

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4709

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT:

Summary of President's Meeting with
NATO Foreign Ministers (U)

PARTICIPANTS:

The President
Secretary Shultz
Secretary Weinberger
Edwin Meese, III
Michael K. Deaver
Robert C. McFarlane
Assistant Secretary Burt
Ambassador David Abshire
Peter R. Sommer, NSC
John H. Hawes, Department of State

Secretary General Luns
Claude Chyesson
Leo Tindemans
Allan MacEachen
Uffe Ellemann-Jensen
Hans-Dietrich Genscher
Ioannis Haralambopoulos
Geir Hallgrimsson
Giulio Andreotti
Svenn Stray
Jaime Gama
Fernando Moran Lopez
Vahit Halefoglu
Sir Geoffrey Howe
Jean Wagner
JGN De Hoop Scheffer

DATE, TIME
AND PLACE:

May 31, Cabinet Room
9:00-9:20 a.m.

The President welcomed the Ministers to the White House and expressed his hope that their meetings had been fruitful. He noted that the Alliance was healthy and sound. We can, he said, be very proud of NATO's achievements; looking back in history, there has never been another such alliance, which has pulled countries together and maintained the peace. We can be proud of that, and what it means for the future. (S)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Declassify on: OADR

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED
BY GHS, NARA DATE 5/1/01
#92

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

The President continued that NATO is important not only in the military sense, but also in the political sense. It is an Alliance based on shared values. The Alliance has stood the test of deploying modernized nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union has seen that it cannot divide us. Collective defense means collective responsibility, observed the President. Noting that there is concern in Congress over the sharing of NATO's defense burden, the President underlined that his ability to maintain Congressional support depends on Allied efforts. It may be difficult for Ministers from parliamentary systems to understand our need to win Congressional support, he noted, but it is a fact. ~~(S)~~

Saying he understood that the Ministers were very concerned at the state of relations with the Soviet Union, the President noted that he had had extensive exchanges with Chairman Chernenko since he assumed power. He then asked the Ministers if they wanted to make any comments, noting that he had been impressed by a recent Economist article, which described the Soviet Union as a hibernating bear. Since it had no answers at present, it has crawled into its cave, waiting and saying nothing. The President commented that it is our task to wait outside the cave, perhaps throw a fish in front of it, and be prepared when the bear comes out. ~~(S)~~

Speaking for the group, Secretary General Luns expressed pleasure at the opportunity to meet with the President. He found it especially fitting that the 35th anniversary meeting had been held in Washington, where the North Atlantic Treaty had been signed when Truman was President. Luns said that the Ministers' talks had gone very well. The meeting at Wye had produced a very good exchange of views, with no prepared papers. Luns added that, to his satisfaction and that of the Ministers, two documents had been prepared on East-West relations, along the lines of the earlier Harmel report. These documents, one confidential and the other public, had been prepared at the suggestion of the Belgian Foreign Minister. They were now finalized, although that had been doubtful as little as two days earlier. This was a great success for NATO, and the Washington meeting would go down as a great success. Luns attributed this to the President's dedication to the Alliance, and to US hospitality. He expressed warm thanks for the President's dinner the previous evening, and for the President's personal remarks in presenting him the Medal of Freedom. ~~(S)~~

Secretary Shultz asked French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, as President d'honneur of the North Atlantic Council, to comment on the meetings. Cheysson noted that it had been his privilege to open two sessions of the NAC. In his speech on Tuesday he had expressed his feelings publicly. NATO has reached maturity. It has shown that it can quietly take decisions, and quietly manage those decisions. It makes no great fuss about it, but it simply gets on with its task. This shows the basic solidarity among our peoples. Cheysson agreed with the President that it was correct to ask for greater defense efforts, both to keep the peace and to provide a basis upon which we can seek to build relations with the other side. ~~(S)~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Cheysson continued that the two meetings he had opened had both been marked by a great determination and an expression of Alliance solidarity, which was very impressive. He observed that, after some hesitation, NATO has moved to consider issues even beyond the formal legal bounds of the Alliance. The private Ministerial discussions have now achieved the proper climate for such discussions. In this regard, he cited the discussion the day before of the Soviet Union and East-West relations, but also of the Iran-Iraq war and other issues outside of Europe, as evidence that NATO can usefully discuss these issues. Although the sixteen countries cannot have the same positions, because they have different outlooks, we can discuss any issue, added Cheysson. He suggested that this fact demonstrated that the Alliance has reached an impressive stage of maturity. (C)

Cheysson commented that the Soviet Union paid a great deal of attention to what the Alliance does. In his estimate, this was further evidence that "this old lady of 35" was doing well. He welcomed the US invitation to hold the Ministerial in Washington, and the President's willingness to meet twice with the Ministers, and thanked the President on behalf of the French government for his hospitality. (C)

Shultz observed that in the discussions the previous day at the Wye Plantation UK Foreign Secretary Howe had used an interesting formulation to describe current Soviet policy, as had the Foreign Minister of Turkey. He asked if they would be willing to elaborate for the President. Noting that he and Turkish Foreign Minister Halefoglou had discussed the issue on the road to Wye, Howe said that he had characterized the Soviets as running on autopilot. It was an autopilot designed by Peter the Great, modernized by Joseph Stalin, and administered by the present regime. If we are going to influence it, we will have to have a great deal of firmness and patience. (C)

Turkish Foreign Minister Halefoglou recounted an incident when he was serving in Moscow in 1949. Time magazine had printed two photos: one of Nicholas II and one of Stalin. Halefoglou had asked the Russian charwomen who was cleaning his apartment if she recognized the photos. Yes, she said, that one is the old Tsar and this one is the new Tsar. This, Halefoglou suggested, is another demonstration that in the Soviet Union people at the top may change, but the system and the thinking remain the same. We in the West must adapt to the fact of this unchanging system.

The President asked whether it was possible that we were concentrating on the wrong issues, when we analyzed the theories of Marx and Lenin. In fact, the Soviets have created their own aristocracy, and are primarily interested in maintaining the power of that aristocracy. Halefoglou agreed, commenting that the Soviet Union is the most bureaucratic and conservative country in the world, even though it calls itself revolutionary.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4

Commenting that the view from Moscow is not always the same as the view from the Eastern European capitals, and that the Ministers had discussed the situation in Eastern Europe earlier, Shultz asked German Foreign Minister Genscher to comment on relations with Eastern Europe. Genscher said he believed that it was possible to discern a greater freedom of movement on the part of the Eastern European governments. They clearly feel their own national identity. The Eastern Europeans find multilateral East-West meetings, such as the CSCE and the CDE, valuable in providing them some room for maneuver. For that reason, said Genscher, the West should continue to pursue such meetings. We should not expect that the Eastern Europeans would be able to change their policies, or leave the Warsaw Pact, but it is possible for them to take different positions on issues. In this regard, he noted that on the question of the Olympic boycott, several of them had shown hesitation in following the Soviet move, and the Romanians would not boycott the Olympics. Genscher underscored that he believed East-West talks can have an impact. Thus, Genscher continued, the Alliance is on the right policy line -- which it has again defined in its statement on East-West relations -- in calling for firmness, strength, and readiness for dialogue. ~~(C)~~

At this point Shultz noted that was time to move to the Rose Garden for a public statement by the President and photo-opportunity with the Ministers. The President thanked the Ministers for meeting with him. (U)

The meeting concluded at 9:20 a.m. ~~(U)~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~CONFIDENTIAL~~