

November 19, 2012

Transcription of voicemail message

Memo on Meeting with Henry Kissinger. Meeting at 3:30, November 15, 2012

I came up to his office and sat in waiting room. And at about 4:00 he came out, he had been meeting with someone else, and escorted me into his office. We talked from about 4:00 until 4:30.

I started out by saying, "How are you, Henry?"

And He said at this stage, (and I can't quite remember the words, but basically it meant) distinctions are not relevant, something like that.

He started by asking "How old are you?"

I said I was 82.

Then he said "I arranged for you to have dinner at Harvard when I came up to speak."

I said it was very good that you came, and furthermore that you didn't ask that the questions from the audience be screened.

Henry said that the President of Harvard had advised him only to speak, he was the one that said there should be a question period.

I then said I thought of him as a teacher and I mentioned the case at Endicott House at MIT where years ago I saw him sitting on the floor/rug with students all around.

And then he asked why was I not invited initially to the dinner.

I said I am a chemist and my world is very separate from the world of Graham Allison.

Then I told him I had lunch with Fritz Stern.

Henry said he is an important, maybe he said eminent, historian, but critical of me over Viet Nam.

I said I did not know that, that I came to see Fritz Stern for quite a different reason. Because I had gone to school/college with the granddaughters of Fritz Haber and Fritz Stern was their uncle (the nephew of chemist Fritz Haber).

And we talked that a little a bit about Haber, and Henry asked if he was Jewish, I said yes but he was baptized.

Then we talked a little about Haber's first wife Clara committed suicide, and circumstances of that, how it was the son, Herman, her son that found her dead or dying. That son, that same son Herman in America killed himself and one of his daughters, Clair killed herself.

Henry said he didn't know about whether Fritz Haber was Jewish or not.

I said yes he was Jewish but baptized, so was Fritz Stern.

Then I asked Henry were you baptized? He said No, no, my father was orthodox. And he said was orthodox, maybe largely out of duty.

I ask did his father believe in a deity? And he said that was not clear.

Then I asked What do you believe about this?

He said words to the effect I believe there is maybe some intelligence that we don't understand, not that it would ever respond to me or answer the prayers of people.

Then Henry said he had I think he said a dinner but I'm not sure with a woman who was head of New York Natural History Museum, and she was furious with him and called him a creationist. It sounded friendly, but nevertheless. But Henry said couldn't there be an explosion and creation out of an explosion?

I don't know whether he meant a universe or of a species. I imagine he meant universe. I doubt that he's a creationist in the sense of species all being individually created I'm sure he's not.

And then I said you probably know why I've come – it's because of the Biological Weapons Convention. I reminded him of my concern that over time, biology with, especially now that we're beginning to understand the brain, be able to essential to manipulate people any way we desire. And that for the very long term, the norm established by the BWC, I said it was only 4 pages long and therefore probably a very good treaty.

Then Henry asked does it have any provisions for application. I thought that he used the word application, I forget what he said.

I said no, no, it just sets up...well I said yes, it does. It requires states parties to criminalize these activities within their own statutes.

And I said something like A treaty like garden, needs to be tended. But there is on record the statement of Nixon that it's a jackass treaty. I don't know if the President meant it that way or would have stood behind it. But that's it's really important that if child never has a single good word from parents, it's not good news for the child, and that the Treaty needs good words from Henry.

He said he had no problem with that. He said why don't we set up a lunch or breakfast to talk about it further.

That he had to go home now to dress, because he was having dinner with Finnish Ambassador, but set up a breakfast or lunch.

Second part of some notes from talking with Henry.

It is now 5:30, the previous phone call I guess I started around 5:15. I left his office at 4:30. This is just the very end, I don't know exactly where I left off.

He said to set up breakfast or lunch and we could talk about this. I said I would do that.

He said his assistant Tara was very nice, but not very competent.

Said my advice is to have Nancy interview your people before you take them on. He said you're right, she's much better at judging people. I said something similar.

Then I said good bye, and Tara said she'd send me several dates for a lunch or a breakfast.

And that's about it, I'm probably forgetting some things, but this is the main part, this is what I remember.

It was very pleasant, good to see him. A little bit older and greyer.

As I left the building he was also leaving in an automobile with two people helping him. License plate for what it's worth was CBC 7615. I'll come back and we'll talk more.

He mentioned Niall Ferguson— The implication that Niall is not moving very fast on this, but I'm not really sure. Niall is writing an authorized biography.

He was clearly willing to do something along these lines. I suggested an Op-Ed, but Henry quite rightly said well, we needed to talk further about it.

I reminded him that once before we had lunch with Jeanne at the Brooks Club. I had asked him if he would write something about it, but he said he only had one or two research assistants any more but if I sent him some materials maybe they could do something, and I did I sent him a big notebook full of some things.

He put his arm around me and said "Oh, Matt, one does not brag about one's own accomplishments." And I said "You were teasing me but we really have to get something about this treaty. It's the norm for civilized behavior, it's important for the future." He clearly agrees with that, and I hope we'll get something done.

That's it.