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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Government House
Bermuda

Thursday, December 21, 1961
4:00 PM - 5:50 PM

U.S.

The President
The Secretary of State
Ambassador Bohlen
Ambassador Bruce
Mr. MacGeorge Bundy
Mr. William R. Tyler

U.K.

Prime Minister Macmillan
The Foreign Secretary, Lord Home
Ambassador Ormsby-Gore
Sir Evelyn Shuckbrugh
Sir Norman Brook
Mr. Ian Samuels

Subject: Berlin (1)

In answer to Lord Home, who asked what the next move should be on Berlin, the President said that instructions to Ambassador Thompson had been drafted, as guidance for a first talk with Gromyko. The British were then given the text of the draft instructions.

The Secretary commented that after the probes, there might be a meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers. In the first talk, Ambassador Thompson could raise two points: 1) access, 2) the idea of an International Authority. Should the Soviet response hold out some promise, these subjects could be taken up again in the next talk.

Lord Home said there seemed to be four major points, on which we should draw out Soviet attitudes and intentions:

- 1) De facto dealings with the GDR -- some formula short of de jure recognition
- 2) The question of the frontiers of Germany
- 3) The question of allied rights: Can we find an agreed formula whereby we would not drop our rights, but superimpose on them a practical agreement? We might say to Khrushchev that we want to get away from a war basis for our position, and assume the role of a kind of trustee for West Berlin.
- 4) The links

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- 4) The links between West Berlin and the Federal Republic. Was it necessary to hold Bundestag meetings in West Berlin "and that kind of thing"?

The Secretary said the Soviets have repeatedly stressed "existing facts". Our presence in Berlin is one such fact, and we are not going to be driven out. On the other hand we recognize certain facts pertaining to the other side.

The President asked the Prime Minister whether there was anything he would wish to add to the instructions. He commented that there was one idea which we were considering with regard to access: that the international access route might start deep inside West Berlin, cross GDR territory, and continue into Federal Republic territory to a roughly equivalent extent, thus involving three territorial jurisdictions.

The President went on to say that we could not accept the Soviet claim to have the right to be present in West Berlin, nor the imposition of a time limit on any agreement.

The Secretary referred to certain remarks by Lord Home during the NATO meeting, in which he said we should stick to facts, allowing our respective theories, underlying these facts, to diverge. He went on to say that at some appropriate stage we might say that we considered that the Oder-Neisse line constituted the Eastern border of Germany. Lord Home suggested the formulation might be that "If Germany is reunited, the Oder-Neisse line would be the Eastern border of Germany." The Secretary said that the issue of the frontiers is one of the few cards the Germans feel they have to buy something with.

(There was

(There was general agreement that the Germans wouldn't be able to buy much anyway.)

The Prime Minister asked if we expect the probe to be successful. Ambassador Bohlen said he expected there would not be much success at first, and that the Soviets would probably adopt a tough position to start with.

Sir David Ormsby-Gore asked whether we expected the French to be swayed. The Secretary pointed out that the primary target of our endeavors was not the French but the Russians, at whom we should direct our efforts. Sir David Ormsby-Gore said that the probe should be a first move leading toward negotiations. Sir Evelyn Shuckbrugh repeated this thought with some emphasis.

At this point there was a general discussion on whether Ambassador Thompson should report the substance of his talk to the French and the Germans (as well as to the British Ambassador). Lord Home said that Sir Frank Roberts would give Ambassador Thompson whatever support he could. He added that the German Ambassador, Herr Kroll, would probably want to play a role. Ambassador Bohlen said that so long as Ambassador Thompson talked to Gromyko within the framework of the draft instructions, he would not be exposed, as he would be operating on an agreed four-power basis. Lord Home said there were certain other matters within the Ambassadorial working group report on which we are not agreed quadripartitely, i.e., recognition. Sir Evelyn Shuckbrugh said the thing to do was to try to reach a possible area of agreement on a practical basis, and ~~then~~ then only go to the Germans on specific points which would complete the picture.

Ambassador Bohlen pointed out that if negotiations were conducted on matters relating only to Berlin (i.e., on a narrow basis), this would exclude
the Germans

the Germans from playing a direct role, since they do not have responsibility for Berlin. The Secretary said it would be useful to retain the Ambassadorial group as a base, to which to refer the progress of the talks for consideration, rather than to use the Ambassadors in Moscow for this purpose. He added that it would not be desirable to create too much of an impression of Anglo-Saxon direction of the talks, as this might make the continental powers feel they were being ignored. In particular the French and Germans must not be made to feel left out.

Sir Evelyn Shuckbrugh asked whether we were thinking of moving forward to a Foreign Ministers meeting. The Secretary said it would be necessary to take the temperature of the French. We might find ourselves moving toward a Deputy Foreign Ministers meeting, and eventually a full Foreign Ministers meeting. Sir Evelyn Shuckbrugh at this point pressed hard on the necessity of holding out a prospect of forward movement. The Secretary said it might be that our present position (as set forth on the bottom of page 3 in the Working Group paper) was too negative with regard to the possibility of an all Berlin proposal.

The President asked whether it would not be useful to take a look at the working group paper overnight and see what changes might usefully be introduced. Lord Home raised the question of the timing of the probe. He said he thought it was agreed it should be conducted by "one chap", who should be the American Ambassador. The Secretary said we should not delay too long before moving. Lord Home said he thought that the German Ambassador in Moscow might play a useful role, and Ambassador Bohlen commented that we should be rather careful about any role to be played by Ambassador Kroll, who had gone somewhat far on his own with Khrushchev. Sir David Ormsby-Gore said that it was important

to commit the Germans to any steps which it might be desirable to take. At this point, the Prime Minister, who had been sitting very quiet in an atmosphere of brooding, said with some vehemence that "all this was very confusing." The point was do we want to reach an agreement with the Russians or don't we? The UK would never go to war unless there had been negotiations first. He didn't like the idea of long drawn out preliminary stages. The question to be answered was do we want to bring the Russians to negotiate. What were the facts? East Germany exists. It is nonsense for the West Germans to talk as though it doesn't exist when they ~~were~~^{are} conducting trade with East Germany to the tune of 300 million pounds yearly. This business of about not recognizing the existence of East Germany was pure fiction. The thing to do was to recognize East Germany, not too much and not too little. It is obvious that the GDR could not be elected to the United Nations, ("happy country!"), because it was part of ^a divided country like South Viet-nam or South Korea. The French don't want Germany reunited, the Russians don't, and he wasn't sure the Germans themselves wanted it very much. All we had to do was to start by saying that there will be a uniting of Germany and the Russians might accept this so long as they felt sure it ~~would~~^{would} happen. He said the thing to do was to find some suitable phraseology "in a Pickwickian sense". We were going to stay in Berlin by the de jure right of conquest, which we had translated into our de facto presence in that city. After all, 8000 Normans had conquered England in 1066, and they rapidly became absorbed into the legal framework of local laws and customs. They rapidly stopped giving up the tenure of their possessions by mere right of conquest, and similarly we were in a position where we should become in a sense trustees for the continued existence of West Berlin. Then there was the matter of an agreement of

agreement of access to go in or come out, he said. We should have guarantees that we should be able to do this. So what remained? There was the question of the frontiers, which might be the last item which would be settled by our saying to the Russians; in asking you to come to an agreement with us, we are prepared to ^{give} you assurances on the question of frontiers. The thing we must be clear about is what was to be the purpose of our undertaking a probe. The Prime Minister said that he himself had often suffered, in the period of his life when he was engaged in diplomacy, from lengthy instructions of twenty pages or more. It was very hard on an Ambassador to have to cope with this kind of thing. It was difficult to remember all the points which were so carefully balanced in the text. If the purpose of the probe was to lead to a four-power conference, then the Russians would be influenced in the direction of moving toward us. ^{Unless} ~~it~~ it was clear to them that we wanted a conference, they ^{wouldn't} ~~would~~ move. If all this was right, the question was how can we bring the allies to agree. The Prime Minister said that he would like at this point to use an American expression, and to say that probably somebody would have to be the fall guy. If that was to be the U.S., the U.K. would glad to be the "extra fall guy". The point was that the probes must be a preliminary to negotiations.

Lord Home asked whether we could say to Gromyko ^{that} our desire is to have a Foreign Ministers meeting. We would want to make sure that there is a basis for such a meeting so that it ^{would} ~~wouldn't~~ fail.

The Secretary said that it was clear that we are looking forward to the possibility eventually of a Foreign Ministers meeting. In Paris, Couve de Murville had accepted language which had been proposed by Lord Home incorporating

this idea,

this idea, but General de Gaulle had been adamant. The President raised the question of whether we should move together, or with the Germans, or possibly without the French. He pointed out that the French rights in Berlin had only been derived from the rights which the British and we enjoyed and it was not inconceivable that we might move without them if necessary. Ambassador Bohlen said that it would not be a good idea to start off by proposing a conference to Gromyko. We should find some way of indicating that we would be prepared to hold a conference if the Russians made it possible to reach a basis for holding one.

Lord Home turned to the subject of the presence of Soviet troops in West Berlin. He pointed out that certain Soviet troops are already accepted in West Berlin for certain purposes, such as the guard for the Soviet War Memorial, and the troops required for Spandau prison. Would it be possible to devise some way of admitting Soviet troops on the basis of a token presence? He thought that there was a good deal of face-saving involved in this particular matter. The important thing was that if there were the presence of Soviet troops it should be without their having an unacceptable function.

The President said that we should think about a forum for negotiation with the Germans present in the room. He felt that our experience this summer with the Germans had been instructive. Whereas the German Ambassador in Washington had raised all kinds of difficulties in the Ambassadorial group, it turned out, in the course of Adenauer's visit in November, that the Chancellor was much nearer our point of view than he had seemed to be at "arms length". The Secretary and Ambassador Bohlen commented that we should show the French
the instructions

the instructions that we were sending to Ambassador Thompson.

Lord Home referred to Khrushchev's recent letter to the Prime Minister and said that the UK was considering a reply. There was a draft text, which he would like us to see which contained suggestions for a possible opening of discussions.

The Prime Minister asked whether the United States thought that the Russians really wanted negotiations. The Secretary said that we had at first thought so, but that we were no longer sure since the erection of the wall in Berlin. Lord Home said that the recent tactics of the Russians had been curious, and appeared to suggest that they might be desirous of disengaging. Ambassador Bohlen said that another interpretation of their present attitude would suggest that they might be preparing to sign a separate peace treaty.

Lord Home commented that in spite of what Mayor Brandt was saying, evidence was coming in to suggest that the morale of West Berlin was "in a pretty dicky state". He added that Adenauer certainly is of this opinion. The Secretary remarked that in Paris Couve de Murville had said that the real question was whether it was better to lose Berlin by default, or de facto by its withering away. Ambassador Bruce said that the only comment he had to make was that he thought it was not necessary to try to decide now whether we would move eventually without the French. It might be better to see how things go and take a decision in the light of later developments. Ambassador Bohlen said he thought we should first do all we can to ascertain whether a basis really exists for negotiations.