

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
 Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense
 William P. Clements, Deputy Secretary of Defense
 The Joint Chiefs of Staff
 -- Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Chairman
 -- Gen. Creighton Abrams, USA
 -- Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, CNO
 -- Gen. Robert E. Cushman, USMC
 -- Gen. John D. Ryan, USAF
 Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Monday, March 11, 1974
 3:10 - 4:45 p.m.

PLACE: The Pentagon

SUBJECT: Kissinger Trip to the Soviet Union

Kissinger: We began detente in 1970 in an environment when we had to defend the budget for the Vietnam War and fight constantly against the unilateral disarmers. Detente gave us: first, domestic maneuvering room; secondly, an opportunity to get control of our allies, and thirdly, to get into a position where we would not get the blame for every confrontation that occurred. It would be seen that we would bend over backwards. So paradoxically, it has kept the Defense budgets not high, but at an acceptable level; it has kept our allies in line; and it let us end the Vietnam War in an acceptable way. Detente -- even with a President who is so hated -- has resulted in the liberals going to the right of the



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Administration. If detente were ended, they would immediately go left and hit us for its failure.

We held off on trade until 1971, when they started to move on SALT. We played tough on Berlin, on Jordan, and on Cienfuegos.

We had given the Soviet Union a list of areas where progress had to be made: Middle East, Berlin, Vietnam, Cuba -- we had good restraint. If I were in the Politburo, I could make a case against Brezhnev for detente -- much more so than against us. Only the wheat deal -- and that is just a bureaucratic snafu.

On SALT, we were in a period of declining defense budgets; we had no programs which we gave up. The defensive agreement was a conspiracy of the bureaucracy. This is no intellectual defense of the defensive agreement, except that we didn't lose by it.

Where are we now? In the Middle East, the Soviet Union must be beside itself. This is very worrisome. They could turn hard line.

Schlesinger: What would they do if they went hardline?

Kissinger: They could make trouble in the Middle East, in Europe, and especially domestically.

Clements: What the Soviet Union wants is the Suez Canal open. They can't screw up the Middle East until they get the Canal open.

Kissinger: I see no evidence of that. The Soviet Union always talks in terms of an overall, not partial settlement. They do that to force us either into affirming or changing the '67 boundaries -- either way we would get one side down on us and get them back in.

What this means is we can't thwart the Soviet Union in every way at the same time -- on MFN, in the Middle East, in SALT. It is not just a position they can't accept, but one which will result in Brezhnev being attacked for having been fooled.

We want the defense budget as high as the environment will allow; we want to be tough when we need to do so; but keep the detente or peace symbol for ourselves.

Schlesinger: How about Europe? Hints that we may withdraw troops may be useful.

Kissinger: The Atlantic area is the key to our security. If we think that by competing in the Third World we can do anything but bring about the destruction of the Western World, we are wrong.

In Europe, we have weak governments that are appealing to all sides. They kick the U.S., they spend a little more on defense for the right and to get American protection free. Every decision the EC has made has been anti-American.

Take Japan (and Canada). All the Europeans get is the Japanese maneuvering between us and the Europeans and thus encouraging Japanese nationalism. The EC-Arab meeting reflects their insecurity. They just maneuver. And this will come at the very time when we will be in trouble in the Middle East on the issues of Palestine and Jerusalem. We can't tolerate a Europe united against us. The defense people there are still good -- and there are others.

The Europeans can't be organically anti-American. If they are, why are American troops in Europe? The defense of Europe is essential to the U.S. How we defend it, however, is open. Our withdrawal could turn Europe neutralist; if they are going that way anyway, we may have to threaten some withdrawal. That would be a last resort. We have given up troop withdrawals. We have to appeal to the good types in Europe.

French policy can be viciously shortsighted, In the 19th century, they succeeded in unifying both Germany and Italy. Between the wars they surrounded Germany with weak states. They weakened and humiliated Germany but didn't take steps to prevent them from doing anything about it. The Maginot line was an invitation to Germany to turn east against the small states.

We don't want troop withdrawal. That is too drastic.

Schlesinger: An excellent formulation. We must have a common outlook on Europe and on the world as a whole.

I think on SALT we understand that we must not use too-tough words now. Essential equivalence we need for a permanent agreement; but we know we need maneuvering room now.

Kissinger: There is no differences between us on equivalence. We have had words on tactics, but not on the overall strategy like bomber throw-weight.

I will make no agreement with the Soviet Union. You will not be faced with a fait accompli. It is essential not to be too mechanical over what we consider equivalence. I look at overall equivalence, not equality in subcategories.

Schlesinger: I speak for the JCS -- we don't want to force them into a mirror image.

Kissinger: We will be looking it over to bring back something to talk about.

Schlesinger: On the budget, we may have seen an irreversible change.

Kissinger: I hope you are right. As a historian though, I think the liberals will turn if detente ends after the next election.

Schlesinger: How about the Far East -- the Chinese, Japan, Korean deployments?

Kissinger: Our best NATO ally is China. They understand the nature of politics and power. They are tough realists. Huang Chen complained to me about the Mideast alert, without instructions, and Mao bawled him out in front of me.

They want us to stay in Asia. That is why I am leary of pulling the B-52s out of Thailand.

Schlesinger: We have a new idea -- to float the squadrons in and out.

Kissinger: The Chinese want a visible American presence in Asia. The Japanese are not organically anti-American. Japan can shift courses very rapidly. We can't assume that democracy after '45 is a permanent phenomenon. They will be okay as long as the balance of power stays -- if it shifts, they could change overnight.

Our deployments in the Pacific and our overall strength are essential to keep Japan in line.



The Chinese are not our allies -- they would be very aggressive if they weren't so scared of the Soviet Union.

Clements: How about the Japanese Defense Force?

Kissinger: I favor it so long as we remain the dominant power in the world. It will worry the Chinese a bit, but that is a bit of an asset. I think Japan will go nuclear within 10 years. We should use the Japanese to scare the others while keeping the Japanese tied to us.

The next 10 years will require a cold-blooded assessment of power.

Schlesinger: The Europeans are like Italy between the war.

Kissinger: I would like the U.S. forces in Korea turned into a mobile reserve -- but I am worried about the Chinese.

I am basically in favor of it.

Abrams: We could build up the strength of the division there.

Schlesinger: I wonder if we can hold 40,000 in Korea. I think we could hold it at 25,000.

Kissinger: It depends on over what period. I am leary of a visible cutting back, but no figure is magic.

We are a long way in the future ever thinking about withdrawing forces from Europe.

Schlesinger: It was a mistake in getting Great Britain into the Common Market.

Kissinger: It was a tragic mistake.

We will take on Europe to save NATO and to keep our forces there.

Zumwalt: We have a special technical problem. It is dangerous to make arms control decisions that haven't been worked through the JCS.



Kissinger: They couldn't possibly propose anything which could be accepted without being scrubbed down.

Zumwalt: It is still questionable whether we will come out in the long term. Decoupling MIRV from equivalence could be dangerous. If they are separated, it must be done very carefully.

Kissinger: There is nothing going on in any channel of which you are not aware.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
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WITHDRAWAL ID 018663

REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL National security restriction
TYPE OF MATERIAL Note
DESCRIPTION Brent Scowcroft's handwritten notes of
Kissinger, Schlesinger, and Joint
Chiefs meeting
CREATION DATE 03/11/1974
VOLUME 8 pages
COLLECTION/SERIES/FOLDER ID . 031400123
COLLECTION TITLE National Security Adviser. Memoranda of
Conversations
BOX NUMBER 3
FOLDER TITLE March 11, 1974 - Kissinger,
Schlesinger, Joint Chiefs
DATE WITHDRAWN 08/20/2004
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