

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Mitterrand of FrancePARTICIPANTS: U.S.

The President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Nicholas Brady, Secretary of Treasury
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the President
and Press Secretary
Walter J.P. Curley, U.S. Ambassador to France
Robert Zoellick, Counselor, Department of
State
Robert D. Blackwill, Special Assistant to the
President for European and Soviet Affairs
Raymond Seitz, Assistant Secretary of State

France

President Mitterrand
Roland Dumas, Minister of State for Foreign
Affairs
Jacques Attali, Special Counselor to the
President
Jacques Lanxade, Chief of Military Cabinet,
Office of the President
Hubert Vedrine, Presidential Spokesman
Loic Hennekine, Technical Advisor to the
President on International Affairs
Elisabeth Guigou, Advisor to the President on
International Economics and Foreign
Commerce
Jacques Andreani, Ambassador to the U.S.
Bertrand Dufourcq, Ministry of Foreign
Affairs Political Director

DATE, TIME April 19, 1990, 1:07 - 2:15pm
AND PLACE: Key Largo, Florida

The President: Let's ask the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister to tell us what they learned in their meeting. (X)

Foreign Minister Dumas: We talked about Lithuania and the Alliance. We discussed the problems of today and tried to analyze the problems of tomorrow. There are internal constraints on Gorbachev. We concluded that there is a possibility that Soviet measures will be continued. If so, what do we do? I told Jim Baker we had suggested that there be a committee of experts of the EC-12 to assess the danger to Lithuania and what we could do to compensate that danger. Some countries are moving in that direction: Norway has already decided to supply Lithuania with oil. Consultations are going on among the EC-12. We need to know what the Alliance will do. (X)

Regarding the Alliance, we thrashed things out thoroughly. We began with our differences. I said that the EC will be more and more of a reality. The European Monetary Union will move ahead; this will be a reality. The idea of a confederation will become more prominent. The landscape is changing. We need to imagine a changing nature for the Alliance, with the EC-12 having the closest links among themselves. Instead of being obsessed with a few problems, I have said that we need a new approach. The U.S. should not criticize the Twelve for talking about their own security. We understand that our American friends want to discuss these things within the Alliance, and we want U.S. troops in Europe. We are told that American troops are linked with the idea of a political dimension for the Alliance. We need a new approach. (X)

Secretary Baker: That was a very fair presentation of what Roland and I discussed. Europe needs a continued U.S. presence in Europe. We want to stay as long as we are wanted. The Allies and some Warsaw Pact members think that the U.S. is a force for stability, but we need to be part of a political dialogue. As the military threat recedes, we need a more political NATO to justify the U.S. presence. The CSCE is important, but this is not the same as consultations within NATO. We are not seeking a veto over EC decisions, but we do want to enhance U.S.-EC institutional interaction. A member of the French delegation raised the EC decision regarding a CSCE summit. We are not arguing that the EC cannot take this decision, but it fundamentally affects European security. This is the kind of political decision that we think we must be a part of if we are to justify a continuing U.S. troop presence. We need to discuss these sorts of issues in NATO. I gave five or six examples of such problems. We agreed that we have to continue to work together in order to get a meeting of the minds. (X)

The President: We had a similar discussion. President Mitterrand gave me the benefit of his serious long-term thinking. I pointed out that the U.S. presence in Europe cannot be seen by the American people as constituting a mercenary force. Our presence must be broader, which requires an expanded role for

NATO. This does not conflict with CSCE or with the EC, where we are not seeking a chair at the table. We are stepping up contacts with the EC. It would not be possible to sustain U.S. public support for the U.S. presence if it seemed that we were not involved with the overall security decisions of Europe. We had a good discussion. (S)

Also, I asked President Mitterrand's views about Lithuania. I learned a little history. President Mitterrand said that we had to be careful about not hurting the people of Lithuania. (S)

President Mitterrand: I would like to make things even simpler. On the question of the role of NATO, our answer is very simple. We consider it natural that NATO should have authority on all matters of security and concerning the political equilibrium of Europe. There can be no question of asking the Americans to stay in Europe and pretend that the Americans should not be there when the decisions are made. We should institutionalize NATO and U.S.-EC links. Very simply, the U.S. troop presence continues to be necessary. Yes, there have been changes, but the risk of conflict continues. Gorbachev has not yet gone half way in the route that he has to cover. He may not reach the end of his road, and the Soviet Union maintains a tremendous military potential. So much more has to change in Europe. Regarding the CSCE, this is an important meeting place where all of the Europeans are present. We want a meeting of this institution in moments of international tension. NATO should discuss the CSCE, either at its regular meetings or in a special meeting at NATO. If there is a CSCE Summit, it would be good for NATO to meet beforehand. Things will become complicated if we refuse to face up to this need. We must avoid internal suspicions and anxiety. (S)

Eastern Europe is all alone, poor and humiliated. This is the reason for my idea of a confederation. They will come with their hats in hand like beggars. This is bad. There needs to be a place for these countries to do their work where they are respected and treated with dignity. This is vital, believe me. For instance, the Poles have visceral anti-Russian feelings, and yet they say the Soviets should stay in Poland because they are afraid of Germany. This is bad. We need to open up another possibility. This future union needs a contract or a treaty with the United States. This confederation may be visionary, but it is important. Its purpose would not be to replace the EC-12, but to build on it. Chancellor Kohl and I sent a memo to the Irish President of the EC saying that we wanted to talk about both a monetary and political strengthening of the EC. (S)

My idea of a confederation is not designed to get rid of the United States; this would be idiotic. But the Europeans need to feel European. If one day in the far future we have strengthened Europe, we will need stronger institutional contacts between the U.S. and the EC. There must be treaties and agreements. (S)

On Germany, we agreed that a unified Germany should remain within NATO. However, we do not want to raise Soviet anxieties, and therefore there should be no NATO forces in what is now East Germany. (S)

Regarding the American commitment in Europe, the U.S. must take part in European political developments because they will design the future shape of Europe. We need to develop a new political order over time. France will be fully involved. France will not change its status within NATO. However, that has not prevented us from having excellent military-to-military contacts. That will continue. Regarding the North Atlantic treaty, its area is defined. Let's stick to it. We must maintain NATO. Unlike some of my predecessors, I don't wish to shut myself off from NATO. (S)

Regarding the CSCE, you are a little more reluctant than we, but we are not dreamers. The CSCE cannot solve all problems. There is no such thing as a CSCE political entity. In the future it could be tempting on Gorbachev's side to give CSCE another face. Germany is in contact with the Russians. Germany is a grave problem, including German public opinion. Regarding a unified Germany joining NATO, the majority of Germans are against it. Demagogy will be effective I fear, especially in the electoral campaign. If you argue in Germany that all foreign armies should leave, you will win the election. (S)

If you accept the French special role in NATO, including its nuclear strategy, I don't see any problem. If France can be destroyed in 15 minutes in a nuclear war, that decision can only be made by a French head of state. I told Ronald Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher that I did not like flexible response. The fact that I didn't like flexibility shocked them. We need a massive nuclear threat so that the Soviet Union would never consider moving militarily. France is your logical ally and will remain so. We talk with the Americans and not against them. But diplomats and military men may interpret these ideas of mine differently than at this table. (S)

The President: On NATO, NATO should project a different role and especially a political component. We can discuss this at a NATO Summit. I mentioned an expanded role in arms control verification, and in proliferation. This serves as a guarantor of the interest of the U.S. people in keeping U.S. troops over there. Too many Americans believe we need a peace dividend. This is wrong. An expanded role for NATO does not mean that Eastern Europe should not have a place to talk. CSCE is a place for that. Regarding Germany, if we can convince the Soviets that it is in their interest to have Germany in NATO then the problem is solved. (S)

President Mitterrand: They are prepared to draw that conclusion. (S)

The President: Havel and the Poles are coming around on this. We are in agreement regarding Polish borders. President Mitterrand made an important point. I mentioned Helmut Kohl's approach. The Poles want two treaties. It would be good to have Kohl state his position publicly. (S)

President Mitterrand: The unity of the two German states is a matter for the Germans themselves, but the consequences matter for everyone. So we need a guarantee on borders quickly. As long as this is not yet done, it causes anxieties in Europe; it worries the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians and the English. (S)

The President: The Polish border issue is now in reasonably good shape. Is the average Frenchman worried about a united Germany? (S)

President Mitterrand: No, there is no such fear at all. There is a vague feeling that German unification would create a considerable new power. However, we've had this for a thousand years and we have dealt with it. We are adapting well. Why have an inferiority complex? It is not at all warranted. Also, we have good friends, including you on two occasions. The Soviet Union is afraid of Germany's potential for expansion and for claiming former territory, and the possibility of German nuclear weapons. (S)

The President: We foresee no change in our position, in our support for French nuclear policy. We would never try to bargain that with the Soviet Union or anyone. I am glad we have had cooperation in this field, and we will continue to have it. (S)

Secretary Baker: When we suggest arms control verification in NATO, only France disagrees. (S)

President Mitterrand: I don't know what you mean. If it's a question of verification as it relates to the security of Europe, the answer is yes. If it relates to the security of Japan, no. We must examine things on a case by case basis. If you will tell me exactly what you mean by a political enhancement of NATO, there will be no problem, I can assure you. (S)

The President: It is hard to define precisely, but in the new situation, with a diminished Soviet threat, there is less targeting on tanks. We need to evolve and discuss proliferation and arms control verification for example, so that we can maintain the U. S. presence. We have no hidden agenda. As Europe changes, NATO has to change too. If we sit down in NATO, in a NATO Summit before a CSCE Summit, we should talk about the future of Eastern Europe. (S)

President Mitterrand: My dear friend, by being more precise you have been precise. I said political in relation to European equilibrium, and proliferation only insofar as it contains German proliferation. Iranian proliferation is not for NATO. (S)

The President: Regarding proliferation, it is good if the U.S. public sees NATO talking about these things, and about terrorism too. (S)

President Mitterrand: We will never refuse to talk about those things. (S)

The President: You don't have to talk about them in NATO, but it helps. It falls short of your vision, but it gets us past present problems. It answers the question as to who is the enemy: uncertainty. It's a good subject for NATO. (S)

What if the military says that's enough, Mr. Gorbachev. We need NATO for that contingency. So we need an organization that respects the French traditional role and also talks about those problems. (S)

President Mitterrand: There is nothing you have said that I disagree with. You have been precise and I deeply appreciate it. Regarding Lithuania and the other Soviet Republics, we should not demand of Gorbachev what we could not get from a dictator who could replace him. (S)

The President: We need to recognize Gorbachev's problems with his own right wing, but we must remember that it is immoral to accept the Soviets cutting off gas supplies to Lithuania. Economic countermeasures may be the best solution. (S)

Secretary Baker: I said that a Lithuanian suspension of its declaration of independence would be helpful. I suggested that France attempt to persuade them. Gorbachev would then perhaps meet Landsbergis outside of the Council of Ministers. (S)

President Mitterrand: Things have gone too fast for Gorbachev. When I saw him in Kiev last year, I thought he was getting ready to accept autonomy, even independence on the part of some republics. But the Lithuanians were too hasty. If they had waited another three months, until after the pertinent Soviet legislation had passed, it would have been better. However, the Lithuanian leadership does not have much leeway either. If Lithuania suspended its declaration of independence, and the Soviets removed their intimidation and promised independence eventually, that would be the only way out. We can not have a bloodbath. American public opinion will press you for certain harsh steps; that would be a mistake. We, you and I together, my dear Mr. President, are in complete agreement. We are not the policemen of the world. We can make things worse. (S)

The President: Lebanon is such a heartbreak. (S)

President Mitterrand: And now the Christians are fighting among themselves. (S)

The President: Are you worried about escalation? (S)

President Mitterrand: Not really, I do not foresee any Syrian intervention. It's a terrible country. People do nothing except quarrel with one another. (S)

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