

The original documents are located in Box 121, folder “Bangladesh” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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2. The President's meeting with Prime Minister of Bangladesh

9/30/74

The President will meet tomorrow afternoon at 3:00 p.m. with Shaykh Mujibur Rahman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The Prime Minister has been in New York in connection with the United Nations General Assembly and is coming to Washington to meet with the President tomorrow. As you will recall, Bangladesh was admitted to the United Nations this month. Tomorrow's meeting will be the first Presidential level meeting with the leadership of Bangladesh since ~~the independence~~ ^{U.S. relations were established} that country in April 1972, and it will give the President and the Prime Minister an opportunity to review U.S. - Bangladesh relations and the situation in South Asia.

FYI: Refer to State any questions resulting from the Washington Post story today that Bangladesh was forced to stop selling gunny sacks to Cuba in order to insure continued U.S. food aid. The questions will focus on why Presidential waivers were signed for Egypt but not for Bangladesh, but we should insist that State is the proper agency to discuss the details of our systems programs. End FYI.

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[8/15/75]

August 15

Q's & A's from Margy

Q. Bangladesh - what can you tell us about the coup in Bangladesh?

Q. Will we continue to maintain full diplomatic relations with the new government?

A. It is premature to make any judgements about the new government. We are, of course, following events in Bangladesh, and our reports from there indicate ~~that~~ no injury to or loss of American life or property. I have nothing to give you beyond that.

FYI

For details on the government in Balngladesh the nature of the coup, etc., refer to the State Department.

Portugal

Q. Yesterday in his speech in Birmingham Sec. Kissinger spoke out in favor of the "moderate elements who seek to build Portugal by democratic means", and he warned the Soviets against interfering in Portugese internal affairs. What are we prepared to do in Portugal and under what circumstances?

A. As you know, the President has been following the matter very closely. He discussed the situation in his meetings with NATO allies at Helsinki and he plans to continue close consultations on this issue. The Secretary's address yesterday reflected as well the President's concern over attempts by anti democratic minority to subvert efforts of the moderate mjaority to strengthen democratic institutions in Portugal.



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AUGUST 15, 1975

COUP IN BANGLADESH

FOR BACKGROUND USE:

THE ARMY MOUNTED A SUCCESSFUL COUP EARLY TODAY AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF MUJIBUR RAHMAN. THERE HAVE BEEN CONFLICTING REPORTS OVER THE FATE OF MUJIB. SOME CLAIM HE IS UNDER HOUSE ARREST, OTHERS ASSERT HE HAS BEEN KILLED.

FORMER COMMERCE MINISTER KNODAKAR LUSHTAQUE AHMED HAS BEEN NAMED PRESIDENT. MARTIAL LAW HAS BEEN IMPOSED, A 24-HOUR CURFEW IS IN EFFECT IN DACCA, AND THE AIRPORT HAS BEEN CLOSED. THE COUNTRY NOW WILL REPORTEDLY BE CALLED THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH.

IT IS NOT YET CLEAR EXACTLY WHICH ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY WERE INVOLVED OR WHAT THE NATURE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE.

AHMED, HOWEVER, IS A MODERATE WHO HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE MOST PRO-WESTERN CABINET MEMBER AND LEADER OF THE MODERATE FACTION OF THE RULING PARTY.

POPULAR REACTION TO THE COUP IS THUS FAR UNKNOWN. WHILE FEW BENGALIS HAVE DARED TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST MUJIB IN RECENT MONTHS, DISCONTENT HAD BEEN WIDESPREAD WITH HIS RULE, ESPECIALLY HIS INABILITY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE COUNTRY'S CONTINUING SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

DISAFFECTION, DISCONTENT, AND DISILLUSIONMENT IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN WIDESPREAD AMONG MILITARY OFFICERS AND POSSIBLY IN THE RANKS OVER HIS INABILITY TO CHECK NEPOTISM, CORRUPTION, AND MALADMINISTRATION. DISPLEASURE HAD BEEN ALSO GROWING OVER HIS LARGELY AUTOCRATIC CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT SINCE ESTABLISHING A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM EARLIER THIS YEAR.



Q. WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE COUP IN BANGLADESH? WILL WE CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT?

A. IT IS PREMATURE TO MAKE ANY JUDGEMENTS ABOUT THE NEW GOVERNMENT. WE ARE, OF COURSE, FOLLOWING EVENTS IN BANGLADESH, AND OUR REPORTS FROM THERE INDICATE NO INJURY TO OR LOSS OF AMERICAN LIFE OR PROPERTY. I HAVE NOTHING TO GIVE YOU BEYOND THAT.

FYI: FOR DETAILS ON THE GOVERNMENT IN BANGLADESH, THE NATURE OF THE COUP, ETC., REFER TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

PORTUGAL

Q. YESTERDAY IN HIS SPEECH IN BIRMINGHAM SEC. KISSINGER SPOKE OUT IN FAVOR OF THE "MODERATE ELEMENTS WHO SEEK TO BUILD PORTUGAL BY DEMOCRATIC MEANS," AND HE WARNED THE SOVIETS AGAINST INTERFERING IN PORTUGUESE INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WHAT ARE WE PREPARED TO DO IN PORTUGAL AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?

A. AS YOU KNOW, THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN FOLLOWING THE MATTER VERY CLOSELY. HE DISCUSSED THE SITUATION IN HIS MEETINGS WITH NATO ALLIES AT HELSINKI, AND HE PLANS TO CONTINUE CLOSE CONSULTATIONS ON THIS ISSUE. THE SECRETARY'S ADDRESS YESTERDAY REFLECTED AS WELL THE PRESIDENT'S CONCERN OVER ATTEMPTS BY AN ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MINORITY TO SUBVERT THE EFFORTS OF THE MODERATE MAJORITY TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN PORTUGAL.

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