

00968

1973/12/20

MEMORANDUM

DECLASSIFIED
Authority *ND 101 057*
By *10 NARA Data 15 09*
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

X

TOP SECRET / SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

HSJ
2-78

SECRET

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Georges Pompidou, President of the French Republic
Interpreter
Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State

DATE AND TIME: ~~Thursday~~, December 20, 1973

CLASSIFIED BY FRANK WISNER 12:00 p.m.

SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
PLACE *Elysee Palace*
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO-
YEAR INTERVALS AND DECLASSIFIED ON
DECEMBER 31, -----

12/21/73

President
from - Kissinger

Pompidou: Weary pilgrim!

Kissinger: I am taking some vacation next week. For the moment I must go to Geneva to meet with three of the interested parties. Obviously, Syria is posing a problem.

Pompidou: Syria won't be at Geneva?

Kissinger: No, and although that is tactically useful, it is strategically complicating. What subjects do you wish to discuss in particular during these talks?

Pompidou: Things which interest you. Naturally the question of the Near East is the most preoccupying for me as for you and for many others.

Kissinger: Fine. I will say a few words on the Middle East and then with your permission discuss briefly the energy issue within the framework of U.S. - European relations and finally will get to some special military questions.

POL FR US

TOP SECRET / SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

SECRET

1

DECLASSIFIED

Authority

NWD 1057

By

10 NARA

Date 16 99

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

- 2 -

Kissinger (cont'd): On the subject of the Middle East, it is very important in my view that you completely understand our fundamental strategy as distinct from our tactics. This strategy proceeds from the hypothesis that whatever may result from the relationship of detente, the Soviet Union will represent a growing threat during the 1970's. While engaging us in a dialogue for reasons that I can discuss further if you wish, we maintain no illusions about detente. Our essential goal remains to decrease Soviet influence in the Middle East and not that of Western Europe. To the extent that we succeed, I hope that the influence of Western Europe will become more effective because we will be confronted by problems where it will be increasingly difficult to satisfy all of the Arab demands.

This is our fundamental strategy. That is why during the war we supported Israel militarily in order that the Arabs might understand that the USSR could help them militarily but not politically. Now that the war is over, we have pursued certain policies toward Israel in order to demonstrate that we can achieve political gains. We have succeeded in closing the positions between Egypt and Israel and between Israel and Jordan. I am hopeful that at the conference we will be able to achieve concrete progress after the first phase. In our opinion, the first phase will take place between now and the end of January. We have an agreement in principle among all of the parties although we still haven't gotten into the details.

The Syrian problem is more complex. I had a good discussion with President Assad but not without certain bizarre aspects. I can give you an example. We had spent four weeks in negotiating the letter of invitation to the Security Council. The Soviets had told us that the Syrians agreed. At the last moment Israel raised an objection against the mention of the Palestinians. We were then obliged to seek a new formula to avoid mentioning them. I spent an hour in convincing Sadat and five minutes discussing it with Assad. I told him, "I had expected this to be most difficult and now you give your agreement within five minutes. If there is something else bothering you in this letter, please tell me." Assad answered: "One phrase bothers me. The one which states that the parties agree to attend the conference." Does that mean I said, that the content of the text is immaterial, that in any event you refuse to go. He answered "yes." If I had not asked the question, he wouldn't have said anything and for three days we would have known nothing. I fear that the Syrians will try to undermine the conference using every means at their disposal.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

Kissinger (cont'd): With regard to the future, I believe that during the first phase we must strive to separate the military forces in order to reduce the danger of conflict. I hope that we will succeed. The second phase must address the more complex problems. In any event, I would like to state very clearly, our position will never be directed against the interests of France. I discussed this yesterday with your Minister of Foreign Affairs. You will be kept completely informed as the conference evolves. Over the longer term, during the second phase, we must get to the larger concerns, that is to say beyond purely military issues.

Pompidou: First of all concerning your approach: I don't believe that it is entirely consistent with the strategy you have described. In reality the Security Council should have been behind this whole business (the peace conference) and frankly, I believe that you will end up strengthening the Soviet position by this tete-a-tete you are organizing. Moreover, we saw yesterday at the Security Council it was the Soviet representative who was the most nervous and who raised the most objections, against France, for example, and he is right. That said, I declare to you with full responsibility that you may be assured that we will do nothing to upset the conference. For example if you were under the impression that we were pressuring Syria, that is not so. We only stated to Egypt that it was considerate of them to want France and the UK to attend but you (the United States) were among those who first accepted that we be excluded; we needn't be coy about it. Again, however, we will do absolutely nothing to disturb the conference. You have my word.

One matter of clarification is, however, required. Do you think that there may be an arrangement between Israel and Jordan on Jerusalem? That is the most difficult question, even more difficult than the Syrian matter:

Kissinger: There is no agreement.

Pompidou: My second comment is this: Certainly nothing would be worse than a resumption of hostilities. But I also believe that this last conflict has clearly posed the question of the continued existence of the state of Israel...

Kissinger: I agree with you completely.

Pompidou: ...and that if one were to reach a peace agreement which was accepted by Egypt, Israel, the King of Jordan, and perhaps even by Syria, but which did not recognize the interests of other Arab states such as Libya and Algeria, the whole thing would start again sooner or later.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

EYES ONLY

- 4 -

Kissinger: I agree completely. I believe that it may be possible to obtain the agreement of the Algerians. I had a good discussion with Boumedienne and I can tell you confidentially that I will meet Bouteflika this afternoon.

Pompidou: I hope that you have envisioned a long discussion.

Kissinger: I scarcely have time. When I was leaving the airport at Algiers I gave a short farewell of five minutes; he spoke for more than fifty.

Pompidou: If Iraq, the Emirates, Algeria and Libya were to reject the peace, sooner or later Sadat would be overthrown and there would be a new war, with this time the end of the state of Israel or perhaps a more serious conflict on a global scale. This is why I think that Israel is wrong in its attitude toward France, and in taking us as a scapegoat. Israel's position is very close to the solution that we have proposed and which corresponds to what you are seeking.

Kissinger: The tragedy of Israel is that in order to avoid that Jews be forced to live in ghettos, as they have done through the course of their history, they have created a state in which Israeli diplomacy makes its own ghetto. It is a diplomacy which leads to suicide.

Pompidou: That's what I said to Ambassador Ben Nathan several years ago. "Your attitude is admirable, but it is suicidal." And I see that yesterday once more the Israeli press, with regard to Copenhagen, is accusing France of interfering even though we quickly agreed to the British text. In the text was a phrase which neither Holland, especially, nor Germany was willing to accept. Heath said that in this case he would prefer to withdraw the phrase than to look for a compromise and I made no objection. But there you are. I suppose you must always have a "tet de turc."

Kissinger: For me the crucial question, and that which demands a very painful effort, is that I am persuaded that the U.S. and I, personally, are the only ones in a position to persuade Israel to begin some movement. When you have passed a night in arguing with Israeli ministers you can't help but be struck by the tragic side of their incomprehension. I completely agree with you. The very existence of Israel is at stake. She can only be protected by great power efforts even though she throws back at us the argument that it is the 50 or 100 Egyptian tanks that are crossing the Canal that are threatening them. We are subordinating everything to the relatively early withdrawal of Israel from its current positions. Without that, the war

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NDM 067
By D. MARR Date 11/16/99

- 5 -

will be resumed very quickly. I don't believe that the Soviet Union has completely understood even now the strength of its position in the event the war were to resume. At that point, the problems that would be posed for us, Europe and Israel would be enormous. That is why we are trying so hard to reach an agreement on disengagement in January.

Pompidou: To conclude, let me tell you that when we state our readiness to be included in the UN forces that will be stationed in the DMZ in the agreement, it isn't because I really look forward to that, it is because you need real forces which will not be taken lightly and not just forces from countries such as Ghana or Liberia.

Kissinger: I understand very well and we're not opposed to this in principle. At the same time, our relations with Israel have demonstrated that their diplomacy is heavily conditioned on psychological considerations and a certain number of questions that will be posed within a few months will have the potential for provoking hysterical reactions. However, last November, when Mrs. Meir was in Washington, she expressed the view that to discuss the October 22 lines was treason, but only last Sunday she was willing to discuss withdrawal from the Sinai. It takes time for Israel to understand the realities of its position. We find no fault with European initiatives which facilitate de-fusing the issue in this context.

Pompidou: You have prompted a second question. That is, relations between Europe and the United States.

Kissinger: In reviewing the events of the last few years, our relations reflect a philosophic misunderstanding between the U.S. and Europe and particularly with France. With regard to the American Administration, you understand the affection that the President holds for France and for you personally. I also count myself as a friend of France. I say this based on the opinion that France is the only European country which is promoting serious policies in matters of foreign affairs and defense and is relying upon its own resources to do this. With regard to Germany, we have already discussed this; I would expect a unified Germany to be a neutral country. We are, thus, in favor of a unified and independent Europe. Moreover, based upon historic record, it wouldn't be healthy for all the decisions to be taken in Washington. I have always felt that in reality there isn't any deep-seated disagreement between Europe and the U.S., or between France and the U.S. It is true that the technical orientation of many of our bureaucrats pushes them toward hegemonic aspirations, but the President and I want to use the remaining

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NOV 19 057
By 10 AARA Data 15 99

- 6 -

three years at our disposal to establish with Europe relations based upon European independence but with a definite association with the United States. We believe that such an arrangement would correspond to the realities with which we must come to grips. There is in the U.S. a growing tendency toward isolationism and in Europe a trend toward the left of superficiality and of neutralism. If, on both sides of the Atlantic, we become preoccupied with the areas of disagreements and never focus on the joint successes, these tendencies can only increase. For the moment, the principal disagreements between Europe and the U.S. bear on the sense of the declaration. Certain Europeans see it as a legal document that we are trying to use to obtain commitments from you. We view it as a symbolic expression of our relations. Its legal significance is very minor.

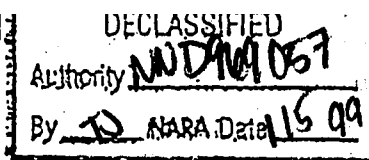
If we look beyond these immediate areas of disagreement, we cannot fail to recognize that toward the end of the decade the USSR will pose a tremendous problem. The placement of 50,000 more tanks between the Elbe and the Urals and the development of four new ICBM's isn't going to make the problem any easier.

With regard to energy and oil, I believe that we are only at the beginning of a resolution of the problems between industrialized and developing countries. If the western powers exhaust themselves in internal squabbles, these problems will never be solved. I was struck by the fact that before we approached any Arab country, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait took the initiative to inform us that they were favorably disposed to the energy proposal that I put forth in London. I believe that is because the Arabs recognize that a competitive struggle for oil among the consumer countries will facilitate the consolidation of the radical Arab regimes. We are in no way opposed to the European identity, but we would like to establish a growing framework of relations with it. We are mindful of the difficulties of the past. We would prefer, certainly, to focus this dialogue with France and the United Kingdom, as opposed to Luxembourg, Belgium or the FRG.

Pompidou: I can tell you as a Frenchman that we see no need to have a formal declaration as a basis for relations between Europe and the U.S. But we don't feel strongly about it -- we would rather prefer that there be no declaration at all or that it be a very brief declaration and more at the European initiative, which would eliminate the need for an American "nihil obstat." If anyone is convinced that the interests of Europe, and in particular France, and the interests of the U.S. are securely linked in economic, political and military affairs, it is I. The proof is by the daily references

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY



- 7 -

to our provoking a crisis with the USSR. I would add that we are joining in these efforts in order to unify Europe, but we never have accepted the idea that we would be able to reach any kind of agreement except under the control of, and with the agreement of, others. If this were the case, our efforts would have been hopeless from the start. There are those countries that really don't make any difference, and others which are always afraid of the USSR. As a consequence, they place themselves under your protection, always hoping to avoid involving themselves by a position of neutrality. It will be necessary for Europe to come together on its own, with it being understood that its primary partner in the world, its greatest ally and its number one friend will be the U. S., in spite of the problems that pose themselves from time to time, such as the soybean and grapefruit problems. Those don't really impact on our fundamental relationship. When one is a great power, however, and you are the greatest power in the world, it is sometimes difficult to understand that and to recognize that independent attitudes don't reflect any desire for separation.

You brought up the problem of energy. If we are talking about a dialogue between consumers and producers, we can discuss the modalities of such a dialogue without any problem. I would not concur, however, in establishing a consortium of consumers that would seek to impose a solution on the producers. You only rely on the Arabs for about a tenth of your consumption. We are entirely dependent upon them. We can't afford the luxury of three or four years of worry and misery waiting for the Arabs to understand the problem. I won't be able to accept, no matter what conditions are established, a situation which requires us to forego Arab oil, for even a year. I would like to be able to take advantage of the resources of Texas and Venezuela, etc., but I don't have that option.

Kissinger: If there is one thing which we want to avoid, it is the weakening of European governments because we recognize that the consequences of such a situation, particularly in Germany, would be very bad. Thus, it is very much in our interest that nothing happens to Europe, as a result of the energy crisis, to weaken the current governments -- particularly that of France. There remains a practical question -- how do we assure that oil begins to flow as quickly as possible? It is easy for us to talk about it because we possess reasonable resources from Texas and elsewhere, and we are not suffering the pressures to which you refer. Nevertheless, my experience, and I could be wrong, with Arab countries, leads me to say that oil will never flow as a function of our requirements, but of theirs. When Yamani was in Washington he tried to extract the conditions of peace that we could accept. I refused to answer him and stated that we have our own dignity, just as he has his. The only interest of Saudi Arabia is to not

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NOV 19 057
By D. NARA Data 16 99

- 8 -

reinforce radical governments. I know how to deal with them, and I made that clear to King Faisal. Afterwards he became much more reasonable. As a result, I believe that the immediate crisis can be overcome within two months. This is the impression that I have drawn from my discussions, especially with Faisal. It is terribly important that this remain a matter of confidence.

Further, with regard to energy, we would like to establish an effective dialogue between consumers and producers. But not the creation of any syndicate. At the same time, with regard to other sources of energy besides oil, if you believe that, the consumer countries should coordinate their efforts, I would agree completely. That corresponds to our common interests and we are ready to share our technology. This is the objective of our proposal on oil -- a dialogue between producers and consumers -- on other sources of energy, a more constrained relationship between consumers.

Pompidou: When I received Yamani and Abdesselam, he asked that Europe and France attempt to exert pressure on Israel, breaking relations and so forth. I answered, just as you did, that we will maintain our dignity.

Kissinger: That is very important over the long term. One of the reasons for which, in the Middle East, we have publicly declared that Europe cannot force us toward certain acts is in part to avoid precisely the Arab pressures on Europe.

Pompidou: You didn't entirely succeed.

Kissinger: I have the impression that Saudi Arabia is looking for a formula to extricate itself from the problem.

Pompidou: You understand that a lot better than we do, even though our relations with the Arab countries are quite good.

Kissinger: It is very important that this remain confidential. In my government, I have told no one except the President, and I have told no other government except yours. In effect, it will be necessary for Saudi Arabia to obtain the agreement of the other countries.

Pompidou: You referred earlier to military questions.

Kissinger: In the American Administration, we are the only ones, the President and myself, that believe that Europe with its own defense

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NWD 91057
By D NARA Date 16 99

- 9 -

capability would lead to a more responsible foreign policy than would a Europe that was dependent upon us. I don't have any illusions over the fact that such a position will make our relations with France any easier, but the objective of our policy is not to look for the easiest route, but to assist those countries that have a desire for self-defense and independence. There will be problems, of course - how do you prevent that concept from being misinterpreted by the press and in the Congress. We have to deal with a very small group to which you cannot give orders, but which you are constrained to persuade. It is also a problem that the majority of our bureaucracy is anti-French, just as the majority of the Quai D'Orsay outside the Minister, himself, is anti-American. As a result, we have to take our time in working on minor declarations which play a certain role in this context. American opinion attaches great importance to French domestic politics, an even greater importance than they deserve in reality.

With regard to military issues, I told Mr. Jobert that we were ready in principle to resume our conversations. I would like you to understand that from time to time we will have to choose complicated modalities but that are always well-motivated. Your Minister of Defense may get in touch with me through the channels that he has used at the White House, and we will resume the discussions.

Pompidou: I will only say that, at the current state of our work, timing is a very important consideration.

Kissinger: I understand. For our part, we would wish that your program might be irreversible. It seems to me that otherwise there won't be any long-term program at all.

Pompidou: I expect that that will come.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EYES ONLY