

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF  
RONALD H. NESSEN  
PRESS SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
HELMUT SONNENFELDT, COUNSELOR  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE BRIEFING ROOM

11:17 A.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: We have a lot of stuff today, so let's get organized. We have to go on a trip, too.

First of all, let's welcome some visitors we have with us from Norway who are here to cover the visit of their king with President Ford.

Second, let Judy hand you out an announcement here and give yourself a moment to absorb it.

Q Is it a trip announcement, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Which trip?

Q Paris.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q There are others?

Q Will he go anywhere else but Paris?

MR. NESSEN: In anticipation of your questions on the Paris trip, I have asked Hal Sonnenfeldt to come over and join us today. You know Hal from the State Department. Why don't we clean up all the Paris trip questions first with Hal.

Q On what basis is he speaking on the record?

MR. NESSEN: He is speaking on the record as Hal Sonnenfeldt. Arent you?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Unless I say different.

MR. NESSEN: Just regular briefing rules.

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Q The number is six here. Is it supposed to be seven with Canada?

MR. SONNENFELDT: I don't know that it was supposed to be anything, but our view is that Canada should participate in the meetings. It is our understanding that there is considerable sentiment in support of Canadian participation among the others as well.

There will be further contact on that question, and it is our anticipation that Canada will participate in the meeting.

Q Is this the first of a series?

MR. SONNENFELDT: It is our expectation that they will, yes.

Q You said Canada will participate?

MR. SONNENFELDT: It is our expectation that Canada will participate.

Q In this meeting?

MR. SONNENFELDT: In this meeting.

Q What was your answer to that question?

Q Is this going to be the first of a series? Is this going to be a regular thing?

MR. SONNENFELDT: That is entirely up to the decision of the leaders when they meet in November. What particular follow-on arrangements might be made after that meeting, that is entirely open.

Q Hal, does that basic inspiration come from Helmut Schmidt of West Germany for this meeting?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Well, there are several inspirations. The French President had, of course, at an earlier time made suggestions for a summit level discussion. The German Chancellor has favored it.

I think this particular idea now, as it has emerged and as it is described in the statement in front of you, is really a joint initiative of everyone.

Q Well, is it going to be all in Paris?

MR. SONNENFELDT: No. Let me say in clarification that it is not at all certain that it will be in Paris. I pointed out to you that the announcement stresses the informality of the proposed meeting, and I believe the French President as the host has in mind some other locality other than Paris in order to insure both the informality and the intensity of the discussion with a minimum of protocol and the other paraphernalia that one would have if one were in a capital.

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Q How about other countries? Will the President go to other countries?

MR. SONNENFELDT: That I have no information on at all at the moment.

Q Are they going to try to reach ~~some~~ concrete agreement or is this just an academic sort of discussion?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Well, it is not the principal purpose of this meeting to reach decisions. It is not a negotiating session and it is not simply another ministerial meeting which happens to be chaired by heads of government.

It is designed for a thorough and intensive discussion at the highest level of the numerous economic and political economic problems that all our countries face separately and together. And, therefore, I would not look for sepcific decisions coming out of this meeting, but the emphasis will be on the freest and fullest possible discussion with the expectation that as a result of that, the negotiations that are carried on in so many different forums already will be given a fresh impulse and a fresh impetus from these discussions at the top.

Q So you are saying it is going to be outside of Paris?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Is it our expectation that it will probably not be in Paris, but I think you will have to wait for an announcement from Paris exactly what the arrangement will be.

Q But it will be in France?

MR. SONNENFELDT: It will be in France, right.

Q What might these discussions ultimately lead to in terms of substantive agreements or accomplishments?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Well, I don't really want to speculate about that all that precisely. As you may know, there was a preparatory meeting which explored these kinds of questions in New York last Sunday and Monday and the general topics to be discussed were isolated there or were crystalized there.

I would prefer at the moment, not to mention those too specifically, but I think you can all recognize that the broad categories will have to do with how our domestic economies are doing and how they interact with each other, the various issues in the international economic sphere, trade, monetary regulations, energy problems and regulations with less developed countries.

So all of these will have a thorough discussion, and I think it will really depend to some degree on the status of negotiations that are already in progress where some nudge and some impulse might be given from these talks.

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Q Will the President be going to other places other than France?

MR. SONNENFELDT: That is the question that was asked, and I have no information on that at all at this moment.

Q What was the question?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Whether he will go to some other place other than France.

Q Who will be going with the President?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Well, the full entourage obviously will be decided at the time. The general understanding of the governments concerned is that the sessions will be as small as possible in order to allow as much freedom of discussion as possible.

I think it is contemplated now that there will not be more than two people present in addition to each head in any given session. And I think in our case that will be the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Treasury.

Q Let me try and ask my question in a different way. What is the advantage over the long term to the Americans, the average Americans and the dollar to have the U.S. President participate in this sort of discussion?

In other words, what ultimate advantage can the public expect to have President Ford go to this meeting, meet with these other heads of state, and how will it ultimately benefit the U.S. economy?

MR. SONNENFELDT: I think I would have to say that in general terms, the fundamental premise of this meeting is that there is a high degree of interdependence between the economies of the countries involved and, indeed, many other countries as well, but these are the principal industrialized countries.

There is a high degree of interaction. Some of those interactions can be injurious, others, if they are properly managed, can be quite helpful, and obviously the emphasis here will be on making those interactions between our several economies and our regulations in the economic sphere as cooperative and as beneficial as possible.

That will be the point of emphasis, and that was really quite clear. And I must say, having participated in many meetings over a period of time, that the spirit in the preparatory meeting was really extraordinarily positive in terms of seeking this kind of cooperative approach.

Q Why don't you know where this meeting is going to be?

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MR. SONNENFELDT: Because the French are the hosts and they are, frankly, looking for background. Now, they are looking at various chateaus that will be most suitable for this purpose.

Q We understand from Paris that is to keep the press away. Is that why they are going to some chateau?

MR. SONNENFELDT: I have never yet known a way to accomplish what you are saying.

Q But it is sort of odd. Don't you admit that the President is going to Europe, but you don't know where the meeting is going to be?

MR. SONNENFELDT: No, he is going to France.

Q You don't know whether he is going to stop anywhere else on the way home, and you can't really say what it is they hope to accomplish?

MR. SONNENFELDT: I don't think it is odd that he has been invited to come to France and that the French President has assured him and his colleagues that they will make very suitable arrangements, and I am sure there will be contact.

Q Was that story not just thrown together in a hurry? Is it something that was contemplated?

MR. SONNENFELDT: No, it has not been thrown together in a hurry. Let me just give you some background, but on the record.

After the discussion in Helsinki of the four, which really gave impetus to this project, each head -- which is to say, the French, the German, the British and the American head of state or government -- designated a representative to pursue the idea of the summit further. That was carried on quite intensively and, in our case, by Mr. George Shultz. In the French case by a now private gentleman named Barre and several others.

And that took several weeks to do until this meeting in New York, and which I happen to have joined Mr. Shultz on our side and some other people appeared also, and the Japanese and the Italians participated.

So this has been in preparation for some time, and there is nothing hurried about it, but the precise arrangement, I am sure the French President has in mind where he wants to do this, and I am sure there will be contacts now very quickly that since the thing has been announced, and there will be an announcement, I am quite certain in, you know, the very near future where this is going to be. I cannot tell you now what the press arrangements are going to be.

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Q We understood that the U.S. was less enthusiastic about it.

MR. SONNENFELDT: No, I think that is not the case. I think we are satisfied, and I think I can say that the President welcomes this and particularly in the manner in which this has now emerged in an informal fashion and as a broad ranging discussion of the whole series of issues and problems in the economic realm.

Q Mr. Sonnenfeldt, have you discussed this at any length with any Members of Congress?

MR. SONNENFELDT: I have not. I think there have been some informal discussions of this, but I honestly can't answer that question from my standpoint. I am sure they will.

Let me say also, I seem to be volunteering so much, that now that this is agreed in the public domain, there will be very intensive preparations in our Government which will probably occur under the direction of Bill Seidman and his economic interagency machinery, and I would expect that in the course of that, there will be the kind of consultation you are talking about.

Q Will you take any Congressional advisers along and will you take any advisers from the private sector?

MR. SONNENFELDT: That I am not in a position to tell you. I think the President will have to decide, but you have to bear in mind that there is an understanding that the meeting itself will be attended only by the small group that I have mentioned in order to keep the crowds down and really permit a full discussion.

Q Would it be wrong to suggest that there is an air of crisis about this meeting?

MR. SONNENFELDT: No, sir, there is an air of --

Q Would it not be wrong?

Q You mean it would be wrong to suggest that?

MR. SONNENFELDT: Don't give me double negatives. At the State Department I can handle those, not here.

There is not an air of crisis about it. There is, I think, an air of satisfaction that this is occurring and that political leaders, in these major countries here, of the industrialized democratic world are going to get together and talk to each other and look to the future.

Q What does the Soviet Union think about it?

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MR. SONNENFELDT: I have not the faintest idea.

Q Would it be wrong to say the French, in the preparatory stages, had put the emphasis on the monetary aspect of this meeting of the Americans on the economic issues?

MR. SONNENFELDT: No, not in the preparatory phases that I have any connection with, and I would say really not since Helsinki. There was, of course, an original Giscard proposal which concentrated on the monetary side, but I think since Helsinki, it has been broadened in the manner I described.

MR. NESSEN: You will be available to answer more questions on this?

MR. SONNENFELDT: I hope not. You are all leaving, aren't you?

Q Is the President going anywhere else?

MR. NESSEN: We have nothing to announce.

There is no filing right now until we finish the briefing.

MR. SONNENFELDT: I might just tell you this announcement is coming out simultaneously everywhere in the six capitals involved. It should be on the wires.

Q Coming out?

MR. SONNENFELDT: The embargo was 11:00.

Q Does the President's security play any part in the decision to look for a place on the chateau or hilltop or anything?

MR. SONNENFELDT: No.

Q Is George Shultz's role over?

MR. SONNENFELDT: No, I think he expects to continue as the President may ask him to participate in the preparatory work.

Q Ron, if we are a half hour past the embargo, I wonder if we could not file?

MR. NESSEN: I have got a fair amount of other stuff here, Allen.

Shall we take five minutes to file, or do you need more than five minutes?

Q Ten.

MR. NESSEN: Why don't we let the wires go and just go on with the briefing because they are double covered here. Now, do the networks want to file?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: Let's go ahead with the briefing with only the wires filing.