**Memorandum of Conversation**

Brussels, December 12, 1974, 10:45 p.m.

**PARTICIPANTS**

* ***US***
* The Secretary
* Arthur Hartman, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs Ambassador Macomber
* Wells Stabler, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs (notetaker)
* ***Turkish***
* Foreign Minister Esenbel

**SUBJECT**

* US-Turkish Bilateral Meeting, December 12, 1974

The Secretary: (Speaking into the telephone) Get me the White House. (Turning to Esenbel) I want to get an up-to-date reading on what happened in Congress.

Esenbel: I have known and worked with Bitsios before. We were together at the Zurich Conference. He came over to see me today during the NATO lunch. He said that after all we had started together on the Cyprus problem at Zurich and why not go on together now. I said I was ready to talk with him and tomorrow we shall get together without any publicity and alone at some point during the NATO meetings.

The Secretary: That’s a good idea.

Esenbel: Yes. I want to test him on the Greek position.

The Secretary: My reading is that Caramanlis wants to get rid of the Cyprus problem as quickly as he can. The Greeks are ready to make major concessions and it is my feeling that they will settle for a bizonal arrangement. They need some face-saving device in the form of a few little cantons near the big one. This is really a bizonal arrangement but one they could accept.

Hartman: The cantons would all be in the north.

The Secretary: Yes. That is true they would be in the north. As a friend of Turkey, I would like to say that if you can organize yourselves to show any flexibility, progress can be made. As I see it, there are two options. The one is a long drawn out political warfare between Greece and Turkey and involving considerable trouble with Makarios. This would of course cause difficulties with US public opinion. In this event you would have to be ready eventually to pay a substantial price. It is important to know when to move. If you can get organized swiftly, then the question can be settled quickly. When I came to Brussels and during my flight over it was my assessment that this process would be a long one. I did not want to get involved because if I were, I would then be blamed for the situation. It is important to test the situation with Clerides and I am willing to help in this regard.

Esenbel: We want you to play a role.

The Secretary: I am not eager for a role.

Esenbel: We want your help.

The Secretary: The more you do, the better we like it. If, on the other hand, you reach a crucial point and we can help, we shall be glad to.

Esenbel: I was not ready for a dialogue with Bitsios but I would not turn one down.

Hartman: It is my feeling that discussions in New York between Gunes and Bitsios were helpful.

Esenbel: Regarding your suggestion that we talked about this morning and yesterday, I have checked with Ankara. I want you to know how we generally feel about the situation in Cyprus. The return of Makarios made a very bad impression.

(The telephone rings. The Secretary answers a call from the White House and inquires whether our people were lining up the House and Senate conferees. The Secretary completes call and returns to his chair.)

Esenbel: During the past week public opinion in Turkey was very sensitive to Cyprus developments. I was asked why we had not been able to stop Makarios in some way. I was also asked how he had come back and I said he had come back the way he had left; that is, via the UK base. I have to tell you that his return has represented a big problem for us. However, I was able to convince Ankara that even if Makarios came back, we should let Denktash negotiate. Ankara told me that if Dr. Kissinger gave his assurances, and I told them about the letter, then the thing to do was to try the Clerides–Denktash talks and ignore Makarios.

The Secretary: Well, you will get a letter from me.

Esenbel: That is why I was able to convince Ankara and that is why there can be talks.

The Secretary: You are a tough negotiator. What do you want me to do?

Esenbel: No.

The Secretary: I will be glad to give you a letter and I think it will be helpful to you. The practical problem is that you must negotiate with Makarios and why is it not better to do it under these circumstances. When we had breakfast yesterday morning I had no intention of letting anything happen here because there seemed to be no prospect.

Esenbel: The principle of negotiation is okay. However the offer for negotiations should come from Clerides to Denktash.

The Secretary: We can arrange that.

Esenbel: Clerides should tell Denktash that he is empowered to negotiate.

The Secretary: When?

Esenbel: I think in about two or three days time. We shall warn Denktash to expect a call from Clerides.

The Secretary: Shall we say next Tuesday?[3](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d155#fn:1.5.4.4.12.288.74.2)

Esenbel: That’s all right.

The Secretary: Yes. Tuesday. (turning to Hartman) Why is it that our Ambassador in Nicosia feels he must leave?

Hartman: We told him he could come home for Christmas to see his family.

The Secretary: What a tough Service! Tell him he can stay a few days longer and we will get instructions to him.

Esenbel: What should Clerides and Denktash discuss? It is our view that he should discuss humanitarian questions plus political matters. However, we are not too inclined to define exactly what all these points should be. Ankara would agree to start with the airport, about which Callaghan is very anxious. I promised him we would start on this.

The Secretary: Callaghan knows nothing about our conversations. When UNDOF was extended Waldheim got all the credit. I suppose when the airport opens, Callaghan will get all the credit. There must be political talks. If Caramanlis wants a settlement, then there must be political talks and not just talks about such matters as the airport. The domestic situation also requires this. When the political talks start then we can draw back from the matter. From the domestic political view point it is important to have political talks. Also Turkey is in a good position. Turkey makes no concessions and yet there will be talks. Before, Turkey was ready to offer concessions, then there was a Congressional action and now Turkey will offer no concessions.

Esenbel: All of this will give Denktash an opportunity to test the good faith of Clerides. We should start with pragmatic matters such as the airport plus Farmagusta port. You have mentioned discussing the powers of the central government. I do not exclude this, but it should not be the first item. Everybody is much more worried about the economic situation.

The Secretary: This should perhaps not be the first item, but it should be an early item.

Esenbel: Okay. Pragmatic questions first plus political matters. But I will not tell Bitsios about Ankara’s position because we want to be sure that the Greeks will accept the bizonal solution. What is the sense of discussing the central government’s powers and let other practical questions fall behind? Ankara is not sure how all this will work out. It wants to be sure that Clerides is negotiating in good faith and has the authority to do so. The powers of the federal government can be discussed later.

The Secretary: You should keep in mind the overall strategic considerations. You cannot find out about the good will of Clerides until there are political discussions. Moreover Caramanlis cannot move until the political talks are underway. I have seen a recent British report which suggests that it would be desirable to move fast so Makarios has no excuse for delay. I know what you want. If Makarios approves, then this makes agreement inevitable. If he does not approve and fights a guerrilla political warfare, then this would make matters difficult. But it is senseless to argue over these points—let’s put these aside.

Esenbel: Let us start on humanitarian matters and then go on to political matters, but let us not try to define precisely what comes under this heading.

The Secretary: I wonder if I should see Bitsios tonight. (Turning to Macomber) Why don’t you get someone to call him to see if he is available?

(Macomber leaves the room.)

Esenbel: The only way to settle the Cyprus problem is by agreement on a bizonal structure.

The Secretary: It is essential to separate tactics from the end result. I am sure you know my viewpoint if you have seen my correspondence with Ecevit. What do the Greeks have in mind? It is too early to determine if the Greeks have some possibility for face-saving on the geographic federation. If there is agreement to have political talks, this would be important. How shall we announce the agreement?

Esenbel: In Nicosia.

The Secretary: After its announcement, do you have any problem about using the announcement?

Esenbel: You should handle it as you like. After the announcement in Nicosia you can say anything that would be helpful.

The Secretary: I may be asked how my talks went. I should like to reply either at my press conference or on the plane going back that I explored the respective positions and that I looked for ways to bring the parties together. I would also say that I was moderately hopeful.

Esenbel: I hope that when you get back, Clerides will make his move.

The Secretary: Is there any reason to hold up?

Macomber: If the conference report is turned down by the House, then this may affect progress. Esenbel: I understand that Clerides will call on Tuesday and I understand that matters in Congress should be settled by Monday.[4](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d155#fn:1.5.4.4.12.288.120.8) I shall tell Bitsios that Clerides should move on Tuesday and that Denktash will be receptive. I am not excluding anything.

The Secretary: Tell Denktash to be open-minded. Please keep in close contact with Macomber about what is happening so that I can pass to you any ideas I might have.

Esenbel: He can always reach me privately at home.

The Secretary: When shall I give you the letter—tomorrow?

(The Secretary rises and gets the letter[5](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d155#fn:1.5.4.4.12.288.128.2) from his desk.)

This is what I would like to give you.

(He hands the letter to Esenbel.)

The Secretary: (Turning to Macomber) I may have to pull you out because you are so good in handling Congress—no, I am really joking. I need you in Ankara, but I have been impressed by the way you handle members of the Congress.

Macomber: I had the job twice.

The Secretary: No.

Esenbel: (Handing the letter back to the Secretary)

This looks alright to me.

The Secretary: I think it provides a good assurance. Do you mind if I give it confidentially to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

Esenbel: I told you that when the talks start you can do what you want.

The Secretary: It would help. The Senate has a good record on leaks. Perhaps I should also give it to the House.

Esenbel: Perhaps you could give it to them in Executive Session.

The Secretary: We have given confidential documents to the Senate and there have been no leaks. In this case there would be no harm if there was a leak.

Esenbel: There is only one trouble. In the assumption that the Aid Bill is passed, it would help. If it is not passed, the letter could work against us.

The Secretary: How? Why don’t you write a letter to me saying that if aid is cut off, there would be no progress on the talks.

Esenbel: I have already spoken to the press twice along this line.

The Secretary: That was helpful.

Esenbel: In a sense such a letter would be contradictory, because we have already said that we should keep aid separate from the Cyprus question.

The Secretary: As you know we are fighting on the aid question. We are prepared to make it a public issue. The letter will not be a liability. By Monday we should know what will happen in Congress. If signals change, we shall be in touch with you. What Congress is doing to the Turks is a symbol of what they are doing to US foreign policy. What weakens Turkey weakens the U.S. This letter shows the Greeks have taken the initiative.

Esenbel: In principle the letter is alright.

Macomber: We should get a good conference report.

The Secretary: There may be a fight on the floor.

Esenbel: If there is a successful conclusion in Congress, then the situation is good. Otherwise, there will be problems.

(Telephone rings. The Secretary gets up and answers it. He is told that Bitsios has gone to bed. The Secretary asks if it would be possible to come up even if Bitsios is in his pajamas.)

The Secretary: You must not capitulate. If you do, it would cause problems for us. The letter shows that the initiative comes from the Greeks. If matters go right and we have a good conference report, there will be time for maneuver through Monday. If Congress rejects the conference report, I may recommend that you not proceed. However, we will still have the letter and agreement in principle.

Esenbel: We do not want to take no action, but we may be forced to do so.

The Secretary: If aid is cut off, I will understand if you cannot proceed. It is your independent decision to make.

Esenbel: This is the first time you have had such a quick settlement. I am not the tough bargainer that you say I am.

The Secretary: My view previously was that the Greek position was aimed at making me the guilty party if we failed in getting the negotiations. Now I think that they want to make Makarios the fall guy. If this doesn’t work, then they can return to me. I asked Bitsios if he wanted a quick settlement and he did not contradict me.

Esenbel: The Greeks could have stopped Makarios, but they didn’t. Perhaps they thought it would be more useful to have Makarios on the island where they could use him as an ingredient, not a threat. They must deal with Makarios and any agreement must have his support. This gives them another option.

The Secretary: I agree. Outside of Cyprus he becomes a Greek politician. The Greek leadership would prefer that he be in Cyprus dealing with Clerides rather than in Greece dealing with Papandreou.

Esenbel: I told people yesterday …

The Secretary: Do you trust Caramanlis now? Do you think I can?

Esenbel: I don’t know. I am not so sure. The Greeks are very sentimental. I am not sure….

The Secretary: Are the Turks sentimental

Esenbel: We are less Mediterranean than the Greeks. I knew Caramanlis when he was cooperating with the late Menderes. He showed that he was able to deal with Makarios before on Cyprus and that he could dominate him.

The Secretary: I think we have good assurances and I went over the letter with Bitsios. He cannot say that he did not know what was in it. I shall tell Bitsios that there is an agreement in principle to begin the talks, that they should include political aspects, but that they should begin with the airport and Farmagusta, Denktash will be instructed to talk about political subjects, although they may not be precisely defined. Clerides should get in touch with Denktash on Tuesday, Denktash will be receptive; and if the Aid Bill is negative to Turkey, we may not be able to carry out the plan.

Esenbel: What should I tell Bitsios?

(Telephone rings. The Secretary gets up and answers. He is told Bitsios is not feeling well and would prefer, if possible, to talk to the Secretary in the morning. The Secretary asks that Bitsios be told that he would like to see him at the beginning of the session tomorrow morning about 9:30. He hangs up and returns to his chair.)

The Secretary: You should tell him …

Esenbel: What should I tell …

The Secretary: Tell him exactly what I said. Tell him that you were acting on my strong advice and that the letter is a big factor in your decision. Tell him Clerides should call Denktas hand that they should be prepared for political talks. Tell him that you have instructed Denktash to deal open-handedly. You may be sure that we will only tell the Greeks what we tell you and vice versa.

Esenbel: Well, I will do the same. Incidentally, I have said nothing to Callaghan.

The Secretary: What shall I tell Callaghan?

Esenbel: I told him nothing.

The Secretary: Can I tell him of our talks?

Esenbel: No, I rather you would not.

The Secretary: Well, anything we say to the other side we will tell you. It is essential that everybody knows what everybody else is doing. My experience with Makarios is that when I told him that I thought the bizonal arrangement was the only practical one, he went out and said that I had said I favored a multi-regional one.

Esenbel: You can be sure that we will speak with the same frankness to you.

The Secretary: Good night. I think we have made good progress and I will see you tomorrow.