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Cable, 'India Visit by the Federal Chancellor'

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Summary:

Description of Federal Chancellor Kiesinger's visit to India, summarizing the issues he discusses with Indira Gandhi during his stay there. First, Kiesinger explains the position of West Germany regarding the Vietnam War, issues in the Middle East, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and German trade with China. Indira Gandhi then raises a number of issues, including German-Indian relations, India's conflicts with Pakistan and China, India's current domestic problems, and a concluding hope that West Germany and India can deepen relations.

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RE: India Visit by the Federal Chancellor [Dr. Kurt Georg Kiesinger]
Reference: Telex No. 914 from 21 November

I. Yesterday's conclusion of the official visit [20-22 November 1967] by the federal chancellor went along in an open and extremely good atmosphere. Protocols and the ceremonial course went without any problems and according to the program as planned (special emphasis: Honorary doctorate by University of Delhi, reception by citizens' assembly and press conference; speech texts of the chancellor provided for these events and for state banquets were particularly well received).

The federal chancellor met twice with Indira Gandhi in private for shorter talks. There was a plenary session with both delegations on the first day (about 2 hours) and the second day (about 30 minutes).

II. On private talks between the federal chancellor and Indira Gandhi, we reserve the right to file a separate report.

III. During talks with the delegations, both sides expressed their positions on current issues of global policy. They mutually explained to each other their policies in order to solve the special problems of their respective country. The exchange of opinions was characterized by efforts to make respective positions clear to the other side. They were also moved by the desire to better understand positions held by the other side. During the conversation, both partners were extremely scrupulous to avoid even the slightest impression of harboring any intentions to impose their own positions on the other side. When problems were touched upon where both sides held different opinions, each side explained its concerns and asked for understanding of respectively held positions-without explicitly asking for a comment from the other side.

IV. In detail, the following issues were raised, in part by both sides, in part just by one side:

1) Jointly discussed issues

a) Vietnam

The federal chancellor expressed the dangerousness of this conflict spot in Asia and voiced his hope for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in due time.

Indira Gandhi called the cessation of American bombing attacks as the first indispensable step to end the hostilities. In Indian opinion, Ho Chi Minh is basically anti-Chinese. This position is currently clouded by an understandable anti-Americanism. There are many indications that he would steer a course independent from China if there was no American intervention; he would remain a communist, but rather of the Yugoslav type. Besides, claiming that the Vietnam War is about the protection of Asia from China is wrong-since there are no Chinese units involved in combat.

b) Middle East

The federal chancellor explained the pro-Israeli emotional attitude of the German population as a positive expression of guilty feelings by the German people for the injustice committed against the Jews. The Federal Government itself maintained strict neutrality in the conflict. It is interested in a resumption of relations with the Arab countries.

Indira Gandhi recognized and understood the position of the German people and the Federal Government. She defined the conflict in the Middle East as still dangerous. A lasting peace is only possible without outside intervention and without any humiliation of parties involved. India has been hit extremely hard by the closing of the Suez Canal [as a result of the 1967 War]. It recognizes Israel's right to exist, but it is supporting [Egyptian President Gamal Abdel] Nasser. From the Indian perspective he is not only a progressive Arab statesman who currently also exerts some moderating influence; moreover, he is, like India, a convinced supporter of a secular state. This issue is of special importance to India since it has 50 millions of Muslims in its own country.

c) Non-Proliferation Treaty

In a brief exchange about the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the federal chancellor emphasized that the Federal Government is against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, though it is the only state in the world that has formally waived its right of producing them. In the currently discussed Non-Proliferation Treaty, however, German interests have to be properly addressed, including protection from nuclear blackmail.

Indira Gandhi opted for the principle of general disarmament. She called the current draft of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as not acceptable for India in its current form, in particular with regard to the nuclear threat emanating from China.

We agreed to continue our formal exchange of opinions like before despite our different situation and interests.

d) German Trade with China

Responding to a question by Indira Gandhi, the federal chancellor explained that German trade with China is conducted on a private basis. There exists no government agreement with China and currently the Federal Government has no intention to formalize these trade relations.

The development in China is, however, of great importance for all of us. It is one of the subjects where an ongoing exchange of opinions would be useful to both sides.

e) Consultations

The subsequent suggestion by the federal chancellor to arrange annual consultations was instantly accepted by Indira Gandhi without further discussion.

[...]

2) Issues Raised by Indira Gandhi

a) German-Indian Relations

As an introduction, Indira Gandhi provided a positive historical survey of the development of German-Indian relations after the war. She praised German contributions to India's development in the cultural and, especially, in the economic field. She also made positive statements about the German policy of détente and peace. The Indian government considers itself close to the Federal Government on the issue of preserving the peace, also on the commitment to freedom and democracy.

b) India's Situation

Then Indira Gandhi gave an overview about the most important current problems of India: Explosive increase of population, drought and food shortage, aggression by Pakistan and China, and subsequently required increases of arms spending.

Given the expected good harvest this year, prospects for economic development are to be assessed more optimistically.

c) Relations with Pakistan

As expected, the discussion of these questions occupied a major part of the meeting. Indira Gandhi explained that the Indian government has the same attitude towards Pakistan as the Federal Government towards Eastern Europe and also towards East Berlin. She is attempting to conduct talks about practical issues of cooperation in order to improve the atmosphere-and then being able to address the actual problems (Kashmir). Unfortunately, reactions from Pakistan have so far been unsatisfactory. India has recognized Pakistan as a state in spite of continuously existing close personal ties between all classes of the population in both parts of the country. Differently sounding accusations by Pakistan against India are unjustified. Time and again, Pakistan attempts to create problems through interference in internal affairs (support for disgruntled elements and for religious and other minorities). India remains willing to solve its problems with Pakistan in a peaceful manner. Yet it is determined to rebut any attack against its integrity and the secular foundations of the Indian state. In the interest of a peaceful settlement, the Indian government is refraining from any attempt to bolster the disgruntled elements, which do exist in Pakistan as well.

d) Relations with China

As the continuing border incidents demonstrate, India suffers from special threats by China. China's aggressive policy becomes additionally dangerous through its collusion with Pakistan. China, as well, is interfering in India's internal matters among others with the support of the China-loyalist Indian leftist communists. The development in China is unpredictable. It forces India to spend on costly armaments, which in turn threaten India's rapid economic development. However, the door to negotiations with China continues to remain open.

e) Relations with other countries of Southeast Asia and Japan

Indira Gandhi defined good relations with other countries in Southeast Asia, and in particular with other neighbors of India. Her government devotes special attention to cultivating relations with Japan, which she intends to visit soon.

3) Exchange of Opinions at the Final Meeting

The final meeting was held in an especially friendly atmosphere. The joint

communiqué was approved (submitted already by Telex No. 914 on 21 November). Both heads of the government expressed their sincere satisfaction with the course of their private meeting. The federal chancellor invited Indira Gandhi to visit the Federal Republic, which Indira Gandhi accepted with appreciation.

[...]

IX. Final Assessment

The successful visit has contributed to the deepening of German-Indian relations. There is no doubt that the privately established contacts on the highest level (as it became especially apparent at the event hosted in return by the federal chancellor for the second evening) will prove fruitful for the cultivation of mutual relations. The agreement to hold annual consultations can be expanded into an important instrument for the development of future relations. With this first visit by a German federal chancellor, the German presence in India was effectively highlighted. Talks with relevant Indian individuals confirm this assessment without any reservations.

[Signed] Mirbach