

TELEGRAM

Foreign Service of the
United States of America

OUTGOING

Charge:

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Classification

Control: 590

Date: December 12, 1961
3 AM

ACTION: SECSTATE, WASHINGTON SECTO-²⁴-----PRIORITY

INFO: Berlin 197
Bonn 352
London 552
Moscow 181

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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 With concurrence of STAT/CBR, PR, DEW
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EO 12356, Sec. 1.3 (a) ()
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8/3-20

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Following based on uncleared memorandum of conversation.

Four-Power Ministerial meeting this afternoon focused on

formula with respect negotiations on Berlin for NATO meeting.

Couve opened meeting stating he did not think it would be good

to accept ^{any} ~~such~~ kind ~~of~~ statement given latest

Khrushchev and Menshikov statements past few days which would appear to indicate one way or another Western readiness negotiate with Soviets. He reiterated French not repeat not opposed to

"soundings" by one or another or several Ambassadors in Moscow.

French, however, do not believe it good to have Council state this or that it be stated publicly. Statement to such effect would merely weaken Western position.

When Home asked whether Couve statement meant French

Ambassador ready to take part, Couve replied he had not said that.

French Ambassador ^{is} ~~is~~ though always in touch with Soviet Government

would not repeat not participate now. By one or several he

was reforming ~~findings~~ by American Ambassador

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British Ambassador in association since British seemed wish associate themselves as they had with Rusk-Gromyko talks.

When Home pointed out this position created great difficulties, since French said they willing see exploration occur but without their participation, as French not assuming their share in alliance Couve replied French reason very simple. ~~The~~ Soviet position was known and became even clearer in light Menshikov statement yesterday; therefore French saw no reason for exploration.

After fifteen minute recess requested by Secretary Rusk, Home stated he very much worried by French position. He noted that while French said exploration might weaken our position vis-a-vis Soviets/^{his}view was that within 24 hours Four-Powers would have to meet with NATO countries without any position. Most of these countries insist on negotiations and difference would be publicly known. Moreover, if West is to pursue contacts with Soviets, they must be based on an agreed Western position. If there is not such position, West will look terribly weak and disorganized which would permit Soviets to pursue one ^{objective} principal /which is/~~so~~ confusion and split up NATO alliance. He asked if introduction of word "exploratory" before diplomatic contacts in formula would help.

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Secretary stated we in very grave position. We have tried explain why we think it necessary make approach and seek real possibilities of negotiations due grave threat to peace. We have no illusions or false hopes re course of negotiations. They will not be easy. We have no intention make concessions to Soviets which are regarded as unacceptable by US and allies. At same time, we see possibility crisis leading to nuclear war and therefore need complete support of NATO alliance. Real question seems to be whether there is an alliance. When there are overwhelming necessities in dealing with a particular situation and this is a feeling which whole alliance shares, our view is that each nation should overcome its marginal doubts about any particular step so that alliance can move together. Secretary said he appalled at possibility what could happen if alliance came out of quadripartite Foreign Ministers and subsequent NATO meeting in obvious disarray. He asked how French Government saw probable course events if Foreign Ministers adopted view that there should be no negotiation, no exploratory talks, and no contacts on an agreed basis with Soviets.

Couve replied he did not doubt most NATO nations yearned for negotiations. This was quite evident. He thought US and French very much

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in agreement on substance. He believed US did not envisage making concessions, even on Berlin status, which would endanger Berlin. Problem was only tactical. On other hand, he would not say same for many NATO nations which at heart did not share US-French view of what must be maintained in Berlin. Difference he repeated was on tactics. To second part Secretary's presentation he said answer depends primarily on estimate Soviet intentions. He doubted Soviets would take major risk on Berlin. They seeking obtain their objectives by frightening Western nations. They have already removed time limit on separate peace treaty. While future unknown he doubted great risk to be run or that Soviets will lead us to war. He argued if West refrained from initiative now Soviets will be embarrassed and in doubt about what step to take next. When Secretary remarked then both sides would be in equal position of doubt, Couve responded this was so but Soviets, not West, wished make changes on Berlin.

Hove remarked NATO nations did not wish negotiations for

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negotiations sake. NATO did not wish "sacrifice" Berlin. But if NATO nations needed make great efforts and had been asked for more in way military build-up, they must be satisfied every avenue explored with Soviets. Couve replied what important to Four-Powers is not repeat not what NATO Council thinks but what Soviets think and intend. If in face current Soviet performance, West shows willingness negotiate Soviets will estimate West frightened and weak and therefore asking for negotiations. Even an outsider would judge NATO showing weakness in face Soviet threats in such circumstances.

Hone responded there now doubt what Soviets will think about NATO if French could not even talk about "exploration". NATO country representatives will demand negotiations publicly. If French had no objection to further diplomatic exploration why should they not agree to exploration being made on basis agreed positions? West might even say recent Khrushchev and Menshikov statements indicate Soviets no longer ~~wish~~ desire serious negotiations but, if Gromyko wished, Western Ambassadors would be ready talk to him on this subject. Onus would thereby be on Soviets.

Secretary asserted this was not enough given our vital interests. He not

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sure all Governments aware war could occur and there is real casus belli involved. American people could only go to war with good consciences. He could not accept Home concept ~~for~~ ^{for} we could not leave to Soviets alone question whether anything more should be said. Home said he did not really like his own idea. He was just trying find something Couve might accept. Schroeder entered ~~discussion~~ discussion at this point, Germans, he said, had just learned about Menshikov speech and had not seen full text. But most ideas contained therein appear in Soviet November 1958 note with minor additions and section knocking down international access.

Soviets continually over past years repeat same demands of 1958. On other hand Soviets opposed by clear and public firm Western position. Although positions greatly different, nothing obliges West believe that there no chance get Soviets make shift their position which probably includes maximum demands. West may be able reduce Soviet demands which is very reason for exploration as suggested. West should proceed without illusions toward objectives which wholly agreed, difference is tactical. West should only go forward in unified way with full NATO support for otherwise Soviets will exploit Western differences particularly if Western soundings start

from position disclosing

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disarray in alliance. Unity of purpose and objectives would be demonstrated if West had procedural unity. Procedure suggested in morning meeting does not repeat not commit West in formula suggested ~~assumed~~. West should act together and diplomatic efforts should be accompanied by military build-up. Agreed with Secretary ⁱⁿ public opinion acceptance ~~in~~ ~~public opinion acceptance~~ essential ~~of~~ support Western position diplomatically and militarily. Procedure suggested not ~~is~~ harmful, although French say so due recent Soviet statements. ~~He~~ ^{He} believed Soviets would interpret Western confusion as showing West subject intimidation. This would bring on trouble, but unified action would be sign Western strength.

Couve responded that in trial of strength indicating anxiety ~~that~~ to negotiate was weakness. It would prove Western sensitivity to Soviet intimidation, ^{Basic} ~~basic~~ position was if Soviets behaved badly, no negotiation. Schroeder answered ^{that} ~~recent~~ Soviet ~~statements~~ ~~stands~~ merely repetitive Soviet position of past. Carrying on debate in public not helpful but in private diplomatic ^{it} negotiations/might be possible reduce Soviet demands. He might agree with Couve except for two factors. First, Soviets can act in such way re Berlin that either West accepts Soviet steps thus displaying weakness or reacts strongly by military

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means which risks war. Public opinion must be convinced by actions
that
Western Governments / there no way out honorably before nations
asked to understand and fight. It not possible always to wait
time
to have diplomatic conversation at more propitious / since enemy
materially and psychologically in position create great trouble
for West if alliance in disarray.

Secretary stated that if Soviets in ^{two} speeches on ~~two~~ different
days prevented West from moving ahead together in its own interest,
these speeches would be two most fantastically productive speeches
in history. In certain sense ^{what} ~~is the~~ Four-Powers thought of
greatest importance but other members NATO alliance also had
vital interests. Appearance complete disagreement in NATO would
make Khrushchev bolder. Believing in Western weakness which
increased by disunity might lead him to dangerous courses of
action. In all frankness and good will, he had thought we were
agreed on substance. But he ^{confessed} ~~admitted~~ that if most
minimum move to develop substance Soviet position rejected,
^{to}
US would have / reviewed situation to see whether Four-Powers
really were agreed on substance and what their objectives are.
It
~~He~~ may be Krushchev trying to prevent negotiations, will sign
separate peace treaty, and create grave crisis. Maybe he will

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let his threats peter out. In either case, large gamble involved must be clarified. Secretary then asked for completely private Four-Power Foreign Ministers meeting as he felt obliged to report directly to the President and he wished clear and full understanding French position.

Home supported Secretary's ^{request} / for a private gathering stating "otherwise disaster stares us in the face". Private meeting followed during which subsequent Four-Power Foreign Ministers meeting set for 9:45 p.m. Paris time.

RUSK

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