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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

17-Jan-1994 02:44 EDT

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

BURNS@A1@OEOB
BEYRLE@A1@OEOB

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526

2016-0117-M (1.03)
10/2/2018 KBH

FROM: White House Situation Room
(WHSR@A1@WHSR)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE MEETING WITH BELARUS

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PRT: BERGER FUERTH ITOH KENNEY LAKE REED SIT{C2} SODERBERG

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RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2603

<SUBJ>

PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE MEETING WITH BELARUS
HEAD OF STATE SHUSHKEVICH

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WHITE HOUSE PLEASE PASS NSC

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: OVIP (CLINTON, BILL), PREL, US, BO

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE MEETING WITH BELARUS
HEAD OF STATE SHUSHKEVICH

1. ~~S~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. PARTICIPANTS:

THE PRESIDENT

SUPREME SOVIET CHAIRMAN (HEAD OF STATE)

STANISLAV STANISLAVOVICH SHUSHKEVICH

ALSO PRESENT: AMBASSADOR DAVID SWARTZ

(AS NOTETAKER AND INTERPRETER)

TIME AND PLACE:

JANUARY 15, 1994; 4:15 - 4:45 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT'S LIMOUSINE, TRAVELLING

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BETWEEN KUROPATY AND MINSK II AIRPORT

3. CHAIRMAN SHUSHKEVICH BEGAN BY SAYING HE APPRECIATED THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR A PRIVATE CHAT. HE SAID THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BELARUS IS EXTREMELY DELICATE. CURRENT TENSIONS COULD BE EASILY SPARKED INTO OPEN POLITICAL CONFLICT, EVEN SOCIAL TURMOIL. HE SAID HE WANTED TO THANK THE PRESIDENT MOST SINCERELY FOR HIS MESSAGE OF MODERATION AND DETERMINATION NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN BELARUS' INTERNAL POLITICAL PROCESS. THIS MESSAGE WAS ALL THE MORE SALUTARY, SHUSHKEVICH CONTINUED, BECAUSE MOST OF THE OBLAST LEADERS ON HIS DELEGATION AT THE BILATERAL MEETING EARLIER IN THE DAY REPRESENTED CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF BELARUS' POLITICAL SPECTRUM. AFTER THE MEETING, HE SAID, A NUMBER OF THEM CAME UP TO HIM TO SAY THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS HAD CONVINCED THEM THAT AMERICA DOES NOT HAVE SINISTER INTENTIONS WITH REGARD TO BELARUS.

4. SHUSHKEVICH SAID HE HAD NOTED THE PRESIDENT'S CALL FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BY MARCH, 1994. HE SAID HE AGREED ON THE NEED FOR THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE ELECTIONS BUT INDICATED THE POLITICAL FORCES AT PLAY IN BELARUS PROBABLY WILL NOT ALLOW A VOTE THAT SOON. GIVEN THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ECONOMY, AND THUS THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CITIZENS' STANDARD OF LIVING, IT MAY BE DESIRABLE TO WAIT A BIT LONGER ANYWAY. OTHERWISE, THE HEAVY PROTEST VOTE THAT OCCURRED IN RUSSIA IN DECEMBER COULD BE REPEATED HERE.

5. THE PRESIDENT ASKED SHUSHKEVICH FOR HIS VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA. SHUSHKEVICH REPLIED THAT THE STRONG SHOWING BY ZHIRINOVSKIY AND HIS PARTY IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS WAS REFLECTIVE OF RUSSIANS' UNHAPPINESS AND FRUSTRATION OVER THE SLOWNESS IN MOVING FROM COMMUNISM TO THE PROMISED BETTER LIFE. HE THOUGHT THE INFLUENCE OF BOTH THE COMMUNISTS AND THE ZHIRINOVSKIY-ITES HAS PEAKED WITH THE ELECTIONS. AS PART OF THE ESTABLISHMENT THEY WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO BLAME YELTSIN FOR THE ECONOMIC FAILURES THAT ARE SURELY STILL AHEAD. THEY TOO WILL SHARE IN THAT BLAME. FURTHERMORE, THE COMBINATION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION AND THE FACT OF YELTSIN HAVING BEEN POPULARLY ELECTED WILL MEAN HE HAS AMPLE POWER TO DOMINATE THE DUMA OR EVEN DISMISS IT SHOULD STALEMATES ARISE.

6. SHUSHKEVICH CONTINUED THAT RUSSIA IS A HUGE, VERY DIVERSE COUNTRY. SUCH CONDITIONS INVITE POWERFUL EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE OF THIS HETEROGENEITY PERFORCE NECESSITATES THE STRONG LEADERSHIP THAT YELTSIN CAN GIVE. BELARUS IS A DIFFERENT STORY. IT IS A SMALL COUNTRY, ONE WITH A VERY HOMOGENOUS SOCIETY. THE NEED FOR STRONG EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IS THUS

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7. THE DISCUSSION TURNED TO BROADER WORLD ISSUES. THE PRESIDENT ASKED SHUSHKEVICH WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA. SHUSHKEVICH REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD LITTLE ABOUT THAT TROUBLED REGION AND DOUBTED OTHERS DID EITHER IF THEY HADN'T SPENT MANY YEARS THERE. FOR EXAMPLE, IN TERMS OF ANTAGONISMS THE MOST HE HAD EVER HEARD BEFORE WAS THAT SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO, AND PERHAPS SLOVENIA, DISLIKED THE GERMANS. NO ONE HAD EVER HEARD OF ANTI-MUSLIM PASSIONS OR OF THE INTENSITY OF ANTI-SERB FEELINGS UNTIL THE RECENT VIOLENCE BEGAN.

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 02 OF 02 MINSK 000066

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8. SHUSHKEVICH VOLUNTEERED SOME THOUGHTS ON CHINA. HE HAD SPENT FOUR DAYS THERE IN VERY INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH ALL LAYERS OF SOCIETY AND CAME AWAY WITH THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT EXOGENOUS EFFORTS TO ACCELERATE THE COURSE OF DEMOCRATIZATION WERE POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE MASSES ARE POORLY EDUCATED, IF AT ALL. THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE DEMANDS OF DEMOCRACY IF THEY HAD IT.

9. SHUSHKEVICH SAID HE WANTED TO RAISE A VERY SPECIFIC ISSUE, ONE WHICH HE SAID WOULD NO DOUBT MAKE THE INTERPETER (AMBASSADOR SWARTZ) UNCOMFORTABLE. SHUSHKEVICH SAID HE HAD HEARD THE PRESIDENT INTENDS TO CHANGE AMBASSADORS IN MINSK. THE LAST THING HE WOULD WANT TO DO IS INTERFERE IN INTERNAL U.S. AFFAIRS, SHUSHKEVICH CONTINUED, BUT IF THERE WERE ANY WAY TO RETHINK THIS DECISION HE WOULD WELCOME IT. THE AMBASSADOR IS PLUGGED IN TO ALL ASPECTS OF BELARUS LIFE. THIS MEANS OF COURSE THAT HE HAS MADE ENEMIES ALONG THE WAY, BUT THAT IS TO BE CONSIDERED AN HONOR. INDEED ONE THING THE AMBASSADOR AND I HAVE IN COMMON, SHUSHKEVICH SAID, IS THAT WE HAVE THE SAME ENEMIES. IF THE PRESIDENT MUST MAKE A CHANGE, HE CONCLUDED, HE SAID HE HOPED SOMEONE EQUALLY CAPABLE COULD BE FOUND.

SWARTZ

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SECTION: 01 OF 02

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