

Record of Meeting between the
Secretary General and the German Foreign Minister
at the Foreign Office, Bonn, on 9th October 1967

Germany

Participants: Mr. W. Brandt - Foreign Minister
Ambassador Grewe
Mr. U. Sahn
Mr. E. Wickert

International Secretariat

Secretary General
Mr. J. Jaenicke

The Secretary General opened the substantive discussion by saying that in the forthcoming meeting of the Rapporteurs at Ditchley Park he believed the main item will be how to continue with the Harmel Study and, in particular, the French attitude. M. Couve de Murville had warned him that any antagonistic attitude which might become apparent in reports undertaken under the Harmel Study, and which would tend to isolate France, would force the French to react. There are some allies who say that M. Couve de Murville's warning should not be taken too seriously; others are of a different opinion.

The Secretary General continued by saying that two questions must be kept in mind. First, what should the Rapporteurs do with respect to their work: should there be four separate reports plus one covering report? Secondly, what ought to be done between the meeting of the Rapporteurs at Ditchley Park and the December Ministerial Meeting?

There is, of course, in the Alliance a tendency to promote better East/West relations, and this tendency was shared by the French. The important question was: Should this tendency toward détente be connected with the Alliance? In other words, will the French refuse to establish a connection /

a connection between the process of détente and the Alliance. This question might cause real difficulty.

The Secretary General himself thought it might be a good line to try to arrive at a minimum agreement on détente with the French - to get the French to accept this, leaving, however, the machinery to a later date. Another situation arises if the French would not accept this minimum agreement on détente; in that case, perhaps the other Allies should agree on such a minimum report, *stating the differences of opinion clearly and leaving the study open for their further discussion* Mr. Brandt then outlined the German view that it would not be wise to have a clash with the French in connection with the Harmel Study. We should avoid a confrontation. He intended during his forthcoming consultation with M. Couve de Murville on Monday and Tuesday of next week to consult also on the problems connected with the Harmel Study.

The Germans believe that it would be worthwhile to have the four Rapporteurs put together their conclusions. He thought the Secretary General could and would have to find out what was acceptable in this connection to the Alliance including the French. In this way, of course, we should soon arrive at the lowest common denominator. At any rate, the four reports should be handed over as such to the Governments to deal with.

Mr. Brandt then raised the question of what should happen after the December Ministerial Meeting. How could we cooperate later on? He referred in this connection to his remarks at Luxembourg. Mr. Brandt then asked the Secretary General what he thought about the idea of an open-ended committee or working group on East/West relations to be formed by the three Powers with special responsibilities for Germany, possibly with the inclusion of Italy and Germany.

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The Secretary General did not specifically take a position with regard to this proposal, but he thought it might be a good idea to look at it.

Mr. Brandt then turned to the dilemma some countries found themselves in, in particular the Scandinavians, who wanted to give something to public opinion by way of content of the Harmel Study but wished, on the other hand, to avoid a clash with the French.

At this point the Secretary General repeated his belief that the French ^{may} ~~did not~~ ^{be prepared to accept} wish any connection between the process of détente and the Alliance. ~~At any rate, first of all the Rapporteurs should try for a summary conclusion.~~

Mr. Brandt then evoked the possibility of a joint report of the four Rapporteurs. Ambassador Grewe at this point underlined that it would be preferable to keep the four reports separate in order to allow for more flexibility (especially in order to avoid an en bloc rejection by the French).

Mr. Sahm said the best first step would be to take the four summaries of each of the reports by the Rapporteurs and put them together. The next step would be to see how much they may have in common.

The Secretary General agreed to have the four reports and the four summaries, and what to do next would be up to the Special Group. The Special Group might present two reports, one for internal use to the Ministers and one for public use. These might be prepared by the Secretary General or possibly by a Drafting Committee of the Special Group. At any rate, the Secretary General would contact the Delegations on this point.

At the end of the discussion, the Secretary General outlined the following steps: First, submission of the

four reports and the four summaries by the Rapporteurs; second, immediately thereafter a meeting of the Special Group and discussion of the work of the Rapporteurs; third, on the basis of the Special Group's discussions, either he or a Drafting Committee should draft a report on these discussions which should go to Ministers.

The Secretary General then asked Mr. Brandt specifically what the latter meant by wishing to avoid a clash with the French. Did this mean no intermediary report in December to gain time?

Mr. Sahm raised the question whether it would not be better to draft a report watered-down so far that no intermediary report would be necessary.

The Secretary General said that even a watered-down report ^{may} ~~will~~ ^{prove useful} ~~not be acceptable~~ because the press will undoubtedly report on the differences between the original reports and a watered-down version. Should we not be frank and discuss the differences openly?

Mr. Brandt here asked the question whether it was the intention to publish the four reports or at least to publish parts of them.

Mr. Sahm pointed out that the reports had not been written with the aim of publication and would, in his opinion, have to be changed if publication was envisaged.

The Secretary General saw the advantage in publishing the four reports, with the necessary corrections, which may be made by the Rapporteurs themselves.

Mr. Brandt thought that publication would be helpful with regard to our public.

Mr. Sahm again pointed out that publication will make ~~more~~ appear more clearly the difference in the four reports and the final result adopted by Ministers.

Mr. Brandt countered that public opinion was not something which one needed to please but which could exercise a certain amount of pressure which might be helpful.

The Secretary General observed that some Governments were more sensitive to public opinion than others, and in this connection he suggested that Mr. Brandt might discuss with M. Couve de Murville the point on which the French were sensitive. He repeated again what M. Couve de Murville had told him (the Secretary General) that if the reports were used to corner the French, the French Government would react. He had told M. Couve de Murville that there was no question of such an intention. The very fact that the Belgian Foreign Minister had launched the proposal was a guarantee against such an attitude. M. Couve de Murville did not then insist and continued by saying that NATO was a military Alliance; the less it did, the better it was. The French attitude was to reduce the Alliance to a minimum - not making it a body for the coordination of Western détente policy.

Mr. Brandt then asked whether in December 1966 there had been a French reservation with regard to the Harmel Resolution.

Ambassador Grewe pointed out that the Resolution was so badly worded and so vaguely drafted that there was no reason for such a French move.

Continuing, Mr. Brandt asked again what the Secretary General thought of the Working Group on East/West relations. The Secretary General repeated that he thought it would be a good idea but wanted to know what the French thought of it. In his opinion, such a Working Group would imply keeping ~~the~~ East/West relations under Alliance supervision.

Mr. Sahm pointed out in this connection the possible precedent contained in Mr. Kohler's proposal to institute a permanent Disarmament Committee in the Alliance.

Ambassador Grewe pointed out that something was needed to satisfy public opinion especially in the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom. This, of course, was connected with détente and perhaps we might make use of some wording from former NATO communiques acceptable to all. The difficulty started when we turned to the question of machinery. He suggested that we divide substance from procedure. Let us stick to the substance of détente postponing any proposals on (détente) machinery. One might also envisage a continuation of the Harmel Study beyond December 1967. This might be particularly acceptable to the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries if one could present it as some sort of contingency planning.

The Secretary General then said he saw three stages: First, the policy of détente; second, the connection between détente and the Alliance; third, the adoption of machinery. In his mind, the second stage was the difficult one. After agreement on the general desirability of the détente policy, everyone may go his own way when it comes to the second stage.

Mr. Sahm made the point that the French may accept anything which left them to/less committed than the Fourteen wanted themselves to be in this connection. In his view, the greatest danger was that of giving President de Gaulle the possibility of using the Harmel Study as a pretext to leave the Alliance.

The Secretary General then said that our public opinion expected some role of NATO in the political field. Here, Mr. Brandt pointed out that Germany also had a particular problem: it would be of the greatest importance, not for the German man in the street but for informed public opinion, that the East/West discussions should go on within the framework of the Alliance. This was, to them, an important point.

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In the final summing up by the Secretary General, the following steps were accepted by all present: First, four independent reports plus summaries; second, a Special Group meeting prepared by the Secretary General through contacts with Delegations; third, a Special Group report drafted by the Secretary General or a Drafting Committee, attempting as much consensus as possible, by December. Here, the question arose as to whether such a report should be called an "interim" report. The Germans thought it might not be wise to use the word "interim". Let it be a report to Ministers.

The Secretary General, as a concluding observation, said he was worried about the possible effects of the reports on the unity of Western Europe, but this was a very large subject which he would prefer to leave to another meeting of all participants when they would have more time to go into the matter.

JJ/mh
9.10.67.