

Conversation No. 724-004

Date May 15, 1972

Time 4:06 – 4:54 p.m.

Location: Oval Office

Participants: Nixon, Donald M. Kendall, Flanigan

Nixon was well aware of the economic importance the Soviets attached to détente, which meant that he solicited the views of American businessmen thinking of expanding into the Soviet Union. One prominent example was his old friend and CEO of PepsiCo, Donald Kendall, who had been present at Nixon's "kitchen debate" with Nikita Khrushchev in 1959.¹ Kendall had visited the Soviet Union as a member of trade delegation in December 1971, and maintained contact with members of the Soviet Government, including the Deputy Minister for Trade, Vladimir Alkhimov.

Kendall shared his thoughts following such meetings with Nixon prior to the President's departure for the Moscow Summit of May 1972. Besides the Soviets' eagerness to rein in arms expenditures and, in Alkhimov's words, "stop this military shit," Kendall concluded that, although the Soviets "want to bring about economic relations just with us," they remained committed to "the spread of Communism." That said, the model the Soviets would follow in future was not that of Cuba and "confrontation" (i.e. armed insurrection). Rather, Nixon should expect "to see more of the things of the Chile-type takeover," whereby the Soviets relied on "political suasions," much like the United States did when "we go around trying to support people that are democracies."

[...]

[724-004_Clip1](#) (1.6m; 1:38)

Kendall: The other thing that I'm convinced of, and I think everybody else in the group was convinced of, and as you know, I've been back there twice since the original trip in December—this is from conversations with Alkhimov and various people when I was there—I don't think there's any question whether there is a big group in the Soviet Union today that want to bring about economic relations just with us, and they want to stop all this stuff that's

¹ President and CEO of PepsiCo, 1971-1986.

been going on. That doesn't mean they're going to stop the spread of Communism. They still believe in Communism and their system. They're not going to change their system.

Nixon: Um-hmm.

Kendall: But I think you're going to see more of the things of the Chile-type takeover, not the Cuba. You're not going to see a Cuba. They—They're not gonna go in with force; they're going to do anything they can through political suasions, or support of that type—the same as we do. I mean, after all, we go around trying to support people that are democracies. They're going to continue that, but there's not going to be any more—

Nixon: Confrontations?

Kendall: That's right. Alkhimov said—

Nixon: [*I think*] that may be a reason that they still want to have the summit.

Kendall: Alkhimov said to me, he said, "Don." He said, "We've got to stop this military shit." "Every time your people go to Congress," he said, "our military people come up." And he said, "Then, they've got to have it." He says, "Then ours come up," and he says, "Then yours go back to Congress." And he said, "We're in a cycle." And I hit him on the thing on Vietnam, after—

Nixon: [*Hmm*].

Kendall: —the thing happened. And he made a very interesting observation. And I said, "Well, why the hell do you give 'em all this sophisticated equipment?" He says, "Well, Don," he says, "sometimes you give people a boat, but you don't expect them to put it in the water."

[...]