

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENT

July 21, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR CHARLES HILL
Executive Secretary
Department of State

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation of British Foreign
Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe

Attached is the memorandum of conversation from the President's
meeting with British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe on
July 14.

Robert M. Kimmitt
Robert M. Kimmitt
Executive Secretary

Tab A Memcon

CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENT
Declassify on: OADR

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Summary of the President's Meeting with British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Secretary Shultz
Secretary Weinberger
Edwin Meese
William P. Clark
Robert C. McFarlane
Assistant Secretary Burt
Peter R. Sommer

Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe
Ambassador Oliver Wright
Anthony Acland, Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign Office
Brian Fall, Howe's Private Secretary

DATE, TIME July 14, 1983
AND PLACE: 3:30-4:00 p.m. Oval Office

In welcoming Foreign Secretary Howe, The President underlined how pleased we were with the British election results. Mrs. Thatcher's victory had truly been overwhelming. It represents, the President said, a welcomed shot in the arm to the West. (U)

Foreign Secretary Howe thanked the President for his remarks on behalf of Mrs. Thatcher and himself and noted that the British were encouraged by the election trends in Europe. He cited Kohl's victory as especially gratifying. (U)

The President replied that we are as pleased as you, both with the British and German election results. According to all reports we have received--including one from Foreign Minister Genscher earlier this week--Kohl was unyielding in Moscow. Unity and firmness is what we need. Kohl's stance may, however, have surprised the Soviets. But it should help convince them that they cannot divide us. (C)

Foreign Secretary Howe said that Genscher gave the same message to the EC Foreign Ministers last week. The German stance was helpful and should encourage the Soviets to believe that we mean what we say. (C)

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BY RW NARA DATE 11/3/11

The President praised British defense spending efforts and noted that Britain's recent recommitment to a significant real term increase was most welcome. He jokingly said that he personally did not favor such large U.S. increases, but Secretary Weinberger always insists on them. In a serious tone, he underlined his constant battle with Congress over spending levels for defense. Congress, added the President, tends to treat the defense budget as a kind of piggy bank that can be robbed for pet projects. He is doing his best, he emphasized, to cure Congress of this misperception. (C)

In thanking the President for his remarks, Foreign Secretary Howe said as Exchequer it has always been his task--which was not an easy one--to find the money for the increases in defense spending. These increases amount to 17 percent over 4 years. This had been the first election in which he has been involved that defense and foreign issues were at the forefront. The election results represent an endorsement of the need for a strong defense. The results also represent, continued Howe, an endorsement of the need to make progress on arms control. The general public is concerned about tensions in the nuclear age. (C)

The President replied that some seem to doubt his commitment to arms reductions, but he has never been more serious about anything in his life. The world will not support countries always pointing all these powerful weapons at each other. I can't help feeling, he continued, that if we could just get on the path to reductions that the Soviets would see the wisdom of deep reductions. (C)

Foreign Secretary Howe agreed on the need to get the Soviets to shift their emphasis, and underscored that remaining firm on INF deployments was essential toward bringing the Soviets around. Turning briefly to the Middle East, Howe said he had come to his job with a clean sheet on the area. The problems are enormous. All the parties know what they want, but unfortunately what they want is not the same. (C)

In recalling an explanation of the Middle East that he had once heard, The President asked the Foreign Secretary to permit him to digress for a moment. There was, he said, a frog and a scorpion, both of whom wanted to cross a stream. However the scorpion bit the frog and hence they both died. When someone asked the scorpion why he did it, he simply replied: because this is the Middle East. (U)

Foreign Secretary Howe commented that he had been encouraged by yesterday's vote in the British Parliament. On the same day that four more British soldiers were brutally killed in Northern Ireland, Parliament had rejected capital punishment.

At one stage he thought he might have to return to cast a key vote, but was pleased that this proved not to be necessary. Moderation had won by a large majority. Howe continued that Britain was grateful for all the U.S. has done to crack down on the supplies of arms. (C)

The President praised both the current Irish Ambassador, and his predecessor, for pleading with the American-Irish community not to support the IRA. Their pleas have played a major role in helping stem the flow of money and arms in support of violence. (U)

In noting that he and the Foreign Secretary had discussed Central America, Secretary Shultz suggested that the President--knowing his strong feelings--also say a few words. (U)

The President characterized Central America as one of our historical failures. It is a shame, he said, that the U.S. has come this far in our history without establishing a proper relationship with the area. Despite good intentions, the U.S. approach has sometimes been insensitive. In the past we have forgotten on occasion our weight: that we are the colossus of the north. But I am determined, he underlined, to set us on the right course. We seek a better long-term relationship. But this is not easy when you have countries like Nicaragua that have violated the original promises of its revolution. The U.S. recognized Somoza's many faults and stood back when he was being ousted. Indeed we cooperated in the OAS effort which asked Somoza to step down. But now the ruling junta has broken its promises for a free press and early free elections. The so-called Contras, who were part of the original revolution and who were subsequently pushed out by hard-core communists, are fighting for the restoration of the original promises. They deserve our support and help. Moreover, the junta is being aided, particularly with weapons, by the Soviet-Cuban axis. Many of the weapons captured for the guerrillas in El Salvador turn out to be weapons of American origin that come to Central America via the communist net from Vietnam. For the U.S. this adds insult to injury. I am pleased to note, he continued, that a number of Congressmen who recently went to the region as doubters, have returned convinced of our cause. Strong remarks from one of the Sandinista leaders helped turn our Congressmen around. The Sandinista leader said their revolution was aimed not just at their country, but at all of Central America. Before long, he reportedly said, you will see us on the Arizona and New Mexico borders. The President added that he hoped this was more boastful than prophetic. (C)

Foreign Secretary Howe replied that he had reviewed Central America in some detail with Vice President Bush in London and with Secretary Shultz in Washington. He simply wanted to say to

the President that Britain shares U.S. concerns and objectives. He also emphasized that we all need to do a much better job of getting across to the public what is actually happening in the area. We also need to heighten our efforts to explain our policies. Britain, he continued, of course has its own special interests in Belize. (C)

The President quickly interjected that he hoped Britain would delay withdrawing its forces. We know keeping them there is a financial burden, but their presence enhances regional stability. (C)

In saying that he expected the President to mention British forces when he heard the name Belize, Foreign Secretary Howe replied that keeping forces in what is now a sovereign nation poses great difficulties for Britain. He continued that Britain intended to withdraw its forces. (Comment: he stopped short of saying precisely when they would be withdrawn). Howe then briefly turned to East-West economic relations. He emphasized the overall commonality of our views. Britain favors, he said, non-subsidized commerce with the Soviet bloc. Britain shares U.S. concerns, continued Howe, over the transfer of sensitive military technology to the East. It makes no sense to arm our enemies, and we look forward to continued close cooperation within COCOM. In suggesting that he did not expect a reply, Howe indicated he had an obligation to cite a few bilateral issues. Britain must defend its corner. He then quickly listed the Export Control Act, unitary tax, and speciality steel as bilateral problems. While our policies normally converge, we can not expect, he continued, to see eye to eye on every issue. It is normal that there is not always sweetness and light. The EC will address speciality steel next Monday and will then take its case to the GATT. In noting that Secretary Shultz had said earlier in the day that this was an appropriate vehicle, Howe praised what he called the Shultz Doctrine. That is, positive solution can be reached through negotiations and discussions. It is always better, he continued, to talk things out. (C)

The meeting concluded with an exchange of friendly stories about the Queen's visit to California and the Williamsburg Summit. In discussing Williamsburg, Foreign Secretary Howe praised its success. It did a lot, he said, to consolidate Western opinion. There were many more agreements than disagreements. But there were a few rough moments. (U)

The President agreed and noted that there had been some last minute backtracking by one or two concerning the statement on security. A few even raised their voices in the ensuing discussion. But the end result had been a positive statement on security. Prime Minister Thatcher, he underlined, had played an instrumental role in assuring that there was a positive statement. (C)

The meeting concluded at 4:00 p.m.

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ACTION

July 18, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR WILLIAM P. CLARK

FROM: PETER R. SOMMER *PRS*

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation between the President and British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe

Attached at Tab I for your approval is a Memorandum of Conversation of the President's meeting on Thursday, July 14, with British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe.

At Tab II is a memorandum from Bob Kimmitt to State forwarding a copy of the memcon for their information.

RECOMMENDATION

That you approve the Memorandum of Conversation at Tab I.

Approve *J* Disapprove _____

That you authorize Bob Kimmitt to forward the memcon (Tab II) to Charles Hill

Approve *J* Disapprove _____

- Tab I Memcon
- Tab II Kimmitt to Hill Memo

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 28, 1997
By *dlb* NARA, Date *11/4/06*