

Texts of 2 Memorandums to Nixon on Student Unrest

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WASHINGTON, July 23—Following are the texts of a memorandum from Dr. Alexander Heard, chancellor of Vanderbilt University, to President Nixon, summarizing what the temporary adviser to the White House had learned about student attitudes toward the Nixon Administration, and of recommendations of Dr. Heard and a co-adviser, Dr. James Cheek, president of Howard University, regarding campus unrest:

Memorandum

A Student's View

This memorandum addresses three questions we have heard discussed around the White House about student attitudes and their relationship to Administration policies. We have sought to compress here the views of a "composite" student.

Something like these views are held by significant numbers of activated students, although obviously not by all such students. We report these views as an aid to understanding the questions being asked, not to imply their validity nor to question their validity.

I

Why do the President and disaffected college youth have trouble "communicating" about Vietnam? At least four factors are at work.

First, the President uses words that mean one thing to him but something different to many students. For example, he has emphasized that he and students both want "peace." By "peace," students mean an end to the killing immediately.

To them the President seems to mean not that, but "a just peace" and "self-determination for South Vietnam," which they see as probably meaning maintenance of a pro-American regime in Saigon, continued U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia, and whatever military action is necessary to produce these ends.

Exacerbating this difficulty is the belief of many students (shared, it is fair to say, by many nonstudents) that the course we are on has no real chance of success. They do not believe Hanoi can be induced to negotiate. They find unthinkable using enough military power to force Hanoi to negotiate.

They believe the longer we keep fighting the more difficult the U. S. position becomes at home and before world opinion. They believe our leaders must understand this, and consequently when those leaders do not act accordingly by "getting out," they must be either blind or evil. Frustration to the point of fury builds up from watching us follow, at an enormous cost in human life, a policy they believe to be leading nowhere.

Students' Argument

When the President explains that we must act in Cambodia to protect the lives of American fighting men, they argue that it would be better protection to bring them home.

The President's admirable remarks in St. Louis on June 25, 1970, showed insight into student idealism and compassion for their anxieties. The phrase "to win peace," however, does not describe a proper goal in the eyes of some students.

Second, what the President regards as successes, students often regard very differently. Reducing the troop level in Vietnam by sometime in 1971 to something over 200,000 men seems to many in Government a formidable achievement. The President so proclaims it.

Yet to the young, who face the draft and think on the time scale of youth, these withdrawals seem wholly inadequate. Their attitude should not be mistaken for that of a draft-dodger in World War II. They are not seeking to avoid personal danger. Rather, they abhor personal involvement in war they perceive as "immoral."

Hence, a plan to have a troop level of over 200,000 men next year, and possibly indefinitely, seems intolerable—to the point that some of them say they would prefer to kill and be killed in a revolution at home to being involved in an immoral war abroad.

Third, to some students, the President appears not to understand the nature of the crisis that has come over the country. He speaks of "deep divisions" in the country. But "deep divisions" suggests a serious disagreement in a stable society, a matter of different groups holding different opinions, whereas students perceive the situation in radically different terms.

They see not just differences of opinion, but rather the whole social order as being in a state of erosion.

In the St. Louis speech, the President said, "We should do something about it and not allow that division to become something that eventually could erupt and destroy a society."

The student says the division is already erupting and destroying the society.

The President's visit to the Lincoln Memorial on May 9 was a splendid act. Reports got about, however, that the President passed pleasant queries about surfing and

football. That offended students who felt immersed in a national tragedy, like telling a joke at a funeral.

Fourth, and this really underlies the other points, the President and some students proceed from vastly different assumptions. The President says, "America has never lost a war," as if "winning" or "losing" were the important consideration.

He seems to them to hold attitudes derived from the cold war, such as the domino theory and to view Communism in Southeast Asia as a source of danger to America. Wrongly or rightly, many of our best-informed students do not share these assumptions.

The President speaks of maintaining "national honor" and implies that this can be done through military power. Students distressed with the failure of their country to achieve all its ambitious ideals at home and abroad think of "national honor" as something yet to be attained.

They see the Vietnam war and its effects at home as obstructing fulfillment of their concept of national honor. Just as an earlier generation fought in World War II to preserve the nation's ideals, they want to end the war to help attain the nation's ideals.

The President presents the goal of "self determination" for South Vietnam as a rationale for our military involvement. To students the cost is too high, so much too high as to make the war "immoral."

A faculty member wrote from . . . "At the root of the opposition to the war in Indo-China is the moral revulsion to the carnage undertaken in our name. Peasant societies are subject to the most awesome destructive technology that man can devise; huge areas are depopulated into free fire areas; defoliants, pesticides, and herbicides scorch the earth, and bomb craters create a moonscape; great masses of people are uprooted from their ancestral lands and turned into refugees in their own countries, and war spares neither the elderly nor the women and children. Surely such death and devastation are out of proportion to whatever objective we might hope to achieve."

II

Why are students not impressed by Soviet atrocities such as the invasion of Czechoslovakia?

The apparent insensitivity of students to Soviet actions and to evils in the Soviet system is at least partly explainable by considerations like these:

First, they feel that by the wrongness of our own policies, such as the war in Vietnam, we have lost our moral standing to condemn other countries.

Second, there is an obsession with our own problems, a feeling that our own crisis should occupy all our attention.

Third, the fear of Communism is less than existed a year ago.

Students perceive the Czech invasion as one more evil action by a powerful imperialist government, but they don't perceive it as a threat to the United States. Since the Sino-Soviet split, they see Communism as consisting of different and often competing national governments and styles.

The Russians appear to repress their satellite countries, but students see that fact as parallel to American domination in its sphere of influence (the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, economic exploitation, etc.).

They see the Russians as no better than we, maybe not as good, but feel more responsibility for our actions than for those of foreign powers.

III

How do they compare the United States with other countries generally?

Instead of viewing the United States as in competition with other great powers, or as being potentially threatened by them, the students we speak of tend to be suspicious of all national powers, including the United States.

As the President said in his "State of the World" message on Feb. 18, 1970, "Today, the 'isms' have lost their vitality — indeed the restlessness of youth on both sides of the dividing line testifies to the need for a new idealism and deeper purposes."

A generational loyalty appears to develop, a loyalty to young people internationally, that transcends national loyalties.

A tendency toward an absolutist conception of moral values helps to make it impossible for these students to be satisfied with the comparative superiority of the U.S. in striving for social justice and equality.

Rather than emphasize what is good about America, most students emphasize what could be better about America (which frequently appears to be merely an emphasis on what is wrong with America.)

Therefore, any form of injustice and inequality, such as is evident in our racial problems, is taken as an indictment of the entire social system, regardless of its improvements over the past or its relative superiority over other societies.

Note on Recommendations

Detailed recommendations were made to the President on a number of subjects. Some of them proposed particular assignments for named individuals. Implementation of some of the proposals might be handicapped by making them public. All of the recommendations, like the comments on campus conditions reported above, were drafted as private communications to the President.

Among the subjects on which we made recommendations are the following:

A. That the President increase his exposure to campus representatives including students, faculty and administrative officers, so that he can better take into account their views, and the intensity of those views in formulating domestic and foreign policy.

B. That the President designate a senior staff member in the White House to have special responsibility for White House liaison with higher education.

C. That the President arrange for the considerable knowledge of higher education already available in United States Government agencies, especially the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, to be put more readily at his disposal.

D. That the President increase his exposure to representatives of the black community and other racial minorities.

E. That the President take initiatives welcoming young people into political and governmental processes.

F. That the President initiate an assessment of youth

opportunity programs in the Federal Government, looking toward their enrichment and better utilization.

G. That the President take steps to improve two-way communications with the campuses of the country through activities in which he, White House staff members and others in Government participate.

H. That the President and others undertake to understand the fears of "repression" among certain groups in our country and to understand the realities underlying those fears.

I. That the President use the moral influence of his office in new ways designed to reduce racial tensions and help develop a climate of racial understanding.

J. That the President increase involvement of blacks in domestic policy formation and develop an ongoing Federal mechanism for research and action on minority problems.

K. That the President act immediately to provide additional student aid funds for the coming academic year to economically disadvantaged students.

L. That the President seek to provide special additional assistance during the coming academic year to those institutions primarily serving black youth.

M. That the President make a long-term commitment to assist predominantly black colleges and universities to enable these institutions to increase their enrollment and improve their academic programs.

From time to time, Dr. Cheek and I have made other recommendations to the President, orally or in writing.