

should say the other side has moved. This would hurt us. And we won't say the Russians or Milosevic have moved either.

MR. BERGER: We should say that we're in engaged in a process of better understanding each other's positions.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Yes, I will say that negotiations or discussions are underway. I've come under criticism, it's all I hear now. "Chernomyrdin's on his way to Belgrade to resolve all the problems." I'm ready to give it to someone else.

[Farewells]

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DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: THE VICE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY OF STATE, LEON FUERTH, SANDY BERGER, STROBE TALBOTT, VIKTOR STEPANOVICH CHERNOMYRDIN, MIKHAIL TARASOV, AMBASSADOR YURI USHAKOV, VLADIMIR MARKOV, BORIS IVANOVSKY

LOCATION: DINING ROOM, VICE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE

NOTE TAKER: RICHARD BRODY

INTERPRETERS: PETER AFANASENKO [+ CHERNOMYRDIN'S INTERPRETER]

DATE/TIME: 4 MAY 1999/0900-0945 EDT

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I'm glad you called and I'm eager to hear what you have to

say.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: During yesterday's conversations here and in the Oval Office we cleared up our positions, so I think we should determine our starting point and what we should tell the world. Everyone is anxious to hear the results of our meeting. So I want to say that for the past two weeks we accomplished some major things. We laid the foundation and all arrangements to put [the conflict] to an end. I think we've reached agreement on 99 percent of our positions to end the crisis. So Annan is not fit, then who is? Who will go to negotiate with Milosevic? To whom should Milosevic surrender? From whom should he accept conditions of surrender? Prior to the Oslo meeting of Secretary Albright and Foreign Minister Ivanov, Milosevic didn't agree to these positions. He didn't agree to the five articles in the Washington [NATO] declaration. Now he agrees.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Have you communicated with him since last night?

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: No. It's not possible, though we can expect anything from him. He can surrender and tomorrow go back on his word. So it's not a matter of Russia or NATO [taking the surrender]. It must be the UN. Who will represent the UN? Let's find or create that person who will participate in that process.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Let me start by responding to your first point about the world's interest. I still believe the less we say the more chance there is for progress. One of the reasons I think it's best to say as little as possible is the need to avoid wrong interpretations.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: This is clear.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: My colleagues and I would all say our impression is that we are not in 99 percent agreement. It may be that we and Russia

could reach 99
or even 100 percent agreement because we have a shared respect for
humanity. But
Milosevic is not saying the kinds of things to lead us to believe that at
all.
About the UN: We believe a UNSCR under chapter VII could be the
mechanism to give
Milosevic the international fig leaf or organ to say what he needs to
say.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: That's the crux of the problem - to whom to
surrender/speak
to. The resolution needs to be worked out.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: After there's a resolution, the president of
the Security
Council would speak for the Security Council and NATO countries
would participate
in an international force. Not a NATO force but a new entity. The
commander of
that entity would speak with the commander of Yugoslav forces to see
how to bring
into force the arrangement.

[short gap in note-taking]

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: I distrust Milosevic as much as you do. I
pushed him, put
real pressure on him. He is ready to accept the five points. But he
needs to
give his consent to somebody. Let's say I go to Belgrade, to talk to
him, to
press him. Then we go to a resolution. Then he'll start saying "no."
He'll
start talking about the monuments, Clark's role, etc. We'll be to blame.
We'll
end up drawing out the whole process. He will surrender, but it's a
matter of
when and at what price. How much blood will be spilled? The whole
world is
watching us. Everyone knows. The Europeans subscribe to this point
of view. I
will do all I can to get Milosevic to agree to autonomy, a force with
NATO
participation, safe return of refugees to avert a guerrilla war. I can't
ask for
more. For self-government purposes, someone will be found to do
self-government.
So let's find someone to discuss this with Milosevic. We need to
resolve the

question of who is in charge, otherwise you make me hostage to Milosevic.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Let's send Jesse Jackson.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Yes [laughs]

MR. BERGER: [Here's the sequence.] You go back to Belgrade. Then there's a UNSCR. Then after the UNSCR [interrupted]

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Milosevic doesn't want to surrender to Russia or any country, but to an international organization. The UN. Who will represent the UN? He won't surrender to Russia. We do we even need a UNSCR? If he's ready to accept the five articles, why do we need a resolution? We need to pressure him, put conditions on him, make him realize that...

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: You're quite right that the essence of the question is whether Milosevic agrees. If so, the rest is form not substance - how to find a way to surrender not to Russia or the US. We suggest the Security Council, but if differences are narrowed and he's ready to agree to the five principles, then Annan could receive the surrender. We don't want Annan to negotiate, but he could serve as a figurehead. But narrowing the gap still requires work. I trust your judgment, but we don't yet have an indication that he's anywhere close.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: He's so close. He himself told me - we're putting in an international presence clause that entails safe return of refugees. He said I'll agree to a NATO military presence. But he thinks we're asking too much. He asked me whether I thought I could trust him. I don't know, but I had a witness. Ivanovsky was there taking notes. I said I will [transmit his message] but what's the next step. He told me so much already. He agreed to withdrawal of troops. At some point, we can solve question of numbers of troops to be

withdrawn. He agreed to an international presence, return of refugees. He's also facing the issue of who will restore his country. He knows Russia won't restore/rebuild anything. He needs confirmation restoration will be made.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I can confirm that NATO allies are fully prepared to restore the country. In Washington we expressed ourselves on that point. The Europeans even more so. One thing is most important. We can stop bombing only if he agrees to complete withdrawal. We can stop bombing almost immediately if that happens.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: To whom should he surrender?

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: There are several possibilities. The incoming president of the EU is a Finn - Mr. Ahtisaari. He's trusted by everyone, you know him, he's worked on the Bosnia question for the UN. He's already a member of the Troika.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Under what umbrella?

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: He's the next EU president. Kofi could designate him.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Good. That's an option. Annan or someone would have to designate him. Put him in charge. He's acceptable.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: And he has worked on Bosnia for the UN.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: OK. Then we can see the logic. Otherwise it's a bottleneck, there's no movement or wiggle room.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: But we need to work with Kofi quietly to make sure he won't try to designate someone else. It's best for you not to raise it with him. I would prefer you didn't meet with him at all.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: I would like to cancel the meeting, but

we've already
announced it. We can just meet and make a statement.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Kofi wanted to name two special envoys
and Ahtisaari didn't
want the job. He didn't want to do it full-time. What we're talking
about is
not full-time. He'd be going with you to Belgrade.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: I'm not full-time either.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Kofi still wants to name others as special
envoy. We can
talk about this. He's named Kukan and now we need a Western
representative. But
this is not the same job.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: I'm ready for this. I'll be with him
[Ahtisaari].

MR. TALBOTT: You're the one to use the hammer on Milosevic and
Ahtisaari is the
one to receive the sword from him.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: I think we can't find a better person.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Good. This shows that you've been right
to push on this
this morning. Now let's think about what we should tell the press.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Ahtisaari needs a [mandate] too, so
everyone understands this
is not another assignment acting on behalf of the UN.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: We need to move quickly.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Let's try to do this today.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: We should wrap it up today. Let's not waste
time.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I agree. We'll work with Kofi today. The
less we say to
the press the better. We'll avoid any statement that talks of
compromise,
concessions, surrender.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: No talk of concessions. We're searching for
ways...It can't
be more difficult with a war going on. Do you think Ahtisaari would

turn this
down?

MR. TALBOTT: I've known him very well for several years. I spoke with him about whether he should take the special envoy job for Kofi. I understand why he turned that job down. My personal assessment is that he'd be interested in the role you're describing. But we need to be careful over the next 48 hours because the Germans have the presidency of the EU. No one, including the Germans, think they're the ones to receive the sword from Yugoslavia. So we should first try to...

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: We need to call Fischer so that he understands what we're doing.

AMBASSADOR USHAKOV: [conversation about communications with Chernomyrdin] If you succeed, I'll call Viktor Stepanovich and let him know.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: We'll communicate before you see Kofi.

MR. BERGER: Let's be clear on the public line. We had good meetings, tried to understand each other's positions, Chernomyrdin is playing a useful role, discussions will continue.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Well, I wouldn't say I'm instrumental.

MR. BERGER: Ok, we won't say that.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: [in jest] Because other Russians might take offense.

MR. TALBOTT [speaking in Russian]: You can say the Americans were pivotal excluding of course the bombing.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: [describing bombing in Belgrade] Seems that as soon as I arrived they started pounding Belgrade. After eight hours of talks with Milosevic my jacket was completely soaked. We took off and looked down - only

one street was illuminated. We could see the tracer flashes from anti-aircraft fire. Guess they were trying to shoot us down.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: You know those were Russian air defense systems.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Possibly.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Madeleine will call Kofi. And note this is not the permanent envoy position.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: Yes. Like me. A temporary designate.

MR. BERGER: One quick trip and he says yes.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I'm glad you came back this morning. Perhaps this will lead to the breakthrough we need.

[discussion of travel plans]

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: I'm ready to fly to Finland or Belgrade or wherever.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: There's a G8 meeting on Thursday.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: That would be a waste of time unless we could reveal plans.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: But we should try to meet.

MR. CHERNOMYRDIN: OK, let's keep working. Let me know if you don't succeed with Ahtisaari.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: We'll call

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: This is the first time I've ever heard Viktor Stepanovich talk about not succeeding at something.

[meeting breaks up]