

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Intelligence Information Cable

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[Redacted]

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CITE [Redacted]

DIST 7 OCTOBER 1968

COUNTRY: WEST GERMANY/FRANCE

DOI : [Redacted]

47 Z OCT 68

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SUBJECT: AHLERS' OFF-THE-RECORD COMMENTS ON DE GAULLE'S VISIT  
TO BONN

ACQ : [Redacted]

SOURCE : [Redacted]

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SUMMARY: DEPUTY PRESS CHIEF CONRAD AHLERS DELIVERED AN OFF-THE-RECORD BRIEFING [Redacted]

IN WHICH HE SUMMARIZED THE TALKS BETWEEN GERMAN AND FRENCH LEADERS.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: AUG 2002

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HE SAID THAT THE ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING THE TALKS WAS SO FROSTY THAT, AS FAR AS FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS WERE CONCERNED, IT WAS INDEED GOING TO BE A COLD WINTER. GERMAN LEADERS HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION AS A RESULT OF THESE TALKS THAT THE FRENCH WILL GO ONLY AS FAR IN THEIR COOPERATION WITH WEST GERMANY AS THEY BELIEVE WILL SERVE FRENCH INTERESTS AND THAT FRENCH POLICY WILL MORE THAN EVER BE CONCENTRATED ON FRENCH NATIONAL INTERESTS ALONE. IN THE FIELD OF EASTERN POLICY THEY FEEL THAT GERMANY CAN NO LONGER EXPECT ANY FRENCH SUPPORT AND THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF A JOINT FRANCO-GERMAN EFFORT IN THIS AREA IS DEAD. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE WHOLE FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP WILL TAKE ON A NEW CHARACTER. THE TALKS WITH THE FRENCH HAVE UNITED THE CHANCELLOR AND HIS SPD FOREIGN MINISTER IN MANY AREAS OF FOREIGN POLICY AND THIS IDENTITY OF VIEWS HAS ALSO EXTENDED TO OTHER LEVELS OF THE CDU AND SPD. AHLERS ALSO COMMENTED ON ACRIMONIOUS EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE CHANCELLOR AND DE GAULLE, PARTICULARLY DURING DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE. AHLERS SAID THAT IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE FRENCH HAD COME TO BONN BELIEVING THAT THE WEST GERMANS WOULD ACCEDE TO ALMOST ANYTHING THE FRENCH HAD TO SAY OUT OF THEIR FEAR OF EVENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

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GENERALLY. END SUMMARY.

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1.

OFF-THE-RECORD BRIEFING

DEPUTY PRESS CHIEF CONRAD AHLERS GAVE AN

ON THE RECENT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN

FRENCH AND GERMAN LEADERS IN BONN. COMMENT: FOR INFORMATION

ON THE DE GAULLE-KIESINGER TALKS GIVEN TO EMBASSY BONN OFFICERS

SEE EMBASSY BONN TELEGRAMS 17687 AND 17735, 4 OCTOBER 1968). AHLERS

SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAD APPARENTLY COME TO BONN FEELING SURE

THE THE GERMANS WOULD ACCEDE TO ALMOST ANYTHING THE FRENCH HAD TO

SAY BECAUSE OF THE GERMAN UNEASINESS OVER CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND OVER

THE SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE GENERALLY. HE SAID THAT THE

ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING THE TALKS WAS SO FROSTY AND UNRELENTING

THAT ONE COULD ONLY ASSUME THAT, AS FAR AS FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS

WERE CONCERNED, IT IS INDEED GOING TO BE A COLD WINTER.

2. SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS HAD BEEN DRAWN BY THE GERMAN LEADERS

IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR TALKS WITH THE FRENCH. THEY FEEL AS A

RESULT OF THESE TALKS THAT FROM NOW ON THE FRENCH WILL FOLLOW MORE

THAN EVER A POLICY OF "NATIONAL EGOISM" AND THAT THE FRENCH

WILL GO ONLY AS FAR IN THEIR COOPERATION WITH WEST GERMANY AS THEY

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BELIEVE SERVES THE INTERESTS OF FRANCE, THEY BELIEVE ALSO THAT FRANCE WILL CONTINUE ITS OWN POLICY IN EASTERN EUROPE WHETHER IT COINCIDES WITH GERMAN INTERESTS IN THIS AREA OR NOT. AHLERS SAID THAT IT HAS BECOME CLEAR TO THE BONN GOVERNMENT THAT IN THE LONG RUN FRENCH POLICY IS DIRECTED AT NEUTRALISM. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE WHOLE FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP WILL TAKE ON A NEW CHARACTER.

3. AS FAR AS THE EFFECT OF THE TALKS ON THE INTERNAL GERMAN SITUATION IS CONCERNED, AHLERS SAID THAT IT HAS BROUGHT THE COALITION PARTNERS MUCH CLOSER ON MANY FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES THAN THEY EVER HAD BEEN. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF KIESINGER AND BRANDT, BUT IT ALSO EXTENDS TO OTHER LEVELS OF THE SPD AND THE CDU. THE TALKS HAVE ALSO HAD THE EFFECT, ACCORDING TO AHLERS, OF STRENGTHENING THE POSITION OF THOSE WHO HAD ALL ALONG OPPOSED CLOSE TIES WITH FRANCE ON THE GROUNDS THAT GERMANY COULD NOT COUNT ON DE GAULLE.

4. THERE WERE FEW POINTS OF REAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND THE GERMAN LEADERS. DE GAULLE APPEARED, HOWEVER, TO UNDERSTAND GERMAN NEED FOR NATO AND HE AGREED WITH KIESINGER THAT THE REAL TARGET OF ALL DETENTE POLICY IS MOSCOW RATHER THAN THE STATES OF EASTERN EUROPE. IT BECAME APPARENT, HOWEVER, AHLERS SAID, THAT IF WEST GERMANY WOULD EVER DECIDE TO MAKE AN APPROACH TO THE SOVIET

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UNION, IT MIGHT HAVE TO BE DONE WITHOUT FRANCE. DE GAULLE ALSO SEEMED INTERESTED IN EAST-WEST GERMAN RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY WHETHER OR NOT THERE WERE ANY CONCRETE PROJECTS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

5. ON THE SUBJECT OF SECURITY POLICY, THE FRENCH HAD SOME VERY INTERESTING VIEWPOINTS WITH REGARD TO GERMAN SECURITY. DE GUALLE SAID THAT "NATURALLY" WEST GERMANY COULD COUNT ON FRANCE'S SUPPORT IN CASE OF A MILITARY THREAT, BUT ONLY IF THERE WERE A CLEAR PROVOCATION. THIS GUARANTEE WOULD NOT BE AUTOMATIC. THIS MEANS, AHLER SAID, THAT WEST GERMANY IS AT THE MERCY OF A FRENCH INTERPRETATION OF WHAT IS OR IS NOT A PROVOCATION. IF THE FRENCH WERE TO DECIDE THAT GERMANY HAD NOT RECEIVED A CLEAR PROVOCATION, GERMANY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO RELY ON FRENCH SUPPORT.

6. THE FRENCH TOOK A VERY TOUGH POSITION ON THE SUBJECT OF MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY. THEY WANTED - AND THEY ALMOST MADE ALL FUTURE COOPERATION BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY CONDITIONAL ON GERMAN ACCEPTANCE OF THIS DEMAND - COMPLETE WEST GERMAN MILITARY RE-ORIENTATION TOWARD FRANCE, INCLUDING FRENCH EQUIPMENT AND ARMAMENTS. IN OTHER WORDS, AHLERS SAID, THE FRENCH WANTED "MONEY, MONEY, MONEY".

7. DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE AND ITS

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IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WEST WAS THE MOST HEATED PART OF THE CONVERSATIONS. CAUTIONING THAT WHAT HE WAS ABOUT TO SAY MUST BE TREATED AS A STATE SECRET, PARTICULARLY AS IT CONCERNED THE BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES OF THE CHANCELLOR, AHLERS SAID THAT DE GAULLE'S TREATMENT OF THE CHANCELLOR HAD BEEN SO BRUTAL THAT KIESINGER, WHO IS KNOWN FOR HIS PERSONAL CHARM TO VISITORS, SEVERAL TIMES LOST HIS COMPOSURE. WHEN DE GAULLE ACCUSED THE GERMANS OF HAVING BROUGHT ABOUT SOVIET INTERVENTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, FOR INSTANCE, KIESINGER BECAME FURIOUS AND TOLD DE GAULLE THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN A WEST GERMAN BUT A FRENCH HEAD OF STATE WHO HAD VISITED POLAND AND RUMANIA AND WHO HAD CALLED UPON THE PEOPLE OF EASTERN EUROPE TO THROW OFF THE YOKE OF SOVIET HEGEMONY.

8. IN THEIR TALKS WITH BOTH KIESINGER AND BRANDT, THE FRENCH ECHOED ALMOST WORD FOR WORD THE SOVIET ARGUMENT ON EVENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE, PARTICULARLY THAT WEST GERMANY HAD BEEN TO BLAME SINCE THE SOVIETS HAD SEEN THAT WEST GERMANY WAS ABOUT TO DRAW CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN-

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TO ITS ECONOMIC SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. EVEN BEFORE THE FRENCH VISIT, AHLERS SAID, THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT HAD HEARD THAT FRENCH DIPLOMATS IN MANY COUNTRIES HAD BEEN SAYING TO ALMOST ANYONE WHO WOULD LISTEN THAT SOVIET INTERVENTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA WAS UNDERSTANDABLE SINCE GERMAN INDUSTRY WAS UNDERTAKING A MAJOR COMMERCIAL OFFENSIVE IN EASTERN EUROPE. THE FRENCH MADE IT CLEAR IN THEIR TALKS IN BONN THAT IF THE GERMANS HOPED FOR FURTHER FRENCH SUPPORT ON RELATIONS WITH THE EAST, THEY WOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR IT IN THE FORM OF LIBERAL GERMAN SUPPORT OF THE FRENCH ECONOMY.

9. DE GAULLE ALSO CRITICIZED THE GERMANS FOR ALWAYS BEING WORRIED ABOUT A CHANGE IN THE MILITARY BALANCE OF POWER. WHEN HE TOLD KIESINGER THAT THE WEST GERMANS SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES WHETHER THEY WERE NOT PERHAPS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EVENTS OF 21 AUGUST IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE CHANCELLOR TURNED CHALKY WHITE. THEN DE GAULLE ADDED WHAT FOR THE CHANCELLOR WAS THE LAST STRAW BY SAYING THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO ASSUME THE SOVIETS HAD ANY INTENTION TO COMMIT AGGRESSION AND THAT THE WEST GERMAN DEMAND FOR A STRENGTHENING OF NATO WAS EXAGGERATED. AT THIS POINT THE CHANCELLOR EXPLODED AND TOLD DE GAULLE THAT TWICE THE GERMANS HAD DEFEATED FRANCE AND ADVANCED TO THE ATLANTIC COAST. NEITHER TIME

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HAD THE GERMAN FORCES BEEN AS STRONG AS THE SOVIETS WERE NOW. OF COURSE, IF THE SOVIET ARMIES INTENDED TO DO SO, THEY COULD OVERRUN GERMANY IN 24 HOURS, KIESINGER SAID, BUT HE TOLD DE GAULLE NOT TO FORGET THAT THEY WOULD NOT STOP AT THE RHINE. IF THE GERMAN ARMIES OVERRAN FRANCE IN A SHORT TIME, THIS WOULD LOOK SLOW IN COMPARISON TO THE AMOUNT OF TIME IT WOULD TAKE THE SOVIETS. "THEN," SAID THE CHANCELLOR, "YOU WILL HAVE THE EUROPE YOU HAVE DREAMED OF, A EUROPE FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE URALS, BUT IT WILL BE UNDER SOVIET CONTROL".

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10. AS FAR AS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE TALKS FOR GERMANY'S EASTERN POLICY IS CONCERNED, AHLERS STRESSED THAT GERMANY MUST EXPECT NO FURTHER JOINT FRANCO-GERMAN COOPERATION. ONCE THE FRENCH FEEL THAT THEIR OWN POLICY IN EASTERN EUROPE IS ENDANGERED, THEY WILL MAKE NO MOVE TO SUPPORT THAT OF THE WEST GERMANS. IT MUST ALSO BE EXPECTED THAT FRANCE, IN AN EFFORT TO FURTHER HER OWN INTERESTS IN EASTERN EUROPE, WILL ATTEMPT TO CAST GERMANY IN A BAD LIGHT AND BLAME GERMANY FOR THE FRENCH LACK OF SUCCESS IN THAT

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AREA. DURING BRANDT'S TALKS WITH DEBRE AND KIESINGER'S CONVERSATIONS WITH DE GAULLE, THE FRENCH CRITICIZED THE GERMANS FOR HAVING FAILED TO SETTLE THE QUESTIONS OF THE ODER-NEISSE BOUNDARY OR THE MUNICH AGREEMENT AND FOR NOT HAVING MADE MORE PROGRESS TOWARD RENUNCIATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS OR TOWARD SIGNING THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY. FROM THESE CONVERSATIONS, AHLERS SAID, BOTH KIESINGER AND BRANDT HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE HAD NOW BEEN A BREAK IN THE SOLIDARITY WHICH PREVIOUSLY EXISTED BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY. A GREAT CHANGE IS TAKING PLACE IN FRENCH POLICY, AHLERS SAID, AND IT WILL IN FUTURE BE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM THE WEST GERMAN. DE GAULLE EVEN TOLD THE CHANCELLOR, AHLERS SAID, THAT FROM NOW ON THE FRENCH ARE LOOKING OUT ONLY FOR FRANCE. IN THE FACE OF ALL THIS, GERMANY MUST STEER A VERY CAREFUL COURSE. DE GAULLE MADE IT BRUTALLY CLEAR THAT IF THE WEST GERMANS WERE NOT FOR FRANCE, THEN THEY MUST BE AGAINST HER. MUCH OF THE BASIS OF THE FRENCH ATTITUDE, AHLERS SAID, CAN BE FOUND IN FRENCH ENVY OF WEST GERMAN ECONOMIC POTENTIAL AND JEALOUSY OF THE SUCCESS THE WEST GERMANS HAVE HAD IN ADVANCING THEIR ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE COUNTRIES OF EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE. THE GERMANS HAVE IN MANY CASES TAKEN OVER THE POSITION PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED BY FRANCE. IN ANY CASE,

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AHLERS SAID, ANY HOPE THAT HAD EXISTED FOR A JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY IN EASTERN EUROPE MUST BE REGARDED AS DEAD AND BURIED.

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11. [Redacted]

AHLERS HAD ALSO SPOKEN

OF DE GAULLE'S COMMENTS TO THE CHANCELLOR ON UNITED STATES POLICY. ALTHOUGH NOT MUCH OF THE TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS HAD CONCERNED THE UNITED STATES, DE GAULLE TOLD KIESINGER AT ONE POINT THAT NOTHING COULD REALLY BE DONE UNTIL AFTER THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. DEGAULLE SAID HE EXPECTS THE NEW PRESIDENT TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM AND THEN GO TO MOSCOW. DE GAULLE SAID THAT IF EUROPE DOESN'T HURRY, THERE WILL BE AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW WHICH WILL LEAVE EUROPE OUT IN THE COLD.)

12. [Redacted]

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