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SECRETARY'S STAFF MEETING

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1973, 3:10 P.M.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I see a lot of new faces.

I thought we would have a brief meeting to bring you up to date on what has happened on the trip and what our general strategy has been.

There were two essential parts to the trip. One was the relation with the Europeans. The second was the relationships in the Middle East, leading to the Geneva peace conference.

With respect to the Europeans, the basic problem really is the attempt to organize Europe, to unify Europe on an anti-American basis, or at least on a basis in which criticism of the United States becomes the organizing principle. And all the other issues that the press mentions are totally subsidiary to that. The difficulties with the so-called Year of Europe, the difficulties with the Energy Action Group, are all traceable to one fundamental cause, which is the cooperation between the French and the British to split off Europe in a manner in which the organizing principle for European unity becomes their capability of resisting us: and in which they want us out of any structural arrangement in which we might predominate. The rest are subterfuges. And it is this that we have been trying to

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resist.

It takes many forms. With all the talk about consultation, for example, the fact is that if we made a list, we, on the whole, consult them rather meticulously. On the trip through the Middle East, at every stop at which there were British or French ambassadors, Joe or I briefed them. We never know what they are doing. And we were in the ridiculous position that for three weeks there were exchanges on the subject of whether I should meet with the Foreign Minister of the Nine, while five Arab Foreign Ministers showed up at the European summit conference for meetings both with the Prime Minister, who was the president of the Commission, and for meeting with the European Foreign Ministers. The Europeans pretended that these Arab Foreign Ministers just showed up uninvited. But that was total nonsense. The news of their coming was reported by the British Prime Minister while we were there as a great achievement. And it was only when we indicated that we thought it might have been helpful to inform us that they remembered that this was improvised by the Arabs.

Anyone who knows the Arabs knows that five Arab Foreign Ministers don't show up in one place at the same time, being moved by that spirit independently.

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So this is the basic issue between us and the Europeans. There literally is no other issue. And we had decided to bring it out into the open, because domestically no European government can at this moment still sustain an anti-U.S. foreign policy. And what we have been trying to prevent is that the French strategy is to use NATO to milk us for military protection and for whatever other unilateral concessions they can extract from us, and to use the EEC to separate Europe from the United States. And the British on the whole have ^{been} supporting the French. The Germans have been wringing their hands. And the others haven't done anything.

I think we made some progress at the NATO meeting in bringing at least the dilemma up to them. If one were to listen to their expressions, they all collapsed completely and they all asserted that there is absolutely no contradiction between European unity and Atlantic union, which is also our view.

But it remains to be seen, both in the work on these declarations and in the implementation of this Energy Action Group, to what extent the Europeans are capable of conducting a sustained foreign policy right now, and to what extent the movement towards European unity can feed itself on other

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motivations except distinction from the United States.

Formally we did rather well. But I have not yet seen any real progress, either at NATO or in EC negotiations, other than formal declarations. I think we have made some impression on the British. But our problem with the British isn't Home; it is Heath. And therefore the fact that we had very good talks with the British Foreign Office doesn't really mean that the British foreign policy is going to change substantially. We will have to see that over a period of time.

Walt, do you have any observations?

MR. STOESSEL: No, I don't think so. It is too early, I think, in the EEC to see much reaction.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That is right. I am open-minded. I think it is too early to tell. They are all tempted to appeal to their left by pretending that they are pursuing an anti-American unified Europe policy, and to appeal to their right by pretending to pursue an active NATO policy. When I say pretending, the anti-American policy is more vocal than real at this moment, but so is the pro-NATO policy. The danger is that everything will disintegrate into a sort of a vapid mish-mash in which the basis for any sustained foreign policy will disintegrate.

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On the energy problem, they seem torn between trying to get some short-term advantages and organizing a cooperative relationship. Probably they will try to combine the advantage of both of these policies until somebody forces them to choose. And that will be our intention.

Now, with respect to the Middle East, we had the problem first of getting the conference organized; secondly, developing a strategy for the conference.

Getting the conference organized involved the very mundane problem of developing a letter signed by the Soviet Union and us that each of the parties would accept. And that turned into a rather harrowing exercise. We finally had everybody except the Syrians. And there were two points in the letter that we wanted to change. One -- the date of the conference; and the second, we wanted to drop the word "Palestinians" from the letter. So when I saw Assad -- Joe and I saw President Assad, in that bizzare place. We asked, "Can we change the date from December 18th to the 21st?" He said, "Sure." I said, "Can we drop the word 'Palestinians'?" He said, "Certainly." I said, "Why does everyone say it is impossible to deal with you. It took us an hour-and-a-half to do this with the Egyptians and here we did it in ten minutes with you." I said, "Is there anything

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else in that letter that bothers you, since this is our last chance?" He said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, there is one sentence in the letter that bothers us." I said, "What is it?" He said, "That the parties have agreed to go to the conference. (Laughter) We haven't agreed to go to the conference." This to my knowledge was the first time that anybody heard that the Syrians were dubious about going to the conference. It certainly came as a surprise -- unless they are consummate actors -- to both the Egyptians and the Soviets.

And to this day I don't understand the strategy. Because if he had wanted to blow up the conference, he could easily have refused to change the word "Palestinians" in which case the Israelis wouldn't have come. In fact, he could have accepted the letter with the changes and gone to the conference, in which case again the Israelis wouldn't have come.

So why he accepted the letter and permitted the conference to go on is not easy for me to understand.

But Dean is the expert on the Arab mentality and perhaps can explain it.

So actually, from our point of view the decision of the Syrians not to come was a rather favorable development --

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all the moreso as they have not really made a systematic effort to blow up the conference.

And I must tell you, Joe, right afterwards, regretablely, they are now showing signs of wanting to go to the conference, (Laughter) giving us a totally new nightmare.

From our point of view, the best thing would have been if they had not come while the first stage of the conference was gaining momentum.

Now, as for the strategy that we pursued, our problem was as follows.

We had to prevent, in the first phase of the conference, that the coalition of the West Europeans, Japan, the Soviet Union and Arab producers focus on some issue in which Israel would be totally isolated and we would be isolated with them, either because we agreed with Israel or because we disagreed with Israel and couldn't produce her. Either case would have been disastrous for us.

Therefore, in the last six weeks we have been looking around for some issue that could be settled in the first stage of the conference as a result of our activity and that nevertheless was not so complex either

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to produce a showdown between us and Israel or to produce a demonstration of our impotence vis-a-vis Israel.

Now, I think there is now a good possibility that the issue of the disengagement of forces can provide such a vehicle. And what this would mean is a moving apart of the Egyptian and Israeli forces with perhaps some UN forces in between, which would have the double advantage that the conference would have started with some success brought about by the United States, and secondly, that starting the war again would become much more difficult, or could be achieved only by actions which would prevent the element of surprise from being as operative as it was on October 6, and therefore would produce an added deterrent to military operations.

We had extremely good talks with the Israelis in which for the first time a glimmer of the strategic reality of their position seemed to us to exist. And while this doesn't mean that their precise positions will be in accord with what we think may be necessary, at least it permits us to talk from a common conceptual base, which is more than existed before.

Finally, we have wanted to reduce the dominant influence of the Soviet Union in the Arab countries by

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inducing the Arab countries to deal with us and to recognize that others might have a better rhetoric but only we could deliver on a responsible settlement.

Now, this essentially was achieved.

At the conference, the histrionics were kept to an absolute minimum and a mode of operation was adopted which gives the maximum possibility for progress in the sense that the issues to be discussed first will be military issues to be discussed by military men in the absence of Soviet and U.S. participants, with a member from the UN Emergency Force in the chair -- in other words, transferring the Kilometer 101 talks to Geneva. And given the fact that at Kilometer 101 there were already some signs of progress, the first phase of the conference, unless the Syrians suddenly show up, is likely -- well, I agree with Dayan, that it has a slightly better than 50-50 chance of working.

What happens afterwards will depend on the nature of the disengagement agreement, to see whether one can have a second phase.

If the Arabs and Soviets can be induced to stage their proposals so that we never face an all-or-nothing situation, then I think we could gradually approach a settlement through a series of steps that could bring about

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a de facto situation, that would be much safer and much more sustainable. And if we can keep up the position where the Soviet Union does not actively disturb the negotiations, but also does not get into the central position of where its proposals dominate the conference, then I think we will come out of this reasonably well. And I think we are well on the way to doing that, certainly in the first phase of the conference.

Joe, do you want to add anything?

MR. SISCO: Do you want to say a word about oil? I think there will be a good deal of interest here in the group.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, on oil, as those of you know who know the subject better than I do, you are aware there are really two issues. There is the issue of the level of production; there is the issue of the embargo. Lifting the embargo without raising the production doesn't really do us much good, because we would then be competing with the Europeans for an already inadequate share of the total. So our objective is two-fold -- to get them to increase their production, and secondly, to get them to lift the embargo. Our object is also to get this brought about without our having to bargain for specific terms on

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the Arab-Israeli settlement -- because our view has been that if we once begin to let ourselves be blackmailed, this weapon will be used time and time again at every stage of the negotiations. And if we once get into a negotiation on specific terms in return for the oil, we will be negotiating with the wrong parties, perhaps without being able to deliver the other party. So the position we have taken with the Arabs, which I think is going to work, is that we have shown our good will by producing the conference, by establishing an agenda that has a clear direction, and by using our influence to get Israeli agreement to that agenda and to that direction. We will not under any circumstances make pronouncements as to the final goal in order to get a temporary alleviation of the oil problem. And I think that has become understood.

I don't know what the experts here think, but I consider that this increase in production is not a bad prelude to the lifting of the embargo -- if this is where they are planning to go.

We certainly found the Saudis much more relaxed and much easier to talk with this time than on the last visit. In fact, I'm reaching the point where if a Foreign Minister doesn't kiss me, I think there is something wrong. (Laughter)

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QUESTION: It is when they start burning the photos that you have to worry.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That is going to happen, too. It has been too easy.

Okay.

Are there any questions?

Good.

(Whereupon at 3:30 p.m. the meeting was adjourned.)

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