitude for us standing by him. He was sure it had not been easy. I said that on the point of not using force it was not difficult for us to give support. Whatever our views on other aspects, as he knew, our public opinion was disturbed and needed very careful handling.

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9. My conclusions from the above conversation are as follows:

(a) The President realizes very well in what a bad posture the United States Government is over the islands. He said again and again that it did not stand to reason to fight for these two islands. If there had to be a fight, the four imprisoned United States airmen were a much better issue. The American people understood about them but not about Quemoy and Matsu.

(b) A retreat enforced by Chinese military action is impossible for the President to tolerate.

(c) His personal views on the use of nuclear weapons against the Communist batteries are reassuring.

(d) He did not reject the idea of a Foreign Ministers' meeting if the Warsaw talks failed. With regard to it being between Dulles and Chou, he seemed to consider it a practical proposition. With regard to a wider meeting, I cannot put it higher than that he was politely interested.

(e) He, like Dulles, is ready to go a long way in pressure on the Chinese Nationalists. He is even considering the possibility of an alternative régime to Chiang. He is anxious to have a full discussion with us about the implications for the Western Powers of changes in American policy over Formosa. For example, how to handle the Overseas Chinese.

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