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1974/03/22

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GSS SENSITIVE EUROPE
(S/S-7406197)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: Mar. 22, 1974
5 p.m.

SUBJECT: Atlantic Relations

PLACE: Secretary's Office

PARTICIPANTS: H.E. Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, Ambassador of France
Jean-Pierre Masset, Counselor, French Embassy

The Secretary
Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Counselor
Arthur A. Hartman, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs

KOSCIUSKO: It looks as though we are having an active dialogue.

SECRETARY: Yes, I see you have been pretty active.

KOSCIUSKO: I am just following your example but I think it is useful for us to talk about these issues bilaterally. Before we get into other subjects I would like to mention a specific problem. Our Permanent Mission office in New York was broken into by some Jewish demonstrators. It took an hour for the police to come and take these people away.

SECRETARY: I had not heard of this and I want to give you my full apology. This sort of thing is inexcusable. As you know, we don't control the police but we will get the facts.

KOSCIUSKO: Your security people were pretty cold blooded but I don't understand why it should take an hour before the police came. They also say that we now have to bring a lawsuit. It doesn't seem to me that that is a proper procedure.

EUR:AAHartman/gw
(Drafting Office and Officer)

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SECRETARY:

Again, let me apologize and I will see that there is a written apology sent to you officially. I don't understand why it should have taken the police an hour. There is no excuse for that. When I have the facts I will personally call the Mayor if there has been a slip on the part of the authorities in New York.

KOSCIUSKO:

I would like to tell you a little bit about President Pompidou's trip to the Soviet Union. This was not "a Summit of Summits". Nothing very significant was accomplished. I want you to understand that we are not motivated by the fact that we currently have differences with you to fall into Russian arms. That is not the way the French Government will allow the Soviets to play the game.

We discussed our bilateral agreements and reconfirmed earlier decisions to continue our consultations and cooperation. That part of the talks took up nearly a third of the two-day meeting. On CSCE Brezhnev complained about the pace of the Geneva talks. He thought that they were being artificially slowed down. He asked for French help in keeping up the pace and speed of these negotiations. We said that we were ready to help but there are, of course, 35 nations involved and there is only so much that we can do.

SECRETARY:

What position did you take on the Summit meeting?

KOSCIUSKO:

Brezhnev stressed several points of substance. He said that the most important point from the Soviet point of view was the principle of inviolability of frontiers and he also made the point about Basket III not being an open invitation to interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. On the Summit Pompidou didn't give up any of the common Allied position that we would have to be satisfied with progress in the Stage II. He said that we were not in principle opposed to a Summit but it would only be appropriate if significant achievements could be made.

SECRETARY:

On that point what is the position of your Government on what constitutes "significant achievements"? Would you be satisfied if work was completed on the present text or do you want more?

KOSCIUSKO:

I don't know. The question of human rights is very important and there must be something more on increasing communications and press contacts. We are very firm on this.

Let me turn to the Middle East. Brezhnev said that it is necessary to have international guarantees of any settlement and that more nations should be involved, particularly in the final agreement. We naturally welcomed this statement and took note of it because, as you know, that is our position as well. Brezhnev also said that the Soviet Union does not wish to establish a condominium with the US. President Pompidou also took note of that statement.

SECRETARY:

How long did the talks go on?

KOSCIUSKO:

A day and a half. Gromyko came back and reported on his discussions with the Syrians and Egyptians. He reported that there seemed to be differences between the two and that the Syrians particularly seemed to be much more adamant especially on the question of linking disengagement to a final settlement. Gromyko also said that he had learned that Arafat was more ready to consider the establishment of a Palestinian state which would include the West Bank and Gaza. Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union has not yet taken a position on the question of a Palestinian state or government.

Pompidou explained the French Government position on its desire not to participate in the MBFR talks. This position is well known. Again on the Middle East the general impression left by the Soviet authorities was that they were very pessimistic about the situation.

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SECRETARY:

Is that with particular respect to Syria?

KOSCIUSKO:

Yes, but I think also on the whole question of a settlement. They reported that there seemed to be a general hardening of positions.

SECRETARY:

I can't tell whether the Soviets genuinely want to be helpful. They could be. They haven't yet said anything to us about their estimates of the situation. I assume that they will tell us when we get there. The big issues in the talks I will have will probably be SALT and the Middle East with minor emphasis on our bilateral relations. We don't expect any surprises.

KOSCIUSKO:

Let me now discuss frankly our problems. We have, of course, noted your various statements and I am particularly disturbed by articles such as the one in the Post today by Marilyn Berger. I, of course, realize that nothing is said off the record these days. There seemed to be two problems: First, you apparently have the impression that France is moving to counter your actions in the Middle East and that Monsieur Jobert particularly is encouraging the Arabs to harden their position.

SECRETARY:

(Reads Marilyn Berger piece.)

KOSCIUSKO:

When I was talking to the Overseas Writers Hella Pick of the Manchester Guardian said that it was her understanding that the frictions between France and the US were caused primarily by the American understanding that recent French actions were really aimed at undermining your peace efforts. I really wonder where this impression could have come from, if it indeed is your view. Jobert's discussions with Asad were intended to show that we support your efforts. He said nothing in Jidda to undermine what you are trying to do. If you have specific cases where French diplomats or others have said things that you believe go in a different direction, tell us.

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SECRETARY:

We have deeper concerns. As you know, the President and I have never had this view that we could not work with France. It has taken us a long time to come to the conclusion that France wishes Europe to conduct its policies in a way which indicates that they are aloof from or even unfriendly to what the US is trying to accomplish. We have always believed that Europe cannot move toward greater unity without France. We have always tried to conduct our relations and to structure our European policies with France. We have always felt that this was preferable to a policy of working against France. We don't believe that these are isolated examples but rather are symptomatic of a systematic policy of movement away from the US. Let me just refer to some of the symptoms which I see and let me begin with some relatively minor points which are very disturbing. In Jobert's interview with Reston, Jobert said that we had accused France of blocking Spain from NATO and, indeed, being opposed to any Spanish relationship with the EC. To my knowledge this has never been discussed with France. We have never thought that France was a problem in terms of developing Spanish relations with NATO. We have understood that this was a problem for the Socialist governments in Holland, Denmark and Germany. This has never been discussed as a French problem by us.

Secondly, Jobert told Reston that in our meeting here in Washington Jobert had told me that I was acting in an unfriendly way; that I had lost my temper. He said that he had asked me to compose myself and that after five minutes of silence, we then discussed the theater. That is a total invention and I think you must understand that because you were there for part of the meeting. He told me "I understand what you are trying to do in the energy meeting but we cannot accept it because it is an American initiative." What we see is a systematic dissemination of these views by the Quai. I

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have said on many occasions that Jobert is the only Foreign Minister I would remain on close friendly terms with after we have both left office.

KOSCIUSKO:

In the case of Syria Jobert strongly advised them to free the prisoners and that was supporting your efforts. In the case of Spain the Spanish Foreign Minister told us that he understood that the US believed France did not wish Spain in NATO or the EC. These are all rumors.

SECRETARY:

Since many countries understand that we are in a position of opposition to each other they naturally go to each of us with rumors. I can tell you that we have never discussed with France or anyone else the position that France is an obstacle to Spanish membership in NATO or the EC. We have always taken the position that we favor these connections for Spain but we have never said that we thought France was an obstacle.

KOSCIUSKO:

These are all rumors. I was told today that someone in the State Department said that France is acting in the NATO Alliance as Rumania acts in the Warsaw Pact.

SECRETARY:

On the Middle East again, it is symptomatic of the way our relations are developing that Jobert could make the kind of public speeches he has in the Middle East. These are cleverly worded but I can only conclude that they are unfriendly. Why would he make a speech in which he tells the Syrians that "the hand that holds the key is turning it slowly"?

KOSCIUSKO:

If he said that he was probably referring to the earlier history where for six years nothing was done to bring about a settlement.

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SECRETARY: I can only tell you that my impression is that on the Middle East these statements add up to an unfriendly posture. I have told Jobert that I want to discuss the Middle East situation with him and I have tried to do this. But these persistent criticisms can only be taken as not friendly.

KOSCIUSKO: We have said publicly that we support your peace efforts and we will continue to support them. We have also said that we want to participate ourselves.

SECRETARY: We could have such a relationship if there were a fundamental understanding that we had common goals. It is a tragedy that in this period the West cannot unite. We favor a European role in the Middle East.

KOSCIUSKO: Yes, we should be moving in parallel.

SECRETARY: But you are not. We would encourage a European role. We know that we can fail in our efforts at any time and we would just as soon that the Arabs turned to Europe and not to the Soviet Union. But your diplomats are going all over warning against any trust in what the US is doing. How else can we interpret your diplomats going to the Arab countries and telling them not to lift the embargo because if they do, the US would return to a purely pro-Israeli policy?

KOSCIUSKO: I just don't believe that. We have said publicly that we want the embargo lifted against the Netherlands and Denmark.

SECRETARY: But not against the US. Our conclusions are based on actual reports that you have worked against the lifting of the embargo. You haven't left any notes to this effect but the entire effort has been to cast doubt on building a close relationship with the US. When I was in Mexico City the Brazilian Foreign Minister told me that your Ambassador had warned him just before he left for the

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conference against associating with the US. He told him that the US and the Soviet Union were out to establish a condominium in the world. What does France have to gain from such a policy? It certainly will not strengthen the position of France in Brazil.

KOSCIUSKO:

I asked you to tell us of specific cases and I will inquire. Please tell us when you see or have reports of such interventions. This is not a tendency of our policy.

SECRETARY:

The issue of consultation would not have become as great a problem as it is if we had not lost confidence in the fundamental unity of purpose between our two governments.

KOSCIUSKO:

On the Middle East, I must say I don't understand why you are so opposed to the EC-Arab dialogue.

SECRETARY:

Much has happened. If France had accepted our offers of cooperative approaches, we might not have the suspicions that we do. As I said earlier, both the President and I have been pro-French. We have always believed that Europe must be organized around France. All my writings have shown that I believe this. I have always believed that there is a danger in emphasizing the importance of Germany -- not because I distrust the Germans but because I believe that Europe needs France. The confrontation which has come about is certainly not by our choice.

With respect to the EC-Arab initiative we would never consider that a meeting between 20 Arab Foreign Ministers and 9 European Foreign Ministers could be anything but dangerous and politically unfortunate. It would certainly lead to a radicalization of the Arab view. I assume that even with your close connections with Algeria, Libya and Iraq you would not encourage these tendencies. With European

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dependence on Middle East oil such a conference is bound to lead to increased pressure on Europe and an escalation of the rhetoric. The Arabs would hope that that pressure would increase the pressure on us and we would be forced to publicly disassociate ourselves from Europe to show that that tactic will not succeed.

KOSCIUSKO:

We can't prevent the Arabs attempting to use pressure but we can strengthen our links with the Arab world.

SECRETARY:

But Europe is weak. We would never think of getting twenty Arab Foreign Ministers together. We would consider it too dangerous. For the rest, if Europe is organized in opposition to the US we are bound to have problems. Normally we would welcome a role for Europe in the Middle East moving in parallel with the US. If we could discuss present circumstances among us we could probably reach reasonable solutions.

KOSCIUSKO:

Our relations are conducted on two levels. First, there is the bilateral US-French dialogue. On this level there really is no problem and we ought to go on with this. The real trouble comes in the second area -- relations between US and Europe. Why is this so? Because Europe is just being built. There cannot be organized consultations because there is no organization on the European side. There is no political body.

SECRETARY:

We need to consult more but this is made much more difficult by the hostility of French policies and public statements. If the Year of Europe and its attendant declarations had been finished last July we could have built up a relationship with Europe and moved in a cooperative direction but every month that goes by produces more conflict. You will know that the President

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consulted with President Pompidou in December of 1972. You know that I gave you on April 13 the outline of what I intended to say. We did not wish to do anything without consulting France. This is an entirely new perspective for us.

KOSCIUSKO:

I cannot accept your conclusion that France has moved to a position of hostility. Look at the way we have helped to draft the NATO Declaration.

SECRETARY:

But that serves your purposes. That helps you. You have a fear of US troop withdrawals. This Declaration is a restatement of the US commitment to maintain the defensive link. But we have agreed to support French leadership in this exercise and we have praised your efforts to help draft a declaration. The Alliance is basic to our policy but the American defense of Europe cannot continue so that Europe is free to pursue anti-American policies. And yet that is the objective consequence of what is happening. On the purely bilateral level I agree there are no tensions. We are prepared to continue exchanging ideas but I must confess that I have been greatly disappointed by the events of the last year. It seemed to me that at every turn -- take last year when Delaue briefed the press that France had moved ahead to thwart an American initiative to achieve what it wanted in the Declarations. How constructive was that action? I don't know why such an action would be thought to be in French interests. We are prepared to recognize that Europe is the center of decision.

KOSCIUSKO:

We welcome that statement. We want Europe as a second center of decision.

SECRETARY:

There is no problem. That is what we want too. Originally when I made my statement about the five centers of power this was read

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in Europe as undermining NATO. Then we were condemned because people thought we wish to have a weak Europe and establish a condominium. We have no problem with Europe being a center of decision but if Europe's identity is defined in opposition to the US we are bound to have problems. At times there seems to be less discussion with Europe than with the Soviets. Every issue is treated as a political question. Take the Declaration with the Nine. Why would the Nine go separately to Canada and Japan and suggest that they could have a better approach dealing bilaterally with Europe than together with the US? This was an attempt by Europe to establish connections with it and isolate the US.

KOSCIUSKO:

You know that we did not like the idea of a trilateral declaration with Japan but preferred separate declarations.

SECRETARY:

That isn't healthy. It sets up a bargaining situation. I could not care less about the declarations themselves but it is symptomatic of our present relations that this was not discussed with us. These are minor examples but they indicate an objective tendency and I don't see that there is any exception to this general direction. I have come to this view reluctantly. I don't relish it.

KOSCIUSKO:

There may be differences between the US and Europe but this is not necessarily hostile. There are no great differences on the questions of peace in the Middle East. We are moving in parallel in Africa. There is no competition in Latin America. We have some healthy competition on trade matters. In the Far East we have gone to the Government of South Viet-Nam and offered them cooperation but this is not in competition with the US. I don't have the impression you do that there is great hostility.

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SECRETARY: What happens next?

KOSCIUSKO: We are waiting for an answer from you on the draft Declaration. For the time being it is perhaps better to improve our bilateral relations and wipe out these misunderstandings. They are really quite absurd.

SECRETARY: This is not our choice. Our conviction has been that Europe needs a strong France. We believe that the course on which you have embarked will have unfortunate consequences for everybody. We have no choice. You will recall that we consulted with you closely. Remember our conversation of April 13. We wanted to work with France. No serious questions were raised by your side to the suggestions I made. For four months we tried to continue our dialogue. Jobert said "Don't talk to the Europeans. Talk bilaterally with France." Then France shifted the whole discussion into the EC Nine. Meanwhile we were attacked by the others for not talking to them. Look what happened at the Energy Conference. There is no doubt in my mind that we could have reached a compromise if Jobert had not pushed his position to the absurd extreme. I made three attempts to reach a compromise and, indeed, I believe that your Minister tried to get his instructions changed.

KOSCIUSKO: We lacked time. We presented two problems which you did not respond to. It was just too late.

SECRETARY: The confrontation was carried to the extreme. We didn't want or need it. There are two problems: US-European relations and the attempt of Europe to achieve its identity. We would respect this identity but when Europe deals with problems that affect our vital interests we would expect consultations to take place -- bilaterally or with the Nine as a group. Second, if we have parallel

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policies it is easier for us to conduct our relations but if those policies clash we get the worst results. When France becomes President of the Council I think the situation will be worse.

KOSCIUSKO: (Smiling) It may be easier.

SECRETARY: There is no basic need for either our bilateral interests or our overall interests with Europe to clash. What we want in Europe is a compatibility of policies, not identical policies. We cannot remain in constant conflict. In the Middle East our positions will not be exactly the same. But there is a role for Europe. I have encouraged Brandt to go to Egypt -- we don't want to see a reduced role for Europe in the Middle East.

KOSCIUSKO: We must go on conducting our bilateral relations and talking to each other. The European relationship is going to be more difficult. The exchange of letters between Brandt and Nixon was not done in the name of the Nine. The Community is in a very fragile state. We want to be a serious partner and I use that word intentionally.

SECRETARY: That depends.

KOSCIUSKO: There is no question of this.

SECRETARY: If we had inherent understandings there should be a partnership.

KOSCIUSKO: We should want to diversify Western influence.

SECRETARY: Looked at in a long historical perspective, we will view this period as one of great tragedy. Threatened from the East, and I think France would admit that there is a basic anti-Western bias on the part of the LDC's, what interest is there for us to cut each other up? It is an historical tragedy.

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If Europe moves in a bilateral isolated direction with the Arabs, this will produce an American bilateral move and there will be intense competition.

KOSCIUSKO: What is required is a change of tone and style.

SECRETARY: The French are the aggressors in this situation. Just remember the Reykjavik briefing. We announced at that time that France was the preferred country and that we would deal on the basis of the closest contact with France. We have a serious problem. Perhaps we should moderate the debate but there are fundamental issues here that transcend personalities. As you know, I have the highest personal regard for Monsieur Jobert.

KOSCIUSKO: It is a question of his style.

SECRETARY: He is personally leading this confrontation but I must say he still expresses himself well.

(The Secretary and Ambassador Kosciusko-Morizet went in to the back room for a private 10-minute discussion requested by the Ambassador.)

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