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PRESS AND INFORMATION

FEBRUARY 23, 1969 TELEX NO: 113

COMEUR BRU
M. NARJES, DIRECTEUR GENERAL, D.G. X

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A TOUS LES CABINET,
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Feb. 23, 1969

URGENT

ON THE DAY OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S DEPARTURE FOR BRUSSELS THE VIEWS OF THE U.S. SUNDAY PRESS, CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

THE HOPE OF EUROPEAN UNITY IS DIMINISHED, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE UNITED STATES REASSERT AMERICAN INTEREST IN EUROPE AFTER YEARS OF NEGLECT. NIXON'S TRIP TO EUROPE IS SEEN AS A "GESTURE" AND AS AN ACT OF NECESSARY CONSULTATION WITH THE EUROPEAN ALLIES IN VIEW OF THE "FAR-RANGING" NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION WHICH THE PRESIDENT IS EAGER TO LAUNCH. THE TRIP COULD PRODUCE AT BEST A NEW CLIMATE OF CORDIALITY AND CONFIDENCE BUT NOT SUBSTANTIVE RESULTS IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE MAJOR PROBLEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION WILL BE DISCUSSED AND THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL LISTEN CAREFULLY TO ALL EUROPEAN VIEWS OF EACH ONE OF THESE PROBLEMS.

THE PRESIDENT MADE HIS VIEWS KNOWN IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESS HELD ON FRIDAY NIGHT THE CONTENT WAS MADE PUBLIC ONLY ON SATURDAY NIGHT. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE EXPECTED TO DISCUSS "ALL BILATERAL MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE WHICH THE OTHER ELEMENT MAY WANT TO BRING UP" AND ALSO "MULTILATERAL MATTERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE INVOLVING THE ALLIANCE AND OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES IN EUROPE". HE ADDED THAT HE WAS EAGER TO DISCUSS MATTERS ON WHICH THE U.S. ALONE MUST MAKE DECISIONS BUT

WHICH CAN AFFECT THE PEACE OF THE WORLD AND ON WHICH "THE BEST ADVICE OF THE EUROPEAN LEADERS... CAN MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THINKING AS TO HOW A PROBLEM COULD BE SOLVED". THE PRESIDENT INDICATED THAT THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD HAVE "HIGH PRIORITY" IN HIS AGENDA, "BECAUSE AFTER WE COMPLETE THE TRIP... IT SEEMS TO ME APPROPRIATE FOR THE U.S. TO MAKE A DETERMINATION AS TO HOW TALKS SHOULD GO FORWARD ON THE MIDEAST". HE SAID THAT TRADE AND MONETARY MATTERS WOULD ALSO BE DISCUSSED. IN HIS FINAL REMARKS HE EMPHASIZED THE FACT THAT "THE UNITED STATES INTEREST IN AND U.S. SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN-EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP ... HAS NEVER BEEN MORE NEEDED IF WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A PEACEFUL WORLD" AND THAT "THERE WILL BE A NEW ERA OF CONSULTATION SEMICOLON I MEAN REAL GIVE-AND-TAKE CONSULTATION".

HOWEVER MANY COMMENTATORS ARE SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE MEANINGFULNESS OF SUCH CONSULTATION AT THE PRESENT TIME. JAMES RESTON IN THE NEW YORK TIMES SUNDAY EDITION WROTE THAT "NIXON WILL UNDOUBTEDLY EXPRESS HIS RESPECT FOR THE EUROPEAN TRADITION OF THE PAST AND HIS HOPES FOR AN AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP WITH EUROPE IN THE FUTURE BUT HE HAS THREE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS (ARMS CONTROL, THE MIDDLE EAST AND VIETNAM) WHICH DEPEND MORE ON MOSCOW THAN ON PARIS, LONDON AND THE OTHER EUROPEAN CAPITALS.... THE HOPE OF EUROPEAN UNITY HAS DIMINISHED IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS IN WASHINGTON.... AND A DISUNITED EUROPE MUST REALIZE THAT THE ANSWER TO THESE PROBLEMS LIES NOT IN EUROPE BUT IN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW".

IN AN ADVANCED REPORT FROM BRUSSELS TWO WASHINGTON POST WRITERS SAID THAT "THE SOUND OF DISCORD IN MAJOR EUROPEAN CAPITALS HAVE REACHED THEIR MOST STRIDENT PITCH IN TWO DECADES...AS FOR THE PROBLEMS OF THE COMMON MARKET, NIXON WILL MEET A GROUP OF FRUSTRATED MEN WHEN HE MEETS FOR ABOUT AN HOUR ON MONDAY WITH PRESIDENT REY AND OTHER MEMBERS OF ITS SUPRANATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMISSION...AFTER QUOTING THE "EXTRAORDINARY STATEMENT" ON THE "GENERAL DETERIORATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE" RELEASED BY THE COMMISSION IN ITS 1968 ANNUAL REPORT, THE ARTICLE SAID THAT THE COMMUNITY "IS NO LONGER AN UNMIXED BLESSING FOR THE U.S. INTERESTS. THERE IS, IN FACT, MUTUAL SUSPICION BETWEEN BRUSSELS AND WASHINGTON AT LEAST WHERE TRADE PROBLEMS ARE CONCERNED". THE ARTICLES QUOTED THE PROPOSED EUROPEAN TAX ON FATS AND OILS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF NEW AMERICAN CURBS ON AMERICAN TEXTILE IMPORTS AS TWO MAJOR PENDING ISSUES. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL, COMMENTING ON "EARLIER AMERICAN IDEALISM ABOUT THE COMMON MARKET", EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT "WE HAVE GONE FAR ENOUGH TO MAKE IT WORTHWHILE TO MAINTAIN WHAT WE HAVE, BUT NOT FAR ENOUGH TO BE CERTAIN THAT WE CAN MAINTAIN IT". COMMENTING ON THIS STATEMENT THE AUTHORS OF THE ARTICLE WROTE THAT "THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION MIGHT ACCEPT SUCH FRICTIONS ON THE COMMERCIAL FRONT AS THE PRICE FOR A POLITICALLY MORE COHESIVE EUROPE IF THE COMMON MARKET WERE CONTRIBUTING TO SUCH A COHESION". BUT, INSTEAD OF THAT, THE COMMON MARKET "HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY THE ARENA FOR INTERNECINE POWER PLAYS SINCE DE GAULLE'S FIRST VETO OF BRITISH ENTRY IN 1963".

ACCORDING TO CHALMERS ROBERTS OF THE WASHINGTON POST, DISCREET CONTACTS HAVE BEEN TAKING PLACE IN THE PAST WEEKS BETWEEN PARIS AND WASHINGTON LEADING TO A TACIT AGREEMENT THAT THE PROBLEM OF BRITISH MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMON MARKET WOULD NOT BE RAISED DURING NIXON'S VISIT TO PARIS.

BOTH ROBERTS AND JAMES RESTON NOTE THE "STRANGE FASCINATION" WHICH NIXON AND DE GAULLE HAVE FOR EACH OTHER. ACCORDING TO MR. ROBERTS, THIS MAY BE A HELPFUL INGREDIENT IN THE TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO STATESMEN. HOWEVER MOST OBSERVERS HERE ARE VERY CAUTIOUS IN JUDGING THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE MEETING MAY BRING ABOUT AN ACTUAL IMPROVEMENT IN FRENCH-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

ALREADY THE QUARREL BETWEEN FRANCE ON ONE SIDE AND HER COMMON MARKET PARTNERS AND GREAT BRITAIN ON THE OTHER SIDE OVER POLITICAL CONSULTATION IN THE WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION HAD CAUSED DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION. THE "SOAMES AFFAIR" IS NOW CAUSING SERIOUS CONCERN AS A POSSIBLE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PRESIDENT'S MISSION. THE NEW YORK TIMES QUOTED AMERICAN OFFICIALS AS FEARING THAT THE FRENCH PROPOSAL "REPRESENTS SUCH AN OBVIOUS CHALLENGE TO THE POSTWAR PLANS FOR AN ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP BASED ON THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE, THE COMMON MARKET AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL UNITY, THAT MR. NIXON MAY FEEL COMPELLED TO OPPOSE IT AND THUS DAMAGE HIS CAREFULLY CULTIVATED POSITION OF NEUTRALITY TOWARD EUROPE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS". HOWEVER THE SAME ARTICLE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES SAID THAT THE WHITE HOUSE INSISTED PRIVATELY TODAY THAT NIXON WAS LIKELY TO REMAIN SILENT OR AT LEAST PUBLICLY NONCOMMITTAL ABOUT THE DE GAULLE PROPOSAL. ACCORDING TO JAMES RESTON, THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH PROPOSAL ON THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION WAS EVEN GREATER THAN IT WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN, BECAUSE NIXON AND HIS AIDES ARE CONVINCED THAT "GENERAL DE GAULLE LEAVES VERY LITTLE TO ACCIDENT" AND THAT HIS ACTION WAS DELIBERATE. "PRESIDENT NIXON ADMIRES HIM (DE GAULLE) AND THEREFORE HE HAS TO WONDER WHY THE FRENCH PRESIDENT (DID IT)... PRECISELY ON THE EVE OF A VISIT BY THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT. THE WHITE HOUSE IS EQUALLY IRRITATED WITH THE BRITISH FOR DRAMATIZING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PARIS AND LONDON, AND THE EFFECT OF THIS PUBLIC SQUABBLE IN EUROPE HAS BEEN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT HERE IN WASHINGTON. IT HAS MADE OFFICIALS TURN AWAY FROM THEIR HOPES OF REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE EUROPEANS TO THE PROBLEM OF TRYING TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE RUSSIANS'

THE NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT FROM LONDON WROTE THAT "THE IMPLICATION OF ALL THIS FOR MR. NIXON WAS THAT THERE PROBABLY IS NO BUSINESS TO BE DONE WITH PRESIDENT DE GAULLE ON THE SUBJECT OF EUROPEAN UNIFICATION. AS LONG AS THE GENERAL REIGNS, WESTERN EUROPE WILL REMAIN DIVIDED AND WEAK.... ALL (EUROPEANS) WILL BE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED THAT MR. NIXON NOT IDENTIFY WITH GENERAL DE GAULLES NATIONALIST POLICY. FRANCE WILL BE LOOKING FOR SOME FRESH TOKEN OF SPECIAL REGARD. IF THE PRESIDENT CAN SQUARE THAT CIRCLE, HE WILL BE OFF TO A MIRACULOUS START IN RELATIONS WITH EUROPE".

AS ANOTHER COMMENTATOR PUT IT, "NIXON IS GOING TO LISTEN PARTLY BECAUSE HE DOES NOT YET HAVE MUCH TO SAY TO THE ALLIES AND HE IS GOING TO LISTEN BECAUSE HE IS CONVINCED THAT SUCH FLATTERY OF OFTENNEGLECTED PARTNERS CAN BEST REASSERT AMERICAN INTEREST AND INFLUENCE IN EUROPE" WE WILL SEND YOU A SELECTION OF PRESS CLIPPINGS AND ADDITIONAL COMMENTS TOMORROW MONDAY.

REGARDS,

WASHINGTON BUREAU PRESS AND INFORMATION

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