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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting With President Mitterrand of France

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.
The President
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

France
Francois Mitterrand, President
Jacques Attali, Special Counselor to the
President

DATE, TIME April 19, 1990, 11:30 am - 1:05 pm
AND PLACE: Key Largo, Florida

The President: I have no agenda, but I want to have a clear view of your ideas. (S)

President Mitterrand: Regarding the German problem, my position is simple. It is a matter for the German people. We should not intervene. The consequences concern us all, however, and especially the four occupying powers. The first problem is that of the borders of Germany. Recognition of Germany's borders is a must, especially for the Eastern Europeans. Helmut Kohl says that only a unified German parliament can decide on this issue. I say yes, but you can indicate your interest. (S)

The President then described what Chancellor Kohl had told him on this issue at Camp David. (S)

President Mitterrand: I think that is right, but it is not clear how it will actually work out. Public statements on this issue differ. When Prime Minister Mazowiecki came to see me, he showed me a leaflet printed by the Christian Democrats for the East German electoral campaign. It had a map showing the Polish territories in a unified Germany. So we do need clarification. (S)

The second issue is that of a unified Germany within the Alliance. This also concerns us all, not just the Germans. (S)

The President: What if Kohl publicly stated what he told me? (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, that would be good, but he hasn't done it. Prime Minister Mazowiecki is pressing for treaties. It will turn out alright, but it is best to clear it up now.

The President: I did not realize that he had not said these things in public. (S)

President Mitterrand: That is what I wanted to say on German unification. Now on NATO, I would like to address Secretary Baker's speech and your recent letter to me. What are your basic questions? (S)

The President: It is in the U.S. interest and that of stability for the United States to stay in Europe. Most, but not all, Americans agree. The question is how the U.S. will retain its involvement. We are not seeking a 13th seat at the EC table. The CSCE cannot be a guarantor of security in Europe, but we do see an expanded role for NATO. That is what I would like to explore with you. It appears to me to be the main way that the U.S. can remain involved. There are various ways in which we can do this. We respect French historic positions on NATO. We don't think that what the U.S. wants cuts across French interests. But you are a historian. I think that we should stay in Europe with a reasonable level of forces. We won't stay as mercenaries in Europe, however, and if we were not wanted in Germany we would be out in a minute. I think that most Eastern European countries want the U.S. to remain. I am rambling because it is not all clear to me, but I think this is the right general approach. (S)

President Mitterrand: The role of NATO is already large. How could it be made larger? (S)

The President: Its role is changing. It will be guaranteeing us against instability, etc. Its role will be different. The organization must be flexible. (S)

President Mitterrand: The risk of war has decreased. The Soviet Union will have difficulty retaining its unity. The Eastern Europeans are no longer enemies. Nevertheless, a threat remains. Gorbachev may have to take certain dangerous postures if he is forced by necessity, so we must retain our security arrangements. We can't ask the Americans to stay and not have a voice. NATO should thus consider the whole range of security issues facing Europe. The Soviet Union is not reassuring: a great power which is in a weakened condition is dangerous. The U.S. should have a say in all issues that effect equilibrium in Europe. I have written this out (he reads from notes and says he will provide them). (S)

This policy is based on three postulates:

1. The first postulate is that the U.S. and France are friends and Allies and always have been. Nothing of importance divides us. (S)

2. The second postulate is that the Alliance has its own rules, in areas defined by a treaty. It is the forum for these discussions. (S)

3. The third postulate is that France has its own unique defense posture, which we will retain. (S)

The Alliance is the organizational forum for the discussion of issues regarding European security and equilibrium. We are a nuclear power, but we do not participate in the integrated military structure. We would use our nuclear weapons on behalf of our Allies, but we do not want to use nuclear weapons for Australia or Japan. Our nuclear weapons are a form of deterrence for us and for our Allies. (S)

Those are the current postures of France. New conditions are arising; new opportunities are arising in Eastern Europe. These countries should take part in a confederable organization which would encompass our common concerns. This is an idea for the long term, and the confederation would be allied with the United States. (S)

Now let us turn to the EC. The EC has no military responsibility and Ireland is a neutral country. So there must be agreements between the EC and the United States. There must also be ties to Eastern Europe and to EFTA. We should seek European unity in the long term, and then we should have a treaty with the United States. Economic cooperation between the U.S. and the EC is weak; we argue all the time. (S)

The President: We need better cooperation, and should give consideration to agreements. (S)

President Mitterrand: We should have a treaty with the United States. A third area is conventional disarmament. It must continue. What should the Alliance do? Maintain its cohesion; keep U.S. troops in Europe; keep Germany in NATO, but without having the Soviet Union think it is against the USSR. (S)

The President: I think that can be done. (S)

President Mitterrand: I agree. The Soviet Union will prefer to have a unified Germany within NATO rather than have Germany exercising its own military sovereignty. (S)

We should not exclude the United States in roles of security. I mean that in the sense of equilibrium. We must also be able to verify within the Alliance on disarmament. France does not have a different position on this. We must simply insure complementarity among NATO, the EC, and CSCE. Why shouldn't we be able to organize regular ministerial contacts at Foreign Minister level to discuss political issues? I am ready to convene a NATO conference to discuss this. Delors says that this would compete with the EC, but that is not at all what I have in mind. Europe is larger than the EC. Also, the East Europeans don't know where to go. They would have to come to an enlarged EC like beggars. What we should do is organize a forum to deal with this problem. There is CSCE, but that is not really

appropriate. Gorbachev talks about a European home, but that is just a vision. I would envision a treaty between the EC and the U.S., with a permanent organization for discussion. It will take a generation to work all of this out completely. A European union--which will not happen in my time--should have a treaty with the U.S. People say I don't want the Americans in Europe any more; that is wholly wrong. I want the Americans to be a part of this. (S)

The President: To sustain the U.S. presence, at a time when the role of NATO has changed, won't work if NATO itself does not change. NATO must be more active than simply drawing target levels. (S)

President Mitterrand: Let us have meetings, then, where we will talk about all this. (S)

The President: You mean a NATO Summit? (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes. (S)

The President: I like that idea very much. It is exactly what I have in mind. For example, NATO should meet before there is a CSCE meeting. (S)

President Mitterrand: Certainly, if necessary. The CSCE is useful because it contains all of the Europeans, but it is useful only for some things. (S)

The President: Could I talk about U.S.-Soviet relations for a minute? I am worried about Lithuania. If the Soviets cut off oil and gas I cannot fail to act. I must do something. I recognize that this is a difficult situation. (S)

President Mitterrand: What can he (Gorbachev) do? (S)

The President: I have been in touch, as has Secretary Baker. As of yesterday, Shevardnadze said that no coercion would be used and that we should judge the Soviets by their acts, not by their words. If they do cut off oil and gas, I must do something. I won't stop arms control negotiations, but one thing I could do would be to stop the MFN negotiations. It might be possible to do something there, and maybe something else. If they do cut supplies, I will consult with our Allies; that will buy us a couple of days. I don't have a clear answer, but I will have to do something. What is your view? (S)

President Mitterrand: We are in a terrible contradiction. Our interests are in keeping Gorbachev where he is, and in supporting Lithuania's independence. Gorbachev did not have time to revise the constitution regarding nationalities. Those he has to work out arrangements in some cases for independence, but he wants to do it in accordance with Soviet law. Otherwise he cannot sustain

himself in power. We should try to negotiate to give him time to introduce the changes that he needs. We should encourage the Lithuanians to be wise. (S)

The President: They are not being wise. (S)

President Mitterrand: Gorbachev has inherited an empire. It is now in revolt. If the Ukraine starts to move, Gorbachev is gone; a military dictatorship would result. He has inherited several centuries of history. We have never recognized the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union; they still have legations in Paris. Lithuania was given to the Germans in the war, and by De Gaulle to the Russians. But the gold is still there. However, we must recognize the complications. Sending Ambassadors would complicate the situation. It would be as if the United States sent an Ambassador to Alsace. (S)

The President: What worries me today is that the Soviet military may be more concerned than previously. Admiral Crowe found Akhromeyev very difficult. Brent met with him and did not find him that way. (S)

President Mitterrand: I think we must act in the interests of the Western world. We must take reprisals, but if we go too far, we will get a military dictatorship. Then where are we? (S)

The President: Exactly. I don't want to return to the Cold War environment. (S)

President Mitterrand: We are building for the future. We are on a ten-mile stretch of road and we have only gone 500 yards so far. (S)

The President: If the Soviets cut off all oil and gas, what would you do? (S)

President Mitterrand: I would take economic measures and nothing more. I wouldn't threaten what I would not want to do. We cannot send troops. The Soviet Union is capable of a violent reaction. Historically, these areas were part of Russia. (S)

The President: I did not have much confidence when I saw Landsbergis on television. (S)

President Mitterrand: During their 20 years of freedom, the Lithuanians were not democratic. (S)