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**1973/04/24**

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PRIME MINISTER

Discussion with Dr. Kissinger

Sir Thomas Brimelow, Mr. Nairne and I, together with HM Ambassador and Mr. Sykes, had an interesting discussion with Dr. Kissinger and some associates for nearly four hours on the afternoon of Thursday, 19th April. A full record should reach us from Washington in the next few days; but I thought that in the meantime you might like to have the attached summary of the points which struck me as the most interesting and significant.

K was in good form - in better form (as both the Ambassador and I agreed) than when I last saw him a few months ago. But he clearly had not had time to study our memorandum on the "conceptual framework" in any detail; nor did he offer us any of the corresponding studies which he alleges that he has in preparation. As a result the discussion took the form of a general exchange of views rather than an examination of the specific issues raised by our memorandum.

As you will see from the attached note, K continues to be obsessed by the problem of coming to grips with a Europe which will not speak with one voice on any subject and appears incapable of understanding that all the various subjects of current concern are as organically interrelated as K's own conceptual approach requires them to be. He now genuinely wants to make progress on this front - almost to the exclusion of anything else; and this is the dominant theme of his speech yesterday. I waited to see at what point he would raise Indo-China, which is usually the first topic on which he wants to unburden himself. But it was not mentioned during the whole discussion; and I asked myself whether this was because it might provoke questions from ourselves which K would rather not answer in the circumstances of the present disarray in Laos and Cambodia or whether it was because the whole problem of South East Asia had genuinely receded in his mind in order that Europe might have priority. Whatever the answer, there is no doubt that, as regards Europe, he is now a man in a hurry. There was a new urgency and an additional impatience in his approach to the problem - which results, I suspect, from his increasing realisation

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that time is beginning to run against him; that there are only about three years left in which to tackle the intractable issues of the Atlantic relationship; and that the Watergate affair, if it develops into the really major scandal which it seems likely to become, could pre-empt quite a large part of those three years in terms of the President's moral authority. He did not discuss the Watergate episode in any detail, apart from indicating that he is keeping clear of it - "It all passes on the other side of my door" - and that he was typically shocked by the behaviour of the judge who had initially imposed savage sentences on some of those who were implicated and had then offered to reduce them if the individuals would disclose all that they knew. But, although K is dissociating himself from the whole affair as much as he can, he is clearly wary of the damage which it may yet do: and it underlies the anxiety with which he spoke about the fragility of United States society and the importance, to the United States itself, of re-establishing the old links with Europe.

Against this background we shall have to consider carefully how far it is in our interest to go along with K's suggestion that a series of working parties, held together by a top-level steering committee meeting about once a month, should now be established in order to give some formal study to the future of the Atlantic relationship. We clearly could not carry this process very far without involving at least the French and the Germans at a pretty early stage; and it is fortunate that K appears ready to contemplate this, perhaps after one more round of discussion with us. It is now urgent, therefore, to give more precision to our own thinking (particularly as regards the possibility of a radical review of NATO's basic strategic concept) in response to the invitation which K extended to us in Washington and has elaborated in his subsequent speech. We ought to try to be ready with some ideas by 10th May, when he hopes to visit us on his way back from Moscow.

K also raised the question of our own nuclear deterrent. I evaded it in open discussion, merely saying (truthfully) that we were not quite ready to carry the matter further. But afterwards, when only the Ambassador was present, I told K that I had always been intrigued by a remark which he once made to me to the effect that an independent British nuclear deterrent was valuable to the United States Government as a reinsurance. But a reinsurance against what? He replied, speaking

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very seriously and emphasising that he was not thinking in terms of the current Administration in Washington, that it was not possible to foresee what the attitude of the United States might one day become and that it was surely no bad thing, therefore, that the Soviet Government, if they wished to become the dominant Power in the world, should realise that it might not be enough to neutralise only one nuclear rival. I then asked him - reverting for a moment to the question of French involvement in European defence, which we had discussed at an earlier stage in the collective exchanges - what scope he really saw for Anglo-French nuclear co-operation. Or even, perhaps, for tripartite co-operation involving the United States as well. If the President had meant what he said when he told you that on nuclear issues he might prefer to deal with France through the United Kingdom as an intermediary, was there some kind of practical support or assistance which the United States would authorise us to offer on their behalf to the French Government? Would the United States Government find this possible without involving themselves in intolerable legal and constitutional difficulties? K looked very thoughtful and said that, if more was involved than the very limited exchanges about nuclear safety which, as we knew, the United States Government had already had with the French Government, the problem would be a very difficult one to handle in terms of Congress. But it might still be both desirable and possible to move in this direction if one could avoid appearing to do so or being too specific about what one was doing at all. There was not time to pursue the point further; but it is one of several arising from this discussion which we ought to pursue, if we can, before your meeting with President Pompidou (about which we said nothing to K).

Fortunately, the timetable in the immediate future could work out quite well from this point of view. K intends to visit Moscow (to clear the way for the Brezhnev visit to Washington) during the first week of May; and he would like to call in on us on his way back, probably about 10th May. Our own examination of our nuclear options should by then have been carried as far as we can carry it at this stage; and, with luck, Ministers will have had their first discussion of the very difficult issues involved just before K reaches London. If, in the light of Ministers' provisional decision, we can then carry rather further with him the possibility of some form of Anglo-French nuclear collaboration, the way would be open for you to

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explore this possibility with President Pompidou during your visit to Paris in the latter part of May. And, if we also fall in with K's suggestion that, after one more round of confidential Anglo-American discussions on the wider issues of NATO policy, we should widen these exchanges to include the French and the Germans, perhaps early in June, you might be able to ventilate this suggestion as well with President Pompidou; and we might then hope to have made at least a little progress towards redefining the Atlantic relationship before the Summer Recess!

Snake Lines

24th April, 1973

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Personal Record of a Discussion in the British Embassy, Washington DC on 19th April, 1973

PRESENT

HM Ambassador	Dr. Kissinger
Sir Burke Trend	Mr. Sonnenfeldt
Sir Thomas Brimelow	Mr. Hyland
Mr. Nairne	Miss Ryan
Mr. Sykes	
Mr. Powell	

K opened the discussion by emphasising the need, as he saw it, for some reaffirmation of Atlantic solidarity - something more than the "traditional liturgies", as he put it - at the time of President Nixon's forthcoming visit to Europe. He himself proposed to take the first step for this purpose in a speech which he was due to make on 23rd April to a public audience (the annual lunch of Associated Press) - a speech which, he said, would be prompted by the President's conviction that, unless the essential basis of Atlantic unity could be reconstituted, everything would go wrong; in particular, there could be no positive outcome of the forthcoming trade negotiations (which would be at best "damage limiting") and the whole of the complex MBFR issue would go sour. He hoped, therefore, that we would make some positive response to his speech immediately after its delivery. (The speech, of which we have now obtained the text in Washington telegram No. 1361 of 23rd April, is very much in line with what K said to us in Washington. But I think that it is fair to say that it is a good deal more forthright, more in the nature of a challenge to Europe, than he led us to expect.)

This gave me the opportunity to ask K a question which I had been wanting for some time to put to him. Why are the United States so concerned about Europe; and what is its essential importance to them? K took this question very seriously; and his answer was framed not, as I half expected, in geo-political terms but, initially, in terms of United States domestic politics. If the United States could not "rely" on Europe, the national morale would be progressively undermined; radicalism - either

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of the Right or of the Left - would develop by successive stages; and the whole of United States society would assume an increasingly regimented character. In the international context the United States ability to influence affairs would decline; Latin America would go over to the Soviet Union; Japan would follow; and China, which would be watching narrowly for any shift in the United States position or any diminution in United States influence, would begin to move in the same direction. In short, the United States could not afford, either domestically or in terms of international influence, to become isolated in the world; "and you can be sure that we will not wittingly make any deal at the expense of Europe".

I asked K how this philosophy would be affected by possible changes in the relationship between the Soviet Union and China - whether towards rapprochement or in the direction of increased hostility - in the decade ahead. He replied that, if there were a rapprochement between Moscow and Peking (which he regarded as unlikely so long as Mao and Chou-en-lai survived but did not exclude thereafter), Europe would count for even more in United States eyes. But he added the significant rider - always provided that Europe played its part in the Alliance both in practical terms and in terms of moral and political support for United States policies. As regards the opposite risk - i. e. a further deterioration in the relations between the Soviet Union and China, even to the point of an outright Soviet attack on Peking (which he has mentioned as a possibility at several of our previous meetings) - he was less specific. But he made it clear that the United States intended to press on with the "normalisation" of their relations with China in order to convince the regime in Peking that they had meant what they said when they had told them that, if China was attacked by the Soviet Union, the United States would help them, albeit in some way which had not hitherto been precisely defined. The Chinese were responding well to this kind of treatment; and, although K. now felt that any Soviet move against China was less likely to take the form of military attack than of intervention in the struggle for power which would develop after Mao's death, he clearly still regards the Soviet Union as a real and continuing threat to China. It is China, he said, who are the real target of the nuclear "treaty" which the Soviet Union are seeking to negotiate with Washington (i. e. Operation Hullabaloo).

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This is perhaps the best place to record an exchange about Hullabaloo which took place, rather later in our discussion, between K and Sir Thomas Brimelow. In so far as any action is required by way of United Kingdom comment on the latest draft of the proposed "treaty" or "agreement", Sir Thomas Brimelow has matters in hand. The interesting point in terms of the main discussion was K's conviction that the project is regarded as increasingly important by the Soviet Government and has now become a major matter of Soviet domestic policy. In Soviet eyes it is central to the forthcoming meeting between Mr. Brezhnev and President Nixon (for which 18th June has been fixed as a tentative and provisional date). K is now paying close attention, therefore, to the finer points of the text. He was very concerned, for example, to obtain Sir Thomas Brimelow's reaction to his own doubts about Article V, which would commit the United States and the Soviet Union to create a joint working party to study the means by which the main purposes of the "treaty" - i. e. the elimination of occasions which might lead to nuclear conflict - could be achieved. Might not this be regarded in Peking as the beginnings of a United States/Soviet condominium? And might not this damage relations between Washington and Peking? He was also beginning to consider how the whole project, which he has not so far mentioned in detail to anybody except ourselves, would best be disclosed - as it clearly must be - to the rest of the Atlantic Alliance before Mr. Brezhnev's visit to Washington. Perhaps the best thing, he suggested, would be to put Egon Bahr in the picture when he came to Washington within the next fortnight in preparation for Herr Brandt's subsequent visit; and this process might be repeated subsequently with Jobert, who would presumably be paying a similar visit to Washington to pave the way for President Pompidou rather later. It would then be possible to feed the "treaty" into NATO as a whole. I noted with interest that K seemed to contemplate that it would be possible to complete the whole of this process before 18th June, when Mr. Brezhnev is due in Washington.

K's reference to China as the real target of Hullabaloo gave me the opportunity to ask him what he really felt about the process of detente which the Soviet Government were so busily launching.



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Some people were clearly tempted to regard this as genuine - in the sense that the Soviet Government really wanted a relaxation of tension with Western Europe and that the latter would be foolish not to take advantage of this opportunity. Other people, including ourselves, were more sceptical about the Soviet motivation. But what did K himself think? He replied that we certainly could not assume that detente was real in this sense - at least not yet. But it had yielded the Soviet Government a significant degree of success; the German settlement had been particularly "pernicious" from this point of view (a remark which reflected K's almost instinctive distrust of the Federal German Government). We must therefore be on our guard against detente; and we must be prepared to "use it quite cold-bloodedly to justify as hard a policy line as we could".

All these reflections merely reinforced K's conviction that we must find some means of giving a new impetus to the Atlantic relationship - a theme which dominates his subsequent speech. Support for this relationship on the part of the Establishment in the United States was now perceptibly waning; and we must find once again some means of making it an "emotional necessity" to United States public opinion. Otherwise, the United States troops in Europe would be gradually and progressively withdrawn; and this process would go further than anything which could be justified by mere bargaining with the Soviet Union. During 1973 the President would have to welcome Mr. Brezhnev in Washington; and it was clear that the United States Government would be the subject of fresh Chinese overtures in the same period. Somehow or other, Europe had got to be elevated, in terms of Washington's thinking, to the same level of importance.

Could we not find some means of rationalising this issue - e.g. by making it the subject of systematic study by a series of working parties, who would examine its various implications - political, strategic, economic - under the general direction of some kind of steering committee, which would need to meet fairly frequently, e.g. every month or so? The United States would like us to consider this possibility (which we promised to do); and, meanwhile, they would like to feel that, perhaps after one further round of discussions with us, they could speak in much the same terms to the French and the Germans and could then gradually widen out the discussion into a more comprehensive European

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context. Meanwhile, however, they had not told the French and the Germans that they were having this kind of discussion with us; nor would they show them our memorandum about the "conceptual framework".

In reply to a question about the probable French reaction to any United States initiative of this kind, K said that he would expect it to be favourable. He had, indeed, made a tentative overture to President Pompidou in this sense (although he did not specify when he had done so); and he had ascertained that the President would be prepared, after the latest elections (which, at the time, still lay ahead), to entertain the idea of confidential exchanges with the United States about the future of the Atlantic relationship but that he would wish to keep these in his own hands (i. e. to conduct them through Jobert) and would stipulate that they should not be disclosed to the Quai d'Orsay. A similar feeler had been put out in the direction of Bonn, whose response (predictably!) had been rather disappointing, in the sense that it had been almost entirely confined to reaffirming the need for the maintenance of the United States nuclear umbrella until such time as Europe could do without it.

But, if the United States were to conduct this kind of global discussion with their main European allies, the discussion must be genuinely global. Economics was a boring subject; but it was not irrelevant. And linkage - as between political, military and economic problems - was a fact of life (as K has since emphasised in his speech to the Associated Press lunch). It was simply not possible for President Nixon to resist Congressional pressure on some issue of commercial policy - e. g. the treatment of soya beans under the GATT - unless he could point to some offsetting advantage which the United States could gain in a wider context. The same was true of the discussions on monetary policy, which showed all the signs of turning into a mere technical haggle. By contrast, if only the President, the British Prime Minister and "a few others" could agree on the general principles which should govern the Atlantic relationship as a whole, it would surely be possible for this relationship to be refounded on a basis of mutual trust and forbearance on both sides. A reaffirmation of the Atlantic Alliance in this sense would be the best possible outcome of the President's forthcoming visit to Europe; and, although that visit was scheduled for the autumn, the timetable could be adjusted if this was necessary in order to ensure that it would in fact culminate in some reaffirmation of this kind.

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(In K's speech this idea appears in the even more grandiose form of a "new Atlantic Charter", to be achieved "by the time the President travels to Europe towards the end of the year"; and it is significant that this Charter is to embrace Japan as well as Europe.)

K then turned to the two areas of policy which clearly constitute his main preoccupation at the moment and are the most urgent candidates in his view for a closer dialogue between the United States and Europe, particularly the United Kingdom. The first - emphasised in K's speech - is energy, about which he spoke in terms with which we are familiar from our own study of the problem. He has set the experts in Washington a kind of "examination paper", in the form of a list of questions designed to establish a technical assessment of the issues involved as a preliminary to an examination of their political implications. He would like to be sure that our own experts subscribed to this assessment; and he asked whether we would be willing to send somebody to Washington for a discussion of his "examination paper". We undertook to follow up this suggestion.

The second issue is MBFRs. Here the discussion started with the expected complaint about the British attitude on the question of Hungary's inclusion in the negotiations. We referred K to the message which the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had that day sent to the Secretary of State, indicating that in our view there were reasons of substance for Hungary's inclusion. He replied that the United States had never contemplated that Hungary would not be covered by the non-circumvention provisions of an MBFR agreement or would not be subject to the necessary restraints. This assurance was duly reported to the FCO; and I think that the United States will assume that this disposes of the dispute. If so, they will wish to get down to the main negotiations as rapidly as possible; and here K was anxious that we should not misunderstand the thinking which lies behind the three possible options outlined in the United States position paper which the White House gave Mr. Wiggin last week as a preliminary to tabling it in NATO. A copy is attached. K was anxious that we should take the following points:-

- (a) A common ceiling approach was essentially right.
- (b) In either of its two forms - i. e. either the "staged common ceiling approach" or the "one-sixth bilateral reduction to ground manpower parity in NGA" - the Soviet reduction would be greater than the United States reduction. If Hungary was included, the

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disparity would become even greater; and the Soviet Government would use this as an excuse to switch the basis of calculation to one of mere percentage reductions. The maximum cut which we could possibly accept would be 15 per cent; and in K's own judgment we ought not to go beyond 10 per cent. But this would affect no more than 7,000 - 8,000 troops stationed in Hungary; and it was absurd to argue that this would make any real difference to European security. This was an additional reason for not making an issue of Hungary's inclusion in the negotiations.

- (c) The third of the three United States options, the "nuclear mixed package approach", was not likely to attract the Soviet Government; and it was best, therefore, to regard it as a kind of "building block", which could be thrown in, if necessary, as a make-weight in addition to either of the other two options. The MBFR negotiations were not concerned primarily with nuclear weapons; and the United States could sacrifice some of these, without damage to NATO, if this was necessary to provide some compensation for an inequality or asymmetry in the strength of ground forces.
- (d) As between the two main options, K himself prefers the "one-sixth bilateral reduction" formula, since he believes that the "staged common ceiling" suffers from two disadvantages. Its identification of indigenous ground forces as an element to be dealt with in addition to, and separately from, stationed ground forces would encourage the European Governments to think in terms of their national forces as distinct from the forces of the Alliance, as a whole and would therefore be liable to generate competition between them to ensure the maximum reduction in the former, regardless of the effect on the latter. It would also involve trading some good German divisions against some third-rate Polish divisions; and the Alliance as a whole would get the worst of that bargain.

But K's main anxiety was to ensure that we understood that in United States eyes the MBFR project was essentially a security measure. It was not regarded in Washington as a means to the Vietnamisation of Europe; it was regarded essentially as a means of anticipating the domestic

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pressure for some reduction of United States troops in Europe and of dealing with that pressure on a basis which would do the minimum of damage to the conventional defence of Europe. It was ironical that conventional defence was becoming increasingly important precisely as the pressure to dismantle it was itself growing; and it was this dilemma which the United States Government hoped to resolve by a controlled process of MBFR.

This gave me the opportunity to ask K what the United States Government would do if, despite all their endeavours, the MBFR negotiations ended in failure. He replied that they could wear that result (in the sense that they would clearly have done their best; that the blame for the failure would be demonstrably attributable to the Soviet Government; and that this would have shown up the detente for the sham which it was), provided that Europe could agree on a rational defence policy to be followed thereafter. A policy of this kind, which would command the support of public opinion in the United States, was something to which the President attached even more importance than to the success of the MBFR negotiations.

I told K - avoiding any reference to the financial implications - that we did not necessarily dissent from this point of view. But what did he mean by a rational defence policy; and how did he see it being achieved? He replied - and the reply, which he has subsequently underlined in his speech, was essentially a restatement of the view which the President put to the Prime Minister at Camp David in February - that a rational defence policy required a radical reappraisal of NATO's purpose and underlying strategic concept. This was something which NATO itself would be reluctant to tackle, partly because it might involve additional expenditure and partly because it would certainly require some departure from conventional military thinking. Although K himself had tried over and over again to get satisfactory answers to some obvious questions about current NATO doctrine, he had failed to do so; and he was still wondering therefore why it was that the strongest NATO forces were defending the most "scenic" areas (e.g. the Alps); why it was that the member Governments of NATO thought that they could afford to plan in terms of differing scales of consumption rates and reserve stocks for essential military supplies; and why it was that they similarly differed as regards their estimates of the probable duration of NATO resistance to a determined Soviet attack. Above all, there seemed to be no rational

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concept governing the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons. If we accepted - and K admitted that logically it was inescapable that we should do so - that there was an almost inevitable progression from the use of tactical nuclear weapons to the strategic exchange, it was essential that the critical dilemma which would then confront the Government which had to decide whether to press the strategic nuclear button should be a dilemma which the United States Government would impose on the Soviet Government and not the other way round. But this required the whole process, from the very first use of tactical nuclear weapons, to have been thought through consistently; and it was this systematic analysis of the sequence, and of its implications step by step, which K had been unable to elicit from NATO.

Mr. Nairne did his best to persuade K that all these issues were the subject of considerable discussion within NATO and that it was really rather absurd to claim that they were being treated as inconsequentially as he maintained. But K remained unconvinced; and, if we are really to get to grips with the United States on this issue, we must be prepared either to take considerable trouble to demonstrate to them that K's fears are unfounded or we must accept his contention that, somehow or other, a radical reappraisal of NATO strategy - with all its political and financial implications - is necessary.

K then used his anxiety about the irresponsibility of NATO's nuclear planning in order to reinforce his argument that the local and conventional defence of Europe was the problem on which we should all now be concentrating. I asked him how he proposed to persuade the other European Governments to this effect if, whether the MBFR negotiations succeeded or not, the United States started to withdraw their own troops from Europe - especially if these troops, once withdrawn, were demobilised. (And K admitted that, whatever the United States Government might say in public about the troops, they would in fact be demobilised.) Moreover, was it possible to think in terms of a rational policy for the conventional defence of Europe which did not include France? And how did K propose to deal with that issue? He did not give a direct answer to either of these questions. But it was perhaps significant that as regards France he said that in his view we should not bother too much about trying to persuade the French Government to accept some fresh kind of formal defence commitment but should concentrate, instead, on various practical steps which we might take to involve them once a gain, little by little, in the actual mechanics of European defence. Here, too, however,

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he was not very specific and was more concerned to revert to his initial theme of the importance of taking some initiative to make a reality of "the year of Europe" by what he has called, in his subsequent speech, "a joint effort of creativity". It was on this point that he brought the meeting to a close, repeating that he hoped that we might have another round of discussion very soon, perhaps when he called in on us about 10th May.

There was just time for me to mention the question of military supplies to China in the COCOM context. I took the line required by the DOP discussion, as reported in FCO telegram no. 939 of 18th April, confining myself to generalities and indicating that a letter from the Prime Minister would reach the President in the near future. K assumed - and I did not correct him - that we were still concerned with the fighter aircraft which the Prime Minister had mentioned to the President at Camp David in February; and he said instantly that any approach on this subject should meet with a "very sympathetic" response.

24th April, 1973