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NATO SECRET

Summary of discussion at the Private Meeting of Ambassadors
held in the Secretary General's Office on Tuesday, 29th April, 1969

PLANNED VISIT OF THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER TO MOSCOW

The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the last discussion of this subject there had been some comment on the connection between the proposed visit and recent events in Czechoslovakia. The question of timing had also been considered, with particular reference to the World Communist Conference, scheduled for 5th June. There had been general agreement on the exploratory character of the visit, and the fact that the Allies might have some suggestions to make as to what the Belgian Foreign Minister should say to the Soviet leaders did not imply that M. Harmel was to be entrusted with an official mandate by the Alliance.

The BELGIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE felt that Permanent Representatives were in agreement that M. Harmel's visit should take place on a background of the discussion at the Washington Ministerial meeting and the process of consultation in NATO, and that similar exploratory visits by NATO Ministers, should not be confined to the Soviet Union and its satellites.

Vicomte DAVIGNON said that the Belgian Foreign Ministry had made it clear to the Soviet ~~Union~~^{Embassy} in Brussels that the date of M. Harmel's visit was still undecided. Reporting on recent conversations with the Czechoslovak, Rumanian and Yugoslav Ambassadors in Brussels, he said that the Czechoslovak Ambassador hoped that the visit could take place before that of the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister to Belgium at the end of May and that both visits could be announced simultaneously. The Rumanian Ambassador thought that preparations for the World Communist Conference were so far advanced that it would not be affected whatever date were chosen

for the visit. The Rumanian Authorities were very anxious for the visit to take place and were curious as to what the Soviet leaders would say to M. Harmel. The Yugoslav Ambassador hoped that the visit would take place at an early date and that M. Harmel would ascertain Soviet reactions to the possibility of making use of the Group of Ten for preliminary discussions on European security. As a result of recent soundings, it appeared that the Hungarian reaction to the proposed visit was similar to those indicated above. Finally, he stated that his Foreign Minister would have several bilateral issues to discuss in Moscow and that it would be possible to arrange ~~a~~ ^{the} visit for either May or June, depending on the views of the other NATO countries.

The CANADIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities continued to be in favour of M. Harmel's visit which was in conformity with the spirit of the Ministerial discussion in Washington. The visit should be one of exploration and not negotiation, and in view of the recent events in Czechoslovakia and the date of the World Communist Conference, might more appropriately take place after 5th June. His Authorities thought that M. Harmel should reiterate the unacceptability of Soviet conduct in Czechoslovakia but should also emphasize the positive aspects of East/West contacts short of a European security conference. They felt that consideration should be given to the possibility of discussions taking place in the Group of Ten, in a non-governmental seminar (excluding the major powers), in a meeting of Parliamentary Representatives and in the Economic Commission for Europe, all of which fora were of interest to the Yugoslavs, and ~~other~~ ^{offered} possibilities of East/West discussions without inherent risks of confrontation.

The UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities had no strong views regarding the time of the visit. Although the Soviet Union would formally regard the nature of the

visit as bilateral, they would obviously assume that it had been preceded by a process of consultation in NATO and the Allies should not, therefore, be reluctant to engage in such a process. The background for the visit should be the discussion at the Washington meeting and the policy guidelines in Part II of C-M(69)18 which Ministers had agreed to take into account in their national actions. M. Harmel's talks, however, should not prejudge any of the issues which the Council might eventually select as ripe for fruitful negotiation and an early resolution. Of the points made by M. Harmel in his recent speech at Liège, the only one which his Authorities thought might not be expedient to raise in Moscow was that regarding a written code of East/West behaviour. The other topics, such as economic, social and cultural contacts, regional disarmament measures, an agreement on the renunciation of the use of force and precautions against surprise attack, seemed quite appropriate for discussion. He suggested that the Council might establish an informal list of points which represented a consensus in NATO and which could be taken into account by M. Harmel in Moscow. He then circulated a paper entitled "Suggested Informal Brief for Foreign Minister Harmel".

The NORWEGIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities regarded the visit as an exploratory one, in the spirit of paragraphs 3 and 5 of the Washington Communiqué. A date in mid-May or a little ^{later} ~~earlier~~ would meet with their favour. Although M. Harmel would obviously not have any NATO mandate, they hoped he would take full account of the views expressed by other Ministers in Washington.

The DANISH PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE pointed out that the Soviet Union would inevitably assume that M. Harmel's views reflected those of the Council. It would, however, be useful to determine whether the Soviet Union was intent on pursuing its ⁱ ~~d~~ivisive tactics vis-à-vis the different members of the Alliance. One of M. Harmel's objectives ~~sh~~ould be to explore Soviet intentions with

regard to possible negotiations with the West. There would be advantage in stating the West's readiness to negotiate, although not necessarily on all the issues referred to in the Budapest Declaration, in stressing its disagreement with Soviet policy in Czechoslovakia and in refuting Soviet allegations of German revanchism.

The UNITED KINGDOM PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities appreciated the consultations initiated by M. Harmel and agreed to the exploratory nature of his visit. In addition to the issues in the list circulated by his United States colleague, he hoped that M. Harmel would explore the inconsistencies in the Soviet attitudes, i.e. in various public statements and private démarches, and also the Soviet pre-conditions for discussions on European security. He should make it clear from the start that the West would only enter negotiations on the understanding that the issues to be discussed should not be prejudiced by the imposition of pre-conditions and that Canada and the United States should be associated in any negotiations and in any preparations for a European security conference. It would also be useful to explore whether the Soviet Union had any proposals in mind to improve prospects for such negotiations. As to timing, he saw advantage in choosing a date in June rather than May, to allow time for the development of ideas on possible subjects for negotiation at a European security conference, so that M. Harmel could find out whether these concurred with Soviet ideas.

The TURKISH DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE thought that a very early visit might be interpreted by the Soviet Union as an indication of Western acceptance of Soviet conduct in Czechoslovakia. His Authorities therefore preferred a date in June, which would allow a clearer picture of developments in Czechoslovakia and of individual national positions in the light of the Washington meeting.

The FRENCH PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE and the GERMAN DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said their Authorities had no objection to the visit, nor to any date proposed by M. Harmel but wished to avoid any impression that he would be going to Moscow as a NATO emissary. The French Permanent Representative thought that M. Harmel might ascertain Soviet interpretations of and intentions regarding the Budapest Declaration and also explore possible differences of attitude of the Soviet leaders. He suggested that the visit might be announced prior to the World Communist Conference and preferably take place after it.

The LUXEMBOURG PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities agreed to the proposed visit and had a slight preference for a date in June.

The NETHERLANDS PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, expressing his Authorities' interest in the present consultations, stressed the prime importance of the visit. He felt that although the Group of Ten could not have a determining role, each NATO country should ^{ply}~~apply~~ its part in the different international bodies in seeking improvements in the European situation.

The ITALIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE regarded the present consultations as implementing the principle ^{of}~~in~~ consultation in NATO prior to high-level visits to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The attitude of the Alliance to events in Czechoslovakia and to the Tass Communiqué was obviously relevant to M. Harmel's visit, which his Authorities saw as taking place within the framework of a gradual resumption of contacts with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. As to ^{timing}~~time~~, he considered it in the interests of the Alliance to await the results of the World Communist Conference and to avoid any impression of hastening to Moscow immediately after the Washington meeting. On the other hand, the visit need not be delayed longer than one month, since the situation in Czechoslovakia

would not have altered radically in that time and M. Harmel would be able to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that the West was not resigned to that situation, nor to the Soviet doctrine of limited sovereignty, which prevented any real success in negotiations with the Soviet Union. He should try to discover Soviet intentions regarding a process of contacts leading up to an eventual security conference, which should be regarded as the ultimate objective. The Soviet Government had informed his Authorities of their great interest in action being taken to prepare such a conference and had asked them to initiate preliminary steps in this direction.

The GREEK PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities appreciated the present consultations, agreed to the visit and awaited with interest a report on its results.

The PORTUGUESE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE pointed out that the visit would represent a basic change in the Alliance's attitude to high-level contacts and all should be aware of its consequences. As to timing, he saw advantage in the visit being announced before the World Communist Conference and taking place after it.

The ICELANDIC PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities were very much in favour of the visit and felt that its timing should be left to M. Harmel to decide.

The CANADIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE noted that some speakers had stressed the objective of exploring the possibilities of East/West negotiations and others, that of indicating to the Soviet Union Western readiness to engage in substantive confidence-building measures with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said that the United States' list of questions seemed to fall between the two objectives. He then informed his colleagues of the contents of a note from President Nixon which the new United States Ambassador in Moscow had delivered to Mr. Kosyguin on 22nd April, and suggested that M. Harmel might make use of the basic Western views outlined in this note.

The BELGIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said M. Harmel fully recognised that he would not be acting as a NATO emissary. He agreed that there should be no pre-conditions for a "conference on European security", which title he regarded as more in keeping with Western objectives than a "European security conference". He considered the doctrine of the Alliance to be sufficiently well defined to act as the background for all such bilateral East/West contacts. As to timing, he assured his colleagues that M. Harmel would take into account the comments made in the discussion, particularly regarding the desirability of the visit being announced before the World Communist Conference and taking place after it.

Vicomte DAVIGNON said the Belgian Authorities thought it should be up to the East, which had broken off contacts with the West following the invasion of Czechoslovakia, to take the initiative to resume such contacts. M. Harmel would explore Soviet intentions but would not enter into substantive negotiation, which, he would state, was impossible on the basis of the Soviet doctrine of limited sovereignty. He would act with all due caution, in full knowledge of the positions of individual NATO countries.

The CHAIRMAN, summing up the discussion, noted several positive results from the present consultations. It was agreed that such East/West contacts were acceptable and indeed desirable. While a final decision on the timing of the visit should be left to M. Harmel, there was a preference for a date in June following the World Communist Conference; however, the announcement of the visit may be made before this Conference. It was agreed that M. Harmel's visit would be of an exploratory character, would not imply any mandate from the Council, and would fall within the framework of NATO consultations. He would be free to explore the possibilities of East/West negotiations and to indicate Western readiness to engage

in confidence-building measures with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He should also emphasize the unacceptability of any pre-conditions and also the necessity for Canadian and United States participation in any kind of negotiations from the very start. Equally, the question of Germany and Berlin could not be ignored. Other issues which it was suggested that M. Harmel might explore, included the reactivation of the Group of Ten, economic and cultural contacts, regional disarmament measures, an agreement on the renunciation of the use of force and precautions against surprise attack. The discussions should not take as their starting point a possible European security conference, which had not been mentioned in the Washington Communiqué. The Ministers agreed on exploring possible specific items for negotiations and this should be the point of view of allied countries. A European conference has not been excluded by the Ministers, but should remain for the time being as a possibility, and considered as an ultimate stage, a result of successful negotiations.

The BELGIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE said his Authorities intended to continue the process of consultation prior to M. Harmel's departure for Moscow. M. Harmel would probably report to the Council in person on the results of his visit.

CONFIDENTIAL

SUGGESTED INFORMAL BRIEF FOR
FOREIGN MINISTER HARMEL

1. Western Allies have no greater desire than to establish lasting, secure order of peace in Europe.

2. In this connection, they were deeply discouraged by the virulent Soviet attack against NATO on April 9 and by Soviet use of force in Czechoslovakia. (In this connection, it would be appropriate for Foreign Minister Harmel to explore contradictions in recent Soviet statements and behavior.)

3. Although encouraged by the Budapest appeal, they believe, as clearly stated in the recent Ministerial Communique, that the best prospects for genuine peace in Europe lie in identifying concrete issues which "lend themselves to fruitful negotiation and early resolution."

4. The Western Allies are now undertaking earnest and serious effort to identify these issues which they will be exploring with the Soviets in the future through various channels. If the Soviets have a genuine desire to improve the climate of East-West relations, we believe they should join this quest for new areas of mutual understanding and cooperation.

5. What about violating the
Budapest Appeal by
others - USA

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