

~~SECRET~~



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

I-25915/74

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting Between SecDef and John Sherman Cooper, United States
Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic (24 October 1974)

Participants:

Department of State

United States Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic - John
Sherman Cooper

Department of Defense

Secretary of Defense - James R. Schlesinger
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) - Amos Jordan
Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense - Major General John A.
Wickham, Jr., USA
Assistant for Central Europe, European Region, ISA - Colonel David E.
Hartigan, Jr., USA

Time: 1100-1130 hours, 24 October 1974

Place: Office of the Secretary of Defense

1. (C) Opening Remarks

Ambassador Cooper noted that he had mixed emotions about assuming his
new post, given his age and the fact that he purportedly had retired
from public life, but continued to say that he heard, and was responding
to, the call of duty. He remarked that until recently he was unsure of
his appointment for two reasons: first, negotiations dealing with the
establishment of diplomatic relations took much longer than originally
anticipated; and, second, it was problematical in his mind, having
been nominated by President Nixon, whether President Ford would
sustain the nomination. He felt that he had used the interim period
profitably, however, by devoting his time to an extensive study of
Germanic history, beginning with the era of the Frank, Charles Martel.

~~SECRET~~

Classified by Director, European Region
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED
AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON 12/31/82



*333
Cooper
27 Nov 74*

~~SECRET~~

Now, though, he is in the process of receiving a series of serious briefings, which has highlighted for him the delicacy and sensitivity of his forthcoming assignment.

Ambassador Cooper acknowledged that he had little on-the-ground experience *vis-a-vis* Berlin and the GDR, noting that he had visited the city as a tourist and had spent a short time in what later became the Soviet zone of occupation and, subsequently, the GDR when World War II hostilities ceased in May 1945. He commented that he knows less than he would like to know about the GDR's government personalities, and wondered, for example, whether Erich Honacker was pursuing the same hard line as that hewed to by Walter Ulbricht. Regardless, he said that he recognizes the degree to which the GDR's policies are shaped in Moscow, and his approach, from the outset, is going to be firm, particularly where access to Berlin and other provisions of the Quadripartite Agreement are concerned. He intends to be especially conscious and observant of GDR attempts to harass our military personnel when in East Berlin and when operating in the GDR pursuant to Four Power and U.S.-USSR agreements.

2. (S) Defense Aspects of the Ambassador's Role in the GDR

Ambassador Cooper asked for SecDef's views concerning what he should be aware of and looking for where U.S. interests are involved. SecDef responded that it is difficult to put one's finger on U.S. interests, especially since--given our ambivalent attitude over the years--it is not clear whether we really want to normalize relations with the GDR. He noted, however, that Ambassador Cooper should keep two points in mind. First, we place great value on our relationship with the FRG. The FRG is the backbone of NATO in Europe; its contribution to the Alliance is critical. The GDR should be handled in such a way that the developing relationship between it and the U.S. does not result in any reduction in the close comradeship we share with the FRG. Second, it would be most useful if, in his dealings with the GDR, Ambassador Cooper could seek to separate the GDR from the USSR. Toward that end, he might allude to the contribution that the GDR makes to the Warsaw Pact's total military strength; point out that without that contribution the Soviets would be less inclined to entertain an ambition to attempt to overrun Western Europe; and convince the GDR that it would be absolutely catastrophic for that nation and its people if an attempt to overrun the West were made. The Soviets, of course, are the only ones who could entertain such ambitions; right now, they are quiescent. Should the situation change, however, the most valuable roles the GDR could play would be those of restraining the Soviets and, failing that, of convincing the Soviets to terminate hostilities quickly.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

3. (C) Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR)

SecDef remarked that the GDR has been a relatively reserved participant in MBFR; its attitude in Vienna has been serious and in keeping with its perceived role as a member in high standing of the Warsaw Pact. Ambassador Cooper said that he was sure that the GDR was following the Soviet line. SecDef continued, emphasizing that we won't permit the FRG's emasculation in order to satisfy the USSR and noting that there has been no real progress on MBFR. If anything, the tone has become colder and the Soviets are marking time while awaiting SALT results. Mr. Jordan added that the USSR is making a constant effort to drive a wedge between the U.S. and the FRG. Our position is that Phase I reductions affect only the forces of the U.S. and the USSR; the East is pressing for across-the-board reductions in Phase I and has proposed a matched 5000-man reduction in forces of the FRG and Poland. It is not happenstance that the East has suggested a reduction in Poland's forces, rather than the GDR's.

4. (C) Defense Attaches and the United States Military Liaison Mission (USMLM)

Ambassador Cooper inquired whether the U.S. has defense attaches in its embassies in the capitals of other East European countries and, if so, were they and the products of their endeavors of value to us. Mr. Jordan responded affirmatively on both counts and noted that, with respect to an exchange of defense attaches between the U.S. and the GDR, the question is one of an appropriate time. In this connection, Ambassador Cooper noted his understanding that there was some linkage between the attache exchange question and the operation of the USMLM in the GDR. He said that he wants to learn more about the MLM's operations, and Mr. Jordan advised him that he was to be briefed by DIA on that and other subjects the following day. General Wickham mentioned that it was apparent that our MLM must exercise caution in conducting its operations, now that we have an ambassador in East Berlin, lest its activities--if other than completely correct--prove embarrassing to Ambassador Cooper.

5. (C) NATO-Warsaw Pact Balance

Ambassador Cooper pointed out that he always has had a very positive view towards NATO and that he remains interested, now, as he was when a member of the Senate, in the status of NATO forces and the relative East-West balance. He asked whether he should plan to visit Brussels, en route to East Berlin, for a NATO-Warsaw Pact balance briefing, or would

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

it be better to be briefed here. SecDef emphatically recommended that the briefing be held here, and conjectured that it is questionable whether Ambassador Cooper should permit himself to become associated with NATO in the minds of the East Germans, for whom such an association could be a distressing bugaboo. It would be unwise to give the East Germans unnecessary reasons for them to harass the Ambassador. (Note: The briefing asked for by Ambassador Cooper on the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance was arranged for him.)

6. (C) Intelligence Matters

Ambassador Cooper recalled that some number of Soviet Army units were moved closer to Berlin during the Czechoslovakia crisis, and said that he supposed that today, given our many sources of intelligence, we are able to keep track of military movements in the East. SecDef assured him that our intelligence is good; we have no difficulty in tracking unit movements, but there are, of course, some questions concerning the manning and equipment levels in those units. Asked whether East German Army units are effective, SecDef responded that the "Red Prussians" potentially are quite effective.

7. (C) NATO Matters

Ambassador Cooper asked if NATO is alive and effective, and SecDef answered that, though he is more comfortable about American attitudes of today, compared to those of the past, he is not comfortable about the disintegration he sees taking place in Europe. Asked whether he includes the FRG when speaking of disintegrative developments, SecDef emphasized that he did not include the FRG. In fact, one of the results of disintegration has been that of drawing the U.S. and the FRG even closer together on a bilateral basis. Some of the Allies, for example, Norway and Turkey, continue to be relatively steadfast; others, including Greece, Italy and Portugal, are plagued with problems of political disarray and faltering economies. Those problems, of course, affect military cohesion. In response to Ambassador Cooper's question about the UK's attitude towards NATO, SecDef responded that while its attitude is better, military matters are worse. On balance, the UK's military strength is diminishing.

Recalling that he had spoken to the since-retired Chief of Staff of the FRG Army in 1972 /General Ernst Ferber held that post in 1972 and has not retired, but is CINCENT/, Ambassador Cooper remembered that, though optimistic on the whole, the Chief of Staff had told him that it was becoming more and more difficult to interest young men in an Army career. SecDef told the Ambassador that the situation since has been turned

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

around. Morale is high and the problem was solved to a great extent when the youth rebellion receded.

8. (C) Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

In response to Ambassador Cooper's question whether there was anything else he should know about before leaving, Mr. Jordan touched briefly on the status of CSCE. In sum, the Soviets are seeking concessions, but are unwilling to give them. The GDR follows the Soviet lead, and is most interested in sanctifying its, and others', post-World War II boundaries. Because of the sharp cleavage between East and West, the conference is hungup at present, and prospects are that the CSCE may enjoy no more progress than MBFR negotiations have.

9. (U) Meetings with Members of the Congress

Ambassador Cooper noted that he plans to talk to members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee before leaving for Berlin. In discussions already held with members of the Congress, Ambassador Cooper has been amazed by their apparent lack of concern over the establishment of diplomatic relations with the GDR, particularly in view of the role the East German agent, Guillaume, played in Brandt's downfall, the autobahn harassment connected with the establishment of the Federal Environmental Agency office in East Berlin, and so forth. On the other hand, he was most impressed by how well informed Senator Henry M. Jackson is on the whole situation. Obviously, he has done his homework on the GDR.

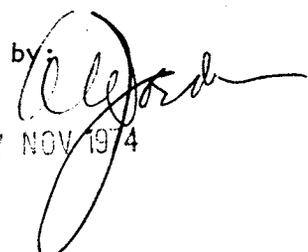
10. (U) Closing Remarks

Ambassador Cooper wished SecDef the best in his future endeavors. SecDef thanked the Ambassador and offered his best wishes for success in what undoubtedly will be, at best, an uncomfortable ambassadorship. Ambassador Cooper responded that he will need everyone's good wishes and support.

Memorandum of Conversation
Prepared by:
Colonel David E. Hartigan, Jr.
25 October 1974

Approved by:

Date:


27 NOV 1974

~~SECRET~~