

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: One-on-One Meeting with President Boris Yeltsin of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Dimitry Zarechnak (Interpreter and notetaker)

Boris Yeltsin, President of Russian Federation
Interpreter

DATE, TIME January 15, 1994, 9:00 - 9:20am
AND PLACE: The Kremlin

The President started the conversation by saying that before he came to Moscow, he had worked hard with the G-7 to achieve the three aims which the U.S. and Russia shared: first, to get the next 1.5 billion dollars from the IMF to Russia; second, to get some debt relief (restructuring); third, to get flexibility in the conditions set by the international financial institutions for setting conditions for aid. The G-7 nations agreed to this if the President would push for reforms in Russia, since they believed that President Yeltsin was committed to these reforms.
(S)

President Clinton said that he had asked for today's meeting with President Yeltsin because President Yeltsin had told him on the previous day that there would be some changes in personnel in his government related to economic positions. For example, Gaidar would lead the party of reformers in the parliament. This was, of course, for President Yeltsin, not President Clinton, to decide, and President Clinton had come to better understand during the days he had just spent in Moscow, talking to the people in the streets and in the TV studio, the political pressures facing President Yeltsin. President Yeltsin only wished that as President Yeltsin worked through these issues in the coming days, he would think about what President Clinton was saying.
(S)

President Clinton said President Yeltsin's decision could have an impact on all the individuals who were committed to achieving the desired goals for Russia. President Clinton's credibility was connected to President Yeltsin's indication that he would continue the reforms, which were linked to a specific team of people. Perhaps this would change, but the impression was that

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Yeltsin would continue the reforms, so that people would stay in line to do what they said they would. (S)

President Clinton continued that there should not be a signal that Russia was backing away from financial responsibility and reforms. If this happened, President Clinton would lose credibility with the G-7 and the international financial institutions. (S)

President Clinton indicated that this was what he was up against. He was not trying to interfere in Yeltsin's affairs. He understood Yeltsin's political difficulties, but he needed to say to those who were committed to help Russia that there was someone there who advocated the right long-term economic course. This was what President Clinton wished that Yeltsin would think about as he made his difficult decisions. (S)

President Yeltsin replied that President Clinton saw the situation, and these difficulties did exist. (S)

President Clinton continued that he had two impressions on the basis of his meeting with people in the streets and after the televised part of the TV show. From Yeltsin's point of view, one of these was negative, and the other was positive. The negative aspect was that most ordinary citizens and some well-educated ones did not feel connected to what Yeltsin was doing. They did not feel that their lives had improved. The positive aspect was that they were interested in what was going on and most of them believed that Yeltsin was doing the right thing, that he was on the right side of history. Yeltsin had unleashed democracy, and without that President Clinton's TV show would not have been possible, and the recently held elections would not have been possible. (S)

President Clinton continued that if President Yeltsin ran into problems during the early days of his work with the Duma, he might appeal directly to the people over national television. At home in the U.S. President Clinton found that if Congress did not agree with him, but if the people did, and told their Congressmen, the Congress would vote to support him. (S)

President Clinton continued that the Russian people wished to be with President Yeltsin. They knew that their success depended on President Yeltsin's success. Perhaps President Yeltsin could do such a TV program. The members of the Duma would hear from their constituents and would want to work with the President. This kind of approach works in the U.S. The Russian people are with Yeltsin. It is a struggle. The United States will stay engaged and help as much as possible. (S)

-- End of Conversation --

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