

HEINONLINE

Citation: vol. XIII Western Europe and Canada 1994 782 1994

Content downloaded/printed from
HeinOnline (<http://heinonline.org>)
Thu May 16 12:30:30 2013

- Your use of this HeinOnline PDF indicates your acceptance of HeinOnline's Terms and Conditions of the license agreement available at <http://heinonline.org/HOL/License>
- The search text of this PDF is generated from uncorrected OCR text.

275. Memorandum of Conversation

Washington, October 7, 1963.

SUBJECT

Franco-American Relations and Europe

PARTICIPANTS*US*

The President
Mr. Ball
Ambassador Bohlen
Mr. Tyler

France

Mr. Couve de Murville ¹
Ambassador Alphand
Mr. Lucet

The President asked the Foreign Minister about the state of Franco-American relations and whether they were improving. The Foreign Minister said that a greater degree of mutual understanding was required on methods and procedures rather than on questions of substance with regard to East-West relations. He also said that the European relationship should be looked at, not merely Franco-US relations. The President asked how the Foreign Minister thought that our approaches differed. Couve said the main question was whether Europe was going to be a going concern with her own policy, including her own means of defense. There was a strong inter-relationship between Europe and the United States in trade and economic problems. This was reality and was in no way dramatic. If there were questions which arose these should be discussed so as to find a way of promoting unity. It was important that Europe and the United States work together with regard to LDC's. Couve pointed out that US trade with Europe had increased greatly in the last few years. In the political military field there was a change going on compared with the immediate post-war situation. Europe was now able to offer and accept a greater share in the burdens of the world. This meant two things: (1) Europeans must reach agreement among themselves on how to unite; (2) they must adjust their relations with the United States in such a way as to reach agreement across the Atlantic. He said there had been increasing economic unity among the Six in the last five years. He said there were still intra-European differences but as the Common Market developed, these would be discussed increasingly with the United States. The major problem, he

Source: Department of State, Central Files, Pol 1 Fr-US. Secret. Drafted and initialed by Tyler; approved by U on October 11 and by the White House on October 15. The meeting was held at the White House on October 15.

¹ Couve de Murville was in the United States to attend the 18th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

said, was that of defense, in particular the nuclear problem which is very difficult and important. At the moment he could see no solution. There was the great problem of Germany, also the Soviet Union. Intra-European ideas on defense were not all identical. He was not able to offer any solution but the problem was there and must be discussed within Europe and with the United States. Europe was prepared to accept her share of the burden of expenditures and defense. With regard to Germany, French policy was based on the idea that Germany must be on the side of the West as part of Europe and of the Free World. Germany should be powerful enough not to be submerged and this meant that she must be an ally of the United States, and attached to the Western world. France's major preoccupation was to try to prevent anything which would detach Germany from the West, for this would lead to neutrality and to an eventual takeover by the Soviet Union. This was why France was so careful in the field of negotiations with the Soviet Union. The Soviet proposals were designed to create doubts among the Germans. These doubts were only increased when France and the United States appeared to be quarreling with each other. This was very bad for common interests and anything which we could do to avoid conflict, or the appearance of conflict, between our two countries would be most helpful.

The President said that one of the unintended results of the Franco-German Treaty of last January was that it made it appear as though France and the United States had basically different aims. The treaty really looked as though it were something more than the healing of old wounds, but rather as though it were outside of, and directed against, NATO. The President said he shared the desire to bring Franco-US relations closer. If these appeared to diverge on defense and European problems this was certainly bad for Germany. It would be good if we could normalize our relations on NATO and economic matters. The President asked how far apart we really were.

The Foreign Minister said that the treaty had in fact been signed outside of NATO, but Franco-German relations in themselves, and the grouping of six countries in Europe, are outside of, and not part of, NATO. He felt that the Franco-German Treaty strengthened the Alliance but was different from NATO. He agreed with the President that the divergencies between us are bad for Germany. With regard to NATO, everybody knows that since the war the United States had assumed almost the entire burden of defense. This was the case in 1949 and the situation was almost the same today, fourteen years later, even though the problem had basically changed. The reason why most countries in NATO were satisfied with the present situation was because sacrifices go together with responsibilities. NATO was adopted when Europe was flat on her back. Today European countries should have a

greater share in defense. The nuclear problem was a special problem, he said, but it should be dealt with in this same spirit. NATO was based on US command because it was normal that it should be in the hands of the most powerful country in the Alliance. However NATO had been created at the moment of the greatest crisis that the West had faced in Europe. Now there was less danger of aggression from the Soviet Union. However today NATO was still on a war footing which was difficult to sustain. It was very difficult for countries that have a tradition of responsibility for defense to bring contingents into an international army without being given a greater share and a greater role. This applied not only to France but also to the UK and Germany. Formerly when the danger was greater, France had no desire to assume responsibilities. Now the converse was true.

The President said that whenever we even looked as though we were contemplating reducing the extent of the US contribution this had gotten us into difficulties with our allies. The Foreign Minister agreed that this was the case with regard to Germany. He said the Germans were apprehensive and unhappy. The President referred to the concern in Germany at the prospect of our withdrawing a cavalry regiment which had only represented part of the increase at the time of the Berlin crisis. The Foreign Minister agreed that there was a real problem. What difference, he asked rhetorically, does the withdrawal of 3000 men make to the defense of Europe? Turning to economic matters, he said that the major problem was not that of chickens but of agriculture. He thought that in this field, too, there was no basic contradiction between French and US interests and policies. Mr. Ball referred to the recent measures which the French government had taken facilitating US exports of fruit to France. He said that these had been very helpful. The Foreign Minister referred to the "Kennedy Round." He said we would have very vigorous discussions, no doubt, but apart from inherent difficulties France was of the opinion, contrary to what was often said, that it would be a good thing to liberalize trade and lower tariff barriers. The Common Market must not be protectionist but rather more liberal than individual countries were. Ambassador Alphand complained that the press continued to talk about Europe being "inward looking." The Foreign Minister said this was a British invention. The President said that what really mattered was not so much trade as the problem of the balance of payments. For the United States, foreign trade was, relatively, less important than this. He said that we should create a system within the West which would result in a relatively even flow of international payments. He said, for example, that France was increasing her reserves by \$25 million a month. We should look to see what can be done to avoid this kind of situation. New steps were needed to bring the balance of payments problem under control. He said that it was of course related to trade. The

Foreign Minister said that he did not think that trade played such a big role. What the President was referring to was the international monetary problem. He did not intend to go into this complicated matter at this time. He agreed that balance of payments problem was a major one. He said he had had no more success in persuading us to accept his ideas on what should be done to remedy the situation, than in persuading his own government (the Foreign Minister was alluding here to his recommendation that the price of gold be raised). The President said that US foreign investment was an American problem but he asked what about tourism. The Foreign Minister said that the United States and France did not have to worry about individual payments, but that the important element in the situation was that of the flow of long- and short-term capital. The President said we had tried to do something about long-term investment abroad. This was very difficult because every time we did something it had caused widespread concern. He said we had increased interest rates domestically which should help the problem. The Foreign Minister asked what Europe could do about American investments: To forbid them would be regarded as an anti-American action ("Inward looking," quipped Ambassador Alphan).

The President went back to the subject of NATO and said he could not see where the disagreement lay. He did not disagree with anything Couve had said about NATO so far. He said it was true there was less danger of war but at the same time it was difficult to do anything in the way of reduction of forces because of German nervousness. He wondered where all this took us in our relations with France. The Foreign Minister said that with regard to France and NATO there was only one sensible thing to do: To leave things as they were and never to speak about them. France was being reproached for having only two divisions instead of four and for having a nuclear program. But this did not weaken NATO. If war were to come, French divisions and her ships would be fighting on the side of the United States. The President said that when the United States does anything people worry about it. He thought that this principle should work both ways and not just against us. Ambassador Bohlen said that what really counted were new acts by France taken without consultation with her allies and contrary to the spirit of NATO, e.g., her latest withdrawal of ships, and earlier initiatives. Mr. Ball said that this point should be stressed. If we move or shift troops, then we do it against a considerable background of doubt and apprehension which has been stimulated by France claiming that we have it in mind to withdraw from Europe. The Foreign Minister denied that this was so. He said that France felt that her defense arrangements could not be based on the assumption that the United States was going to be militarily present in Europe forever. Mr. Ball said that one of the difficulties with General de Gaulle's statements on the defense of

Europe was that although they sounded precise, the time factor was not defined, so that he made it sound as though the United States was going to pull out now.

The President asked the Foreign Minister about the significance of the recent speech by the State Secretary in the Foreign Office, Habib-Deloncle.² The Foreign Minister replied that he thought the excitement it had caused was due to the workings of "complicated British minds," which chose to see in it a French plot to make things more difficult for the MLF. He said that General de Gaulle never saw the speech before it was delivered, but that he himself had seen it. The only significance it had was that if the UK was prepared to join Europe in the nuclear field, this could lead to an agreement with the Community. The President asked how Europe was going to organize herself in nuclear matters. The Foreign Minister referred to his own remarks at the Ottawa meeting in May.³ He said NATO had shown that in order to organize defense you have to have valid political power to control it. If Europe were to achieve political unity then her resources could be put at the disposal of a nuclear force. The President said he didn't see on what we differed with France. Was it deficiency in liaison? Why do we give the appearance of having friction with France, which is an unhealthy condition? He said he thought that we were quite close on Laos, but General de Gaulle's statement on Vietnam had been unhelpful, particularly with regard to its timing. The Foreign Minister said that it had not been General de Gaulle's intention to do anything unhelpful. France had been in a position at the time when she had to say something. France had never had very good relations with the Diem Government. There was a French interest in developing economic and cultural, rather than political, relations. He felt that in the long run, evolution seemed to lead in the direction of the unification and neutrality of Vietnam. He said that he was aware that the statement had been badly received in Washington, but it had been no better received in Moscow or Peiping. Mr. Ball repeated that the timing had been unfortunate. The Foreign Minister said he did not know what the real situation was in Vietnam. The President said he thought it was being made to appear worse than it is. The Foreign Minister said France had been in Indochina during a period of some ninety years and her experience had always been that any problems must be discussed with the Chinese. He thought that this held true today also. He said the Russians were out of Vietnam and Southeast Asia in general and that they have almost no influence there. He said

² The text of Habib-Deloncle's speech before the Council of Europe, September 23, was transmitted in telegram 1421 from Paris, September 24. (Department of State, Central Files, Pol 3 Council of Europe)

³ Regarding the North Atlantic Council meeting at Ottawa, see Documents 196, 197, and 199.

they were in roughly the same position as the UK: both were getting less and less influential, whereas the Chinese influence was increasing.

The President asked about the possible nuclear role of Israel, and the French position. The Foreign Minister said France had not changed her policy and was following the situation closely. France wanted to prevent Israel from acquiring MRBM's. He said they now have only small missiles of the "Véronique" type for use with conventional war-heads.

The President asked the Foreign Minister how he suggested that France and the United States manage their affairs in the next few months to indicate a greater harmony between them. He said he thought that this would be useful for France too. The Foreign Minister agreed and said it would also be useful to Germany. He said the US and French would be meeting in Paris within the next two months (NATO meeting) and that more talks would then be held. It was a matter of discussing outstanding problems of mutual interest and trying to dispel suspicions and grievances. The President asked what Prime Minister Pompidou had meant when referring to a certain "economic press" being sold out to US interests. The Foreign Minister brushed this aside and said that this was merely a matter of French domestic politics.

276. Memorandum of Conversation

Washington, November 25, 1963.

SUBJECT

French-American Relations; Forthcoming Visit of General de Gaulle to the United States

PARTICIPANTS

US

President Johnson¹
The Secretary
Assistant Secretary Tyler
E. S. Glenn (interpreter)

France

President de Gaulle²
Foreign Minister Couve de Murville
Ambassador Alphand

Source: Department of State, Presidential Memoranda of Correspondence: Lot 66 D 149. Confidential. Drafted by Glenn and approved in S on November 26 and by the White House on December 2. The meeting was held in Rusk's office. A memorandum of de Gaulle's conversation with Rusk along similar lines on November 24 is *ibid.*, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330.

¹ President Kennedy was assassinated November 22 in Dallas, Texas.

² De Gaulle was in Washington for President Kennedy's funeral.