

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Lunch with Boris Yeltsin, President of
Russian Federation

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.

President Clinton
Secretary Christopher, Secretary of State
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State
Ambassador Thomas Pickering, U.S. Ambassador
to Russia
Ash Carter, Assistant Secretary of Defense
for International Security Policy
General Christman
Coit Blacker, Special Assistant to the
President and Senior Director for Russia,
Ukraine and Eurasia Affairs, NSC staff
(note-taker)

Russia

President Yeltsin
Foreign Minister Kozyrev
Yeltsin Principal Assistant Ilyushin
Yeltsin Foreign Policy Assistant Ryurikov
Ambassador Vorontsov
Deputy Foreign Minister Mamedov
Yeltsin Military/Science Advisor Kuzyk
Protocol Chief Shevchenko

DATE, TIME October 23, 1995; 1:30 p.m.-2:40 p.m.
AND PLACE: Dining Room, Hyde Park Library, Hyde Park,
New York

THE PRESIDENT: Boris, would it be useful to summarize what we
discussed this morning? (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes. And I've just talked with my team about
how to discuss what we talked about in our discussion this

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Classified by: Andrew D. Sens
Reason: 1.5 (d)
Declassify On: 10/31/05

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526

2015-0782-M-2 (158)
3/13/2018 KBH

morning. Maybe I missed something, but in addressing the press, I think we should answer two to three questions, together, for the press. We should speak on the same wavelength. Simply, we should say that we are making headway, but that it's difficult. That we can't lose our partnership, most importantly. That we can make progress, but that the work continues. And I wouldn't say anything more to the press. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: In other words, that while we do have differences, there is a certain strength to this partnership that enables us to work issues through. I recommend that we use Bosnia as an example: that we are in complete accord on the need for peace; on implementation, that we have made some progress and will continue to work the issue; and that we will instruct our people to press ahead. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes, I agree, since the world -- and the United States and Russia -- don't believe we'll reach agreement today. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: Boris, there are two or three issues we need to discuss over lunch; you may also have some issues that you want to raise. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes. But let's not have a plenary; two or three issues, yes. (C)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CARTER: If I might, before you begin. (Directed to President Yeltsin) I'd like to confirm Minister Grachev's visit to the United States; he says he needs his president's permission to attend. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: We agree. Our minister should come. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: Boris, you said that Russia has trouble with NATO command and control, but that at a minimum Russia will undertake auxiliary operations to help in Bosnia's reconstruction. This is the minimum. And that Perry and Grachev will discuss what might be done beyond that. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes. But let's not call these "auxiliary operations;" let's call them "special operations." We will provide as many troops as necessary for this. But let's call them "special," not "auxiliary." This is the minimum to which we agree. We'd like to do more. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I agree. This is the minimum. Let's have Perry and Grachev follow-up and press ahead. (C)

(President Yeltsin, beginning his lunch, comments on the quality of the bread served and on the quality of its Russian counterpart. The President says that he has read reports indicating that the Russian wheat harvest may be smaller than usual this year. President Yeltsin responds that the size of the crop isn't the problem; it's the transport system that's at fault.) (C)

DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER MAMEDOV: Perhaps we could turn to ...
(U)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN (interrupting Mamedov): No, no. We will talk about CFE after we eat! Otherwise we will miss this excellent American cuisine. (C)

I feel great optimism. I was afraid that Bill and I were going to quarrel today, but now I believe we can come to agreement.
(C)

THE PRESIDENT: I think so, too. We have more in common than we have dividing us. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes. The most important thing is that we are not thinking only of 1996; we are thinking about the relationship. (C)

THE PRESIDENT (laughing): But if that worked out, that would be okay too! (C)

Has the President of China been to Russia? (U)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: He was in Moscow in May, during the commemoration. (U)

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I saw him there. (U)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: This was the first meeting [of a Chinese president] with a Russian president since Stalin; Gorbachev never saw him. (Following a Kozyrev aside) I'll be going on a state visit to China on November 9. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: That's good. I think the Chinese sometimes think the other great powers are trying to contain them; they have so many people and their economy is growing so fast. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes, they do have this fear. There were no contacts between Russia and China for many years; this was quite unusual. Today, we are establishing a normal relationship with China. I started this by saying that we should normalize relations, including the normalization -- the fixing -- of our borders. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: It's good to talk with them. I'll be seeing the President tomorrow. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: You can deal with him as a normal person; he's a man of the earth. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: Boris, we are supposed to leave here in about an hour and a half. If we do a press statement at 3:30, and we need 15 minutes to prepare, we've got about 40 minutes. We need to decide what else we need to discuss. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN (pointing to the food): I'm ready to forsake all for our discussions. (U)

THE PRESIDENT: Let's have it all! Bring it on! (U)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: I haven't seen your ambassador, Mr. Pickering, for six months. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, he needs to show up then! (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: He should show up once a month, or once every two months. Ilyushin should set it up. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: We accept. (C)

AMBASSADOR VORONTSOV: It should work this way in both capitals! (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN (to Ilyushin): You'll promote this right away. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: Should we do joint press statements? (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes. But you should stand side-by-side with me. Two rostrums? (C)

THE PRESIDENT: We'll answer a couple of questions, right? No more. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: No more. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: We can't let the press use this. We need to show them that we're working together. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Yes. Absolutely. (C)

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(The Presidents then agree to continue their discussions in the one-on-one format and return to the Roosevelt residence for dessert and coffee.)

-- End of Conversation --

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