

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

MEMCON

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

1054
Add-on 01

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Manfred Woerner, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Ø)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
William Taft IV, U.S. Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council
Lawrence Eagleburger, Acting Secretary of State
Donald Atwood, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Robert D. Blackwill, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Notetaker)

Manfred Woerner, Secretary General
James Cunningham, Private Office of the Secretary General

DATE, TIME February 24, 1990, 1:15 - 3:15pm
AND PLACE: Camp David

The President: I view this as a real opportunity for us to chat. The German question dominates everything and complicates the issue of U.S. force levels, the U.S. role and the U.S. position in Europe. For our part, we are firm in believing that NATO has an ongoing role in protecting the security of Europe. The United States should not dictate to the German people any timeframes for the unification of the German nation. I wanted to ask you how you see NATO developing down the road. (Ø)

Secretary General Woerner: This is a unique opportunity. This is a decisive moment. In weeks or in the next few months, you personally will have to make decisions that can decide the future of Europe. There is only one critical question, since German unification will come, the issue is will Germany be neutral, or will it be a Germany that belongs to NATO? The answer to this question will decide future decades of European history. If we

~~SECRET~~

Declassify on: OADR

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 12958,
AS AMENDED
91 8/21/2009

go back to a point where Germany is not in the Atlantic Alliance, then the old Pandora's box of competition and rivalry in Europe would be reopened. Nobody will be able to prevent that. A neutral Germany would mean 74 million people with the most powerful economy in Europe -- five to ten years from now all of the united Germany will have the economic sophistication that West Germany has today -- and this country will be a considerable military power. It will not have nuclear weapons for a time, but a neutral Germany may want nuclear weapons. (S)

Trying to create a demilitarized Germany would reproduce the mistake of the Versailles Treaty. I won't accept it. My democracy, the FRG, is as good as anybody's. In this scenario, of a neutral Germany, this German power would not be tied to any safe structure. The most natural reaction then would be for the British and French to try to control the new Germany. The Germans will react, forming their own alliances. We would be repeating the game, with all of its instability, that we witnessed in European politics at the beginning of this century. Potential instability in Eastern Europe will add even more competition and rivalry to the situation. (S)

I am frightened by such a vision. We must avoid the classical German temptation: to float freely and bargain with both East and West. If I have one message, it is that you should not allow that to happen. That is your historic task. The Russians are in a different situation, and we should make clear that we appreciate their concerns. But they are in a weak position. They cannot prevent German unification, if you keep your clear line of supporting the process. I want to protect the Germans from temptation, Europe from instability, and safeguard those elements that have made a new Europe possible. (S)

General Scowcroft: What do you say about the argument that the European Community can play this role of stabilizing Europe? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: The question is: does neutrality allow a security framework within the European Community? The answer is "no". The EC plays an economic role and a mild political role. But it has a small security role. The members of the Community do not want to address defense questions. It will take Europe ten to twenty years to develop real European defense cooperation. The Soviet Union possesses immense power that the EC cannot match. The WEU is pure discussion, no hardware. The CSCE is all talk. Nothing can replace NATO. If NATO goes, Europe will not be able to match Soviet power. If you sacrifice NATO at this moment, you are getting rid of the only stable security structure you have for Europe. If the Soviets correctly perceive their long-term security interests, how can they want German neutrality, given Moscow's own historic memories? But in the short term, the Soviets may push for neutrality. (S)

Do the Soviets have the means to prevent a united Germany from remaining a member of NATO? Do they really have leverage to prevent this? Can their forces stationed in East Germany provide such leverage? I believe the answer to all of these questions is "no." (S)

An American president who wants a Europe whole and free cannot accept neutralization of a united Germany. Some SPD politicians like neutrality. As German Chancellor, Lafontaine would be attracted by neutrality. You and Germany have to agree now on German unity within NATO and sell this to the Russians. The Russians will have to accept it. The Soviets cannot impose their conditions on you, the United States, when they are so weak. (S)

I think you have to maintain the strong position that Germany must be a member of NATO. There can be no ambiguity. There can be no "association" with NATO. I didn't like that phrase. Just association with NATO will create temptations for Germany to make diplomatic deals with Russia. If Germany is out of the integrated NATO structure, the U.S. will be out of Europe. This would lead to great destabilization in Europe. If you leave now, you will be leaving at the most decisive moment. (S)

The President: How do your other NATO colleagues feel on this? How do they feel about German unification, the issue of troop levels, and other problems? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: Mrs. Thatcher doesn't like German unification. The British know they cannot prevent it; they just want to delay it. Everyone agrees that a neutral Germany would be terrible. France wants to dominate Europe, so they don't like German unification. Mitterrand won't prevent binding Germany into the West. Mitterrand wants a united Germany inside the NATO structure. Today, he knows the EC and CSCE cannot replace NATO. But in ten years, he wants a European confederation, free from both the Soviets and the Americans. The Dutch don't like the Germans and they want to keep Germany in NATO. On Italy, Andreotti doesn't like a united Germany, and hopes it will happen inside NATO under the overall control of the Americans. (S)

Deputy Secretary Eagleburger: We have no fundamental differences with your perception of this situation. (S)

The President: What would have an adverse effect on NATO and the presence of U.S. troops would be protectionism in the EC. If the EC pulled the rug out from under transatlantic cooperation, especially in agriculture, I could see a snowball effect toward isolationism. Now attitudes about protectionism are associated with Japan. But if the EC introduces that ingredient, we will be in trouble. (S)

Secretary General Woerner: That is an important point. You should make that clear to members of the EC in all channels. What do you think Gorbachev will accept or not accept on the German issue? (S)

The President: Gorbachev will have to stabilize his internal situation. He will have to accept a unified Germany within NATO. It is sound policy. (S)

Secretary General Woerner: He will have to accept that situation. (S)

The President: We have a selling job to do with Gorbachev. (S)

Secretary General Woerner: Gorbachev has no strong cards. He cannot prevent German unification on Western terms. (S)

The Vice President: What leverage do we have to prevent a neutral Germany? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: You have to maintain a consistent position. You must give a clear message to both the Germans and the Russians. (S)

The President: What about the borders issue between Germany and Poland? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: It is a difficult issue. It is a very delicate problem for Kohl. (S)

The President: Should we speak out more on German unification? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: I am grateful that you have made clear that you will not be an obstacle to unification. Opposition to unification could create German nationalism and anti-Atlantic feeling. You have avoided that. You have to give the German people the feeling that the U.S. is with them. You need close consultation with the Germans, and then with the Russians, about the framework and guidelines of German unification. There is no time to lose. (S)

Germany must be completely in NATO. German's participation in NATO's military structures is the key to NATO military integration. We must have German integration in NATO. (S)

To totally demilitarize part of Germany is a silly idea. It was not even done in the case of Austria. One cannot tell the German people that, because they had twelve years of Nazi rule, they are second class citizens forever. The German Territorial Army could be allowed, in a united Germany, in the former territory of the GDR. (S)

SECRET

The President: What is the constitutional function of the territorial army in the FRG? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: It is no different from the Bundeswehr. It provides support and maintains the military infrastructure. (S)

The President: Gorbachev will want the Four Powers to be involved. (S)

Secretary General Woerner: This would be very dangerous. You will be blamed by the German people if the Four Powers attempt to dictate the fate of Germany. I would prefer that the U.S. agree with Bonn on a common policy, then strike a deal with the Soviets. (S)

You should not accept loose ties between Germany and NATO, or the destruction of military integration, which would mean the end of the U.S. military role in Europe. We should not hold back the only safeguard to European stability, which is NATO and the American military presence. (S)

The President: Is the EC worrying about Eastern Europe? (S)

Deputy Secretary Eagleburger: That is a good question. The countries of Eastern Europe are wondering about where they fit in; whether they will be untied either to the rest of Europe or to the West. What will happen? We need to think hard about this. (S)

Secretary General Woerner: You are right. (S)

Deputy Secretary Eagleburger: We also need to prevent the U.S. from being closed out of the economic development of Europe in the years ahead. (S)

Secretary General Woerner: France wants to marginalize you politically, but keep you in Europe militarily, in a nuclear role. NATO gives you, the United States, a political role in European affairs. Otherwise, you will be marginalized. Mitterrand and the Quai agree on this. (S)

General Scowcroft: How do we keep NATO from being marginalized? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: You should use NATO in connection with the most important political events. A good example was your coming to NATO right after your meetings with Chairman Gorbachev in Malta. (S)

The President: Could we meet these concerns by having NATO assume a less military role? (S)

SECRET

Secretary General Woerner: I think it would help. (S)

General Scowcroft: Gorbachev has objected to our new CFE manpower proposal. He has offered either 195,000 or 225,000 stationed U.S. and Soviets troops in the entire Atlantic-to-the-Urals zone. We believe, however, that we must break the link between U.S. and Soviet troop strength stationed on foreign soil in Europe. Gorbachev is trying to reestablish this linkage. (S)

Secretary General Woerner: I agree. I hate this linkage. U.S. troops are in Europe for entirely different political and geographic reasons. (S)

The President: Will the East European countries invite us to stay in Europe as well? (S)

Secretary General Woerner: I believe the Poles will. (S)

-- End of Conversation--