

TELCON

Mr. Murray Marder (Wash. Post)/Mr. Kissinger
4:36 p.m., December 19, 1972

K: Yes, Murray.

M: Henry --

K: Not that your goddamn paper deserves a return call.

M: Ah, you mean the editorial or me or what?

K: The editorial. No, you've been 80% rational. But for a newspaper that's been accusing us of not showing enough goodwill; now to accuse us of naivety is almost more than one's morality can stand. But go ahead, you're not responsible for the editorial.

M: What I wanted to say was we've had, as you know, the sayings of Xuan Thuy today.

K: Which is a pack of lies.

M: Right.

K: You know, he said we asked for 126 changes.

M: Yes. And you see the reason I was calling, Henry, was --

K: Did he say we asked for 126 on the last day?

M: On the last day, yes. Which seem to -- No, it was not consistent with anything else we've had here.

K: Murray, we did not ask for one single change the last day. Not for one comma change the last day.

M: The difficulty here was we asked at the press office --

K: Well, I'm telling you that is a pack of lies. You know, it's not inaccurate, it's a blatant bold-faced lie. You know, it's such an outrageous lie, it hasn't even a smidgen -- we didn't ask for a comma change on the last day.

M: Right. I was looking back on a copy here to try to see from Randle's statement if there is a mistake in here that is being made in the translation of Xuan Thuy's remarks.

K: We didn't ask for 126 changes any time.

M: This is what I wanted to get at because the press office response was it's untrue that Kissinger asked for 126 changes. But we said, well, we

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M: (cont'd) thought it was too much because that leaves the question "Well, was it 125 or was it anything or was it --"

K: The last day we asked for none whatever. You know, I don't know how the sons-of-bitches are counting -- they might, during the course of 15 days, if they count every word that was ever suggested in these discussions, they might amount to something, I don't know. We did not -- there were never more than 8 points seriously at issue at any time during these 15 days. All of this is off-the-record.

M: Well, I wanted to get through here with you and see if there's not some way to use --

K: No, because I'm not supposed to be talking to you. As you well know.

M: No, I didn't know that you weren't supposed to be talking to me. But at any rate, what I was trying to look at here was to try to figure out some plausible way of dealing with a factual allegation.

K: Well, just say Administration officials made it clear that not a single change was asked for on the last day.

M: Right. Now can I get into the question of where the reader says well, is that supposed to mean that 126 were asked on --

K: There were never 126 changes asked for at any time. There were only 4 problems discussed the whole last week.

M: It does look that what he is talking about is something that recurred in a number of places and as you say, the question is what is he counting up. As you said, there were 4 issues the last week. Is he counting up protocol understandings, so forth, are recurr--

K: But the protocols we never got until the last night.

M: Right.

K: You know, if they counted every word in the protocols we gave them, I don't know whether they would amount to -- but that would be more than 126. But those aren't changes. There weren't any when we submitted them.

M: Right. So let's see, he says here no less than 126 changes in the accord drafted in October and most of the 126 amendments that he's addressed were attempts to impose changes of substance which would have violated the fundamental rights of the people of Vietnam --

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K: But that's total unadulterated crap!!!!

M: And as you can see from the sequence of the way the agencies are --

K: Look, I can show you in the transcript that on Saturday night Le Duc Tho said to me, there's only one issue left and all the rest is agreed on. I mean, it doesn't make any difference what may have gone before but there wasn't anything like a hundred and twenty-six changes that was ever discussed.

M: All right. Now when you left the reporters hanging with this unquestioned looking at the various versions of the copy, as to whether it was one point that was recurring in multiple places or --

K: Murray, it is a lie. You guys can analyze it as long as you -- until you're green in the face.

M: Which I'm not trying to do obviously because this is the kind of thing you get a sweeping accusation from somebody of 126 changes.

K: The major issue that was discussed occurred in one place and did not recur through the document.

M: Um-humm.

K: It's just not true.

M: Right.

K: You know, it may be hard to accept it. The U.S. Government may be telling the truth and Hanoi may be lying but it's just barely conceivable.

M: No, the question here was just simply the way he is slinging the 126 around, it was obvious to anybody following this that there are not 126 changes probably in the entire agreement in any substantive form and he has gone on to say that --

K: Look, can anybody really believe that having negotiated the Berlin agreement, the Shanghai Communique, the SALT agreement, that one could be so wrong at the end of October as to think that 126 issues could be settled in three or four days?

M: No, I would think absolutely not.

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By: BFP
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- K: Or isn't it more likely that we raised exactly the issues that I mentioned at the end of October? Issues on the assumption of a decision to settle are easy. And on the assumption of a decision not to settle become insoluble.
- M: Yeah, yes. I would have no problem with that.
- K: and I assure you the record will sustain this.
- M: It does seem to me, Henry, that what we're seeing here from all the capitals are holding statements. Waiting for a check on the Peking statement --
- K: I didn't see that. What were they saying?
- M: The only thing in it really and it's in indirect form, it's --
- K: Oh, is that the one that took on Laird?
- M: No, no, this is something that came out this afternoon. Tung Pi-wu and Chou En-lai; it's in a very indirect thing. It's a statement in support of the 12th anniversary of the founding of the NLF but in it the only thing that is striking anybody's eye, and this requires a theological analysis by the -- on the verbage, is in the past 12 years the NLF waits protracted abdominal struggles against the U.S. aggressors and their running dogs in one splendid victory. So it's an oblique thing. The only thing that strikes anybody's eye is that formulation of running dogs from a semantic standpoint. I don't think it's probably been used since sometime before your initial trip to China.
- K: Yeah.
- M: As I say, it's in an oblique form here.
- K: I always wanted to know what it is about running dogs that they don't like.
- M: And frankly, what I can remember at this point is I think the more direct accusation is that the United States Imperialists are running dogs. This seems to be a slight semantic variation here - the U.S. aggressors and their running dogs. At any rate, that is the only thing that appears and I imagine you've seen the TASS statement, which to me is a holding statement.
- K: That's what it looks like.

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M: My own limited ability is that it's probably going to be several days before anything jells here if then. How was your feeling about the Sino-Soviet thing?

K: That's my impression.

M: What is not clear to me is do you see a probability of them dumping everything into the record? That would mean a break and everything if they would go that far.

K: They wouldn't do that; they wouldn't look too good.

M: I would think there is a limit. The point is that they probably do not want to break off the negotiations but want to register some great indignation and dismay and generate whatever support pressures from China and Moscow to support them here.

K: I think that's right. Murray, I've got to run but will you write this please by keeping White House or anybody else out of it.

M: All right but I must use something -- Administration sources said the charge of 126 has no foundation whatsoever.

K: that's right.

M: That there were no such presentation on the last day and that at no time were there ever 126 --

K: Or anything remotely like it.

M: Or anything remotely like it. That is essentially what I needed, Henry.

K: You know, don't leave the impression that maybe it was 98.

M: This is why I called you because the White House thing left that hanging.

K: Hell, it wasn't anything like 10. I mean, in fact, only 10 things that were ever seriously discussed.

M: Right.

K: There may be a lot of things but all of this is basically irrelevant because all of those issues have in fact practically been settled.

M: Right, right. Just one brief thing, the timing discernible at all on any next move on their part?

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K: I have no estimate on that.

M: Um-humm.

K: Okay, Murray.

M: Thank you, Henry.

K: ⁿight. Tell _____ that I deeply appreciated his editorial.

M: I will.

K: It made me feel that all the time I had spent with him was worthwhile.

M: I will tell him that.

K: Good.

M: Thanks, Henry.

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Authority: E.O. 12958
BY: SP/DAW/6/10/01



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