

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Presidential Bilateral Meeting with Prime Minister Dehaene of Belgium

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State
Jane E. Holl, NSC Staff, Notetaker

Jean-Luc Dehaene, Prime Minister
Willy Claes, Foreign Minister

DATE, TIME: January 9, 1994, 12:50 - 1:20 p.m.
AND PLACE: Conrad Hotel, Brussels, Belgium

Complimentary Opening

The President: I want to say first off that I am very appreciative for the strong work you did while in the EU Presidency. I deeply appreciate all that you did to achieve a GATT agreement, and I am appreciative of Belgium's support for our Summit initiatives. Perhaps we could talk a bit about some issues; the situation in Bosnia, in Zaire, Burundi, Rwanda -- I know you are very active there. And then perhaps we could also talk about the EU's relationship with the states of Central and Eastern Europe. (S)

Prime Minister Dehaene: Thank you for your compliments. During the six months of our Presidency, it was extremely important that we work through the application of the Treaty of Maastricht. The fact that we kept twelve together in GATT was one of the big issues during our Presidency. It was good for the world that we made a GATT agreement and it is also good that you were able to do NAFTA. It was good for the world, and good for regional arrangements. The fact that we had two together is an important element. (S)

From a European point of view, there is a similarity between what we will discuss tomorrow in NATO and the developments in the EU. You know, we are trying to develop a common foreign and security policy. It is important that the WEU become the security pillar in the EU -- just as we are the security pillar in NATO. It is an important element for further development in the European Union. The contribution of the United States will be very important. (S)

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There is also a parallel between what the EU is doing with the states of Central and Eastern Europe and what NATO is negotiating with the Partnership. We have already negotiated a number of partnership agreements -- even with Russia, but they are more difficult. But as I say, here too is a parallel with the Partnership for Peace. (S)

In both cases, the Central European States are asking to be members -- of the EU and of NATO. We must track a certain evolution that may lead to membership, but not membership today. You will hear this question in Prague: to what extent is Partnership for Peace a step toward membership or not. We have to explain what the Partnership is -- it is more elaborate than what we first think. (S)

In both cases, it is an important point as well. The EU and NATO -- the issue of new members vis-a-vis the Central European countries. The same problem exists if you open up prospective membership but never put the stages of what must be done to come to this. (S)

As I see Yeltsin's reaction, they are responding to the differences we draw between the states of Central and Eastern Europe and members of the former Soviet Union. We must avoid giving them the impression that it is Russia who will decide who will come in and who will not. (S)

Secretary Christopher: It is extremely important, Mr. President, that we reinforce the message that Russia does not have a veto. (S)

The President: We must make that clear. There is a difference between what we decide among ourselves -- that is quite separate from a Russian veto. (S)

What I have been saying is that even if everyone agrees that you should have membership why should we draw the line in Europe just a little further east than before? Why should we alienate Ukraine? Why should we strengthen the hand of the nationalists such as Zhirinovsky? We're trying to leave open the best possible future for Europe. I think the United States must continue to take the lead with Russia. Europe should take most of the initiative vis-a-vis Eastern Europe. Our message to the countries of central and eastern Europe is that we are trying to protect your interests. We want to make you part of our community. We are concerned about the future, but what we are saying is that even if the future goes bad, it won't be as bad as the past. (S)

Prime Minister Dehaene: Furthermore, to take them in now quickly would weaken the EU and, in turn, weaken them too. (S)

The President: Can I raise Bosnia for a moment? Do you think there is agreement on what we should do? (S)

Foreign Minister Claes: The last set of meetings that were held here in Brussels were a disaster. We have to maintain pressure on the parties of course to continue their negotiations. But I believe the moment has come to warn the parties -- including the Serbs. We need to send the signal that enough is enough. I have never favored a military strategy, but it is necessary to give a signal. (C)

Can we envisage air strikes? Yes, it is necessary. We have to be sure that all those countries in UNPROFOR will maintain their forces there. We can't afford to have them pull out their troops. There are doubts in London about this. Other members of NATO and the EU are ready now to take this step. Only London has doubts. (C)

First, we need to strengthen the sanctions. The arms embargo is not respected. Different neighbors are responsible. We need to take measures to strengthen the arms embargo. But something more than symbolic is necessary. Air strikes are necessary. There is no will for an agreement in the field, the Muslims are intent on fighting through the winter. (C)

The President: There is one problem -- there are occasional successes. But the situation in Sarajevo is very troubling. (C)

Foreign Minister Claes: There are no rules. Even the Muslims have responded; not only Serbs. (C)

The President: One final item: is there anything you want to say on Burundi or Zaire? (C)

Prime Minister Dehaene: On Zaire, we want to maintain the trilateral approach with the U.S. and French. It would be difficult for us to do this alone. We're very worried about the situation in Zaire. There has been a real degradation of the situation there. It could be a new Somalia, only worse. Zaire is a very big country. With the warring parties, it is almost like having new countries -- they are fighting with each other. It is a really big problem. The opposition to Mobutu has no way to succeed. Next year could be very difficult, particularly in view of the disintegration. If we can't have the opportunity to consult with the real power, you will have different powers in different countries -- like Somalia, but much worse because Zaire is such a big country. (C)

Regarding, Rwanda, the forces of the UN are in place, and the process is ongoing; it will be difficult, but still it is ongoing. (C)

Foreign Minister Claes: If the United States could pressure on the Presidency and say that now is the moment to respond to the [VAROSA-check] agreement, that would be helpful. We're losing time. Our troops are there. (C)

Prime Minister Dehaene: Regarding Burundi, the situation is more complicated; there is nearly no government. The danger comes from the Army. The Army killed the President and ended the democratization -- there could be a new explosion. More refugees would make for a terrible situation. The world does not understand. There are one million refugees. (S)

Secretary Christopher: It is not yet a CNN war. (S)

Prime Minister Dehaene: Not even here in Belgium -- nothing is moving. Every week we send humanitarian aid, but no one speaks about it. (S)

Foreign Minister Claes: Even if Zaire no longer has strategic importance, it would be wise to maintain control. What if something were to go wrong in South Africa? (S)

The President: Well, I am looking forward to the next couple of days. (S)

Prime Minister Dehaene: Last year, our dialogue was quite different -- Yugoslavia and GATT made things very difficult. Now we must really reactivate the dialogue. We have enough channels between the U.S. and the EU. For the EU, things are not always easy. We always don't speak with one voice. It will be important to maintain steady, regular contact. (S)

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