

TELEGRAM

Foreign Service of the
United States of America

OUTGOING AMERICAN EMBASSY PARIS

SECRET

Classification

Charge:

Control: 585

Date: December 12, 1961
9 PM

SS-40

AMB

MIN

EF-5

PF-5

ACTION: SECSTATE, WASHINGTON SECTO-22-----PRIORITY

INFO: Berlin 195
Bonn 351
London 551
Moscow 179

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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EO 12356, Sec. 1.3 (a) (SS)
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Following based on unclassified memorandum of conversation.

Four-Power Ministerial meeting this morning devoted once again

entirely to discussion of problem of negotiations on Berlin. Formula worked out for final action this afternoon after Couve sees de Gaulle. Appears that formula if accepted would be a substantial step forward for France and that unity on this basis would be major advance.

Formula states:

"The NATO Council would approve a proposal that diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union be undertaken, on the basis of the agreed positions of the Western Powers, in order to ascertain on what basis it might be possible to undertake formal negotiation at Foreign Minister level with the Soviet Government."

Couve opened meeting by asking if group should now resume Berlin discussion.

Home agreed but after lunch he had few additional things wished say on Congo.

Couve then asked what group wished discuss about Berlin.

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Secretary said he felt was of greatest importance that we come out of this meeting and NATO meeting with obvious unity in West. Otherwise there would be dangerous discouragements. He felt differences disclosed in discussions not as wide as had seemed at first or as press seemed feel. We ourselves have not seen basis for negotiations in Soviet statements on Berlin. We are under no illusion that Western position seems negotiable to Soviets. Khrushchev's proposals are not negotiable from our point of view. We do think it of greatest importance to continue to discuss matter with Soviets. We have very important domestic issue in US where have called into service about 300,000 reservists some of whom are not happy. We have increased military budget by 6 billion dollars and will add more in January. We have disturbed our situation at home to increase our strength and it is therefore of greatest importance to us to be able to say as we get ready for war we are doing everything possible to avoid it. Public does not expect concessions that would damage Western position. Pressure of public opinion in negotiations would be for firmness. Berlin issue should be precipitated sooner rather than later in order to get fresh commitment from Soviet Union. We believe that they are in process of improving their military weaponry which will make it more difficult to deal with them in a year or eighteen months. We should recall ICBM development. Soviets very early said they had fully operational ICBM and seemed think this all that required. They moved with

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great confidence and aggressiveness. ICBM illusion has now been dispelled in both their minds and ours by intelligence activities. Today they don't push political developments on ICBM basis. However they are presently saying they have solved anti-missile missile problem. We don't believe that these are in production or that they will be for some time but just a few anti-missile missiles could set them off on renewed period of over-confidence and aggressiveness. Their recent tests indicate there has been some significant technical advance in nuclear field. Therefore we don't want to drag out discussion of Berlin because in 12 or 18 months it may be more difficult to handle. Our problem is not to assume that a basis for negotiations is already in existence but to see if a basis can be found. This can be accomplished only by responsible contact and by participation of all four. US would be uncomfortable doing this alone or with one ^{or} ~~two~~ others in fact in any way except with participation of all four. Question is how to be in responsible contact on an agreed basis to discover whether basis for discussion of Berlin exists. There are many ways this could be done. This is range of problems we might discuss to see if we can find basis for agreement.

Lord Home said he was quite certain that our aim must be to come out of NATO united. Basis for negotiations is not apparent and may not be found but it is just possible that it could be found after much discussion. Therefore we must find out. Alternative is a possible nuclear war. We cannot break

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off contact. Maybe Russians won't make war but they might. Therefore we really must find out and we ought to do it all together. Results will affect all of us alike. Can be done in various ways. Foreign Ministers might begin discussion on broad basis and proceed to narrow basis or begin with narrow basis and proceed to broad basis. Or we might continue discussions in Moscow. Might be most profitable for Ambassadors to talk with Gromyko to discover whether there is in fact basis for Foreign Ministers meeting on Berlin. Meeting through Ambassadors would be normal diplomatic practice. Hoped something like this would be acceptable to all of us. If there is not agreement in NATO very serious differences will be revealed to public and do great damage.

Couve said he agreed that we might have difficult discussions in NAC where everyone was anxious to reach settlement, get rid of problem, and believe that everything all right so they would not have to worry or spend money. However our difficulties with Soviet Union are more important than those with Allies. Concerning substance of Secretary's remarks French had never taken stand against principle of negotiations. However, it is really not very useful or good for our position to enter negotiations in a situation where no basis for negotiations exists. We need only think of recent Russian speeches to produce misgivings. However there is no difficulty in accepting that explorations can be made to ascertain whether a basis for negotiations

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exists or not. If a basis appears French are quite ready reconsider concerning formal negotiations. In past explorations there were some discussions on procedural aspects of Berlin problem. Question concerning our relationship with "GDR" remains unclear and might be further explored. There was some exploration of this and some mention of other problems but fair to say that substance of Berlin status not fully explored. Seems especially after most recent Soviet speeches that it would be worth while exploring again with Soviets question of status of Berlin, garrisons, question of with whom any agreement on access should be concluded, as well as question which is so important for Germans of relations between Federal Republic and West Berliners. If that should be useful and could be done by diplomatic contact he would see no objections from French side. One thing probably would remain open to controversy, that is how any exploration should be made, by whom, and on whose behalf. That is difficulty. French do not wish to take final position now. If explorations are made officially on behalf of all it is difficult to see how this is different from negotiations because all would be committed. He understood Secretary's feeling that it was not good for one to take responsibility and not others. This is quite clear. French share this view. For past three years and especially last six months we have been discussing these matters every day. His idea would be that if there were any kind of

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to
approach/discussion of further explorations on Berlin it should not be
beginning of negotiations. He would prefer that it be done by one ambassador
for reasons of convenience. One of ambassadors in Moscow might make
exploration. He would not commit anyone not even his own Government. He
might see what field should be covered and what questions there were to
be raised, and where we needed to have a statement of Russian position in
order to see what we should do. We could then decide on negotiations, or wait,
or proceed with explorations, or whatever. French don't think we can have a
systematic view under present circumstances. It is quite evident that situation
has changed since August and it may be completely different in month from now.

Secretary said he thought we were moving in constructive direction.
In looking back to talks with Gromyko, one thing that had inhibited further
development of exploration was that that kind of discussion tended to become a
kind of negotiation. Secretary had not felt much consensus. He had felt that
the flanks and rear were exposed/^{and} that he could not explore very far. He didn't
think there could be much difference in degree of responsibility of involvement
in exploratory talks and in actual negotiations. He didn't think US Ambassador
could take a tentative position with Soviet Union. He could not believe Soviets
would believe the Ambassador was not committing at least US Government.
Basis for negotiations is long way down road and can be reached only after
further discussions/^{and} there could not be a significant degree in differing

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responsibilities in exploration and negotiation. For explorations to move on they would have to be quite precise. We have been categorical on some points but there are aspects which cannot be developed except on a quadripartite basis.

Couve said he could see it was hard to draw line.

Lord Home said choices were between a Foreign Ministers' meeting when they would be in a position to make commitments or exploration by Ambassadors obviously following coordinated line which would be put to Soviets without commitment. He would have thought latter though difficult would not be impossible. We could give indication of how we were thinking without being committed. There could perhaps be series of Foreign Ministers' conferences with adjournments from time to time. We could work through three Ambassadors with German support. This would be laborious process but it would be possible.

Couve said he did not think it would be inconceivable on basis of Khrushchev and Menshikov speeches to go to Gromyko and say we have noted them and ask whether this was in fact Soviet position. We could ask for explanations. We could ask Soviets if they think any negotiations with West are possible on that basis. Soviets would once again state their positions. We could then discuss this among ourselves and agree that it was not possible to negotiate on that basis. We could then say this to Russians and see result.

Lord Home said he thought it was possible to move Soviets in argument.

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Of course they could say that our occupation rights could not persist. We would say they must. This subject might then be left aside with each side maintaining its own position.

Couve said we had discussed this for two months at Geneva and then passed exclusively to Berlin discussing an interim arrangement. We then had question of what would be situation at end of interim arrangement. We had said we would start afresh without our rights having been prejudiced. Gromyko had never accepted this. He had never said yes or no. He had wanted to be free to say all our rights had been abolished and we would have to start anew with no rights. That was one reason why we had come to no agreement. If we had come to an agreement we would have been in a bad position now not know what our position was in Berlin.

Lord Home said we would certainly know what our position was even though Soviets denied it. He reiterated that he felt it possible to argue Soviets out of certain things.

Couve said it did not appear very encouraging to him and he wondered why it was necessary to make statement now.

Shroeder said ~~ix~~ it was difficult to know if Soviets wished diplomatic negotiations or if they felt contact should be through Ambassadors, Foreign Ministers or Summit. We don't know what lines Soviets are thinking on and it may be worth while to exchange views. There have been Khrushchev and Men-

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shikov speeches, interviews with Spaak and Lange and letter to Fanfani all of which were only variations on opening note Soviets sent November 1958. If a common line is found for example that three Ambassadors in Moscow would contact Soviets it would be useful to do this in close contact with Germans who would send experts to reinforce their Embassy in Moscow.

Secretary said he felt it very important to establish demonstrated unity among Four and NATO in order prevent Soviets from getting a sense of disunity and prevent fishing expeditions with Spaak Fanfani Lange or one of Four Powers. Soviets will attempt exploit disunity. Disunity on our part would be serious political weakness.

Lord Home then said he would like to propose following formula:

"The NATO Council would approve a proposal that diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union be undertaken, on the basis of the agreed positions of the Western powers, in order to ascertain on what basis it might be possible to undertake formal negotiation at Foreign Minister level with the Soviet Government."

If we find a basis we would then have a Foreign Ministers' meeting.

Secretary said it seemed to him this was very close to actual position. There could be a negotiation if an adequate basis were found. This would not be found by public speeches but through discussions.

Couve said NATO position was not essential thing. Essential thing

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was our position vis-à-vis Soviets. There might be some NATO difficulties but this should not influence us too much. Real issue is between us and Soviets not among NATO allies.

Secretary said he thought if there were agreement among Four there would not be any difficulty with Allies. If Four disagreed there would be difficulty. It would be difficult to proceed if rest of Alliance seemed dissatisfied. It would weaken us in relation to Soviet Union. Alliance would come along if Four were in agreement.

Lord Home said there would be real trouble in Alliance if four could not agree. There was feeling within Alliance and even within UK that military effort could not be sustained if at same time we were not trying to find whether or not there was a basis for negotiation. He would have thought this should have been carried through jointly. He would have thought his formula was not far off.

Secretary said if there were no further talks in weeks ahead there was real possibility that Soviets would go ahead with separate treaty. They might call a conference not limited to ~~Eastern~~ Soviet bloc alone and might get participation of a number of Belgrade Powers. But if some activities were in process it would be much more difficult for Soviets to act.

Lord Home suggested substitution of phrase "on the basis of prior consultation" in his formula.

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Secretary said he would prefer original wording. "Consultation" was too shadowy for present situation.

Secretary then read Mr. Kohler's suggestion for NATO communique.

Couve said his problem was always that this would be negotiation.

Lord Home said exploration would be all right, but exploration gets near to substance.

Couve said that if formula were put in this way, it would be more on side of negotiation than exploration.

Lord Home suggested that meeting might adjourn for a few moments to consider his formula.

Secretary said that in any event as much as was covered by formula would occur and in a most disorderly fashion if agreement were not reached. Soviets were going to play and unless matter were handled responsibly, we would all suffer. He had been impressed recently with the large number of people who say they know how to get along with the Soviets. He had to admit he didn't.

Meeting then adjourned to consider British formula informally.

Drafted by:
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