

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

1003

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526

2016-0923-M (1.46)
KBH 5/4/2021

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Secretary General
Boutros-Ghali of the United
Nations (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Clifton Wharton, Secretary of State (Acting)
Madeleine Albright, U.S. Permanent
Representative to the United Nations
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Samuel Berger, Deputy Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Mike Sheehan, Director for Multilateral
Affairs, NSC (notetaker)

Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of
the United Nations
Alvaro DeSoto, Senior Political Advisor to
the Secretary General
Marrack Goulding, Under Secretary General for
Peacekeeping
James O.C. Jonah, Under Secretary General for
Political Affairs
Michael Stopford, U.N. Information Centre,
Washington, D.C.
Russell Taylor, Office of the Secretary
General (notetaker)

DATE, TIME February 23, 1993, 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President and the Secretary General met in the Oval Office for a discussion of UN issues and multilateral peacekeeping operations. (U)

The President: Thank you very much for coming down to see me. I'm sorry to hear that your train was a little long in getting here. I've also been thinking of taking the train to go on a trip up to New Jersey and Philadelphia. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Thank you, Mr. President. I enjoyed taking the train. You can get some work done on the train. (U)

The President: I understand that you have been very busy. (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Declassify on: OADR

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, there have been too many problems and they all come at the same time. There seems to be a deterioration of situations and they, also, all come at the same time. We are not always able to cope with them all. (U)

The President: Well, I'm very supportive of the United Nations and peacekeeping operations in general. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Thank you very much. That's very important to us. I have here a report from Mr. Paul Volcker that explains some of the financial difficulties that we have. It is a plan for helping us to solve some of our serious financial problems. (Hands the President the Volcker report and budget summary sheet.) (U)

The President: I've just talked with Ambassador Albright about this and I am encouraged. We should pay our fair share. And we will be as generous as we can possibly afford to be in peacekeeping operations. I'm also very encouraged by the progress of the operation in Somalia. I'm looking forward to turning over the command as soon as possible. This is an excellent statement of what we're able to do. With the vast array of other problems that face us, we're very hopeful that we'll be successful in Somalia; so that we can continue to do such things in the future. We are also very hopeful that Congress will give us the money we request. We hope we'll be able to put forth a very serious effort to help you make some of the management changes that you have planned. (U)

I'd like to ask you what your feelings are about the airlift in Bosnia and if we could talk about it for a few moments. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, of course. It's not just Bosnia, though. We have a lot of problems -- Somalia, Angola, Mozambique, El Salvador, Cambodia. (U)

The President: Yes, that's true. We have many problems. But I'm encouraged by Cambodia and the prospects for Sihanouk. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: There will be elections in May even if the Khmer-Rouge do not participate. They only represent about 10 percent of the population. We will hold the elections in any case. (U)

The President: Yes, I think that is the right decision. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: We've had great success in Cambodia. We've been able to repatriate 300,000 people back into their community; some of them returning to their original villages. Of course, it hasn't been a complete success. But it has been a good operation. Somalia, as well, has been a good operation. (U)

The President: Yes, and also in Haiti. We're moving ahead on Haiti. This is very important to the United States. (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, we have a very good program down there. I will be sending you a letter on this soon from the Friends of the Secretary-General working on Haiti. We intend to keep the pressure on the situation down there. (U)

The President: Yes, we need to be firm, almost relentless with these people. I believe the proper way to do this is through the U.N. and the OAS. We don't want to look like the ugly American in Haiti. This issue is very important to us; a lot of their people want to come here. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Dante Caputo is the representative there of both the U.N. and the OAS. We're enjoying complete cooperation with him. In other areas, such as Yugoslavia, we have other organizations involved and they take advantage of this; they play the EC against the U.N. and in Somalia they play the U.S. against the U.N. In Haiti we have perfect cooperation among the U.N. and the OAS because Caputo is in charge of both. We have a transition team down there now and a joint team of observers. (U)

The President: I'd like to ask you about Somalia and the timetable there. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, in a few days we should have a report on the operation and then we should be able to move forward in the next two weeks. I also need to move forward on the appointment of the new special representative. My representative is very ill. He has cancer. We need the representative for the transition and for the new operation. This is the first peace enforcement operation and it's very important that we have the right person in there quickly. We're going to have a meeting on humanitarian aid first and then a meeting on political reconciliation. It's very important that we explain our political reconciliation carefully and that we show the Somalis that we're not there as a neo-colonial power. And we need to get on with the reconstruction and proceed not only with relief but with the reconstruction and the return of the refugees to their villages. That is the purpose of our operation there. (U)

We need to attain the cooperation of as many of the leaders as we can. There are still many bandits in the area. It'll be one or two years in Somalia and it will be very costly. We need new funding. It is for this reason that I'm going to send a special envoy to some of the rich Arab countries. Rich countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries in order for them to contribute to Somalia, a Muslim nation. The money is not just for U.N. forces but for the reconstruction of the country. We need an integrated approach to pull together the political, the humanitarian, and the economic reconstruction of Somalia. (U)

The Vice President: Can we proceed with the transition plan before taking all these steps? (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes. We will be able to proceed. We have the new commander in place. Security is not perfect, as you saw in the situation in Kismayu the other day. We also have many arms flowing from Kenya and Ethiopia. It will be very difficult. But, yes, we will be able to continue the transition. (C)

The Vice President: This operation is a success in the making, but it's very important that we keep the timetable moving forward. (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes. This is no problem. In two weeks we should be able to do that. Now we need to get all the elements in place. On the 11th and 12th in Addis Ababa we're going to have a conference and although many of the factions are still in disarray, that is o.k. Even if, at the worst, we call that conference a preparatory conference for another conference to be held at a later date, we are getting the factions more ready to cooperate. (C)

Also, it's very important that I get the Arab League and the Islamic Conference to support this process. This shows that the operation is not just coming from just Europe and the United States. It's very important to get a regular group of supporters established in order for us to proceed on reconstruction and rehabilitation. (C)

The President: I'd like to return to Yugoslavia again. We're very concerned about whether the Vance-Owen Plan is a realistic plan we can implement and whether or not the rest of the countries can support it. What about the Russians, and others, do they feel supportive of the Vance-Owen Plan? (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, Russia does support the Vance-Owen Plan. We're not talking about a complete partition of Bosnia. The plan is based on the idea of a Federal system. There is no other alternative. But with pressure they will be able to work things out. It will continue to take a lot of work. The situation is ten times more difficult than the one in Somalia. (C)

The President: Yes, I concur. It's very difficult. My military advisers say that it will be very difficult to enforce the Vance-Owen Plan. There are so many borders and so many small areas it's almost unenforceable from a military point of view. The military can not guarantee its success. My military advisers tell me we may want to push for additional modification of the borders. (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, the Vance-Owen team is ready to talk about this. (C)

The President: I'm also concerned about whether the Serbs are prepared to negotiate in good faith. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

5

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, this is very difficult. The Serbs are now controlling over 70 percent of the area in Bosnia. It will be very difficult to negotiate with them on the Vance-Owen Plan. (C)

The President: What about Yeltsin? He has a lot of problems. Is Yeltsin going to be able to put pressure on the Serbians to negotiate in good faith? (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Well, the problem is not only Yeltsin and the Serbs. It's also the Muslims and the Bosnians themselves. They also have problems in the process. It's difficult for them to get a single position. Though the world press seems to think that all Serbs are the nasty people and the Croats and the Muslims are o.k., it's not that simple or that clean. (C)

The Vice President: Are you suggesting that the Bosnians are not a victim of this situation? (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Oh no, of course they are. (C)

The Vice President: Don't you agree that the Bosnians and the Muslims have had a disproportionate amount of the suffering in this situation? (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Of course, of course. But the image of the Muslim government as always the good guys -- it's not as simple as that. They're not always as interested in finding the solution. They're looking for a ground intervention in order to get what they want. I'm not sure they're ready to negotiate in good faith. (C)

The Vice President: Yes, but its been a terrible situation for the Bosnians. They've had many of their people abused and raped. They've been the victims of a very aggressive assault on their country. They have a blueprint that divides up their country and leaves the aggressors in charge of much of their territory. It's not surprising that they're not necessarily willing to accept this situation -- that they have some sort of ill will. (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: No, no. I understand that. The problem is, there's no clear representation in Bosnia. (C)

The Vice President: Yes, but prior to this situation this government was a model of multi-ethnic diversity. Now ethnicity is the basis for the organization. The fact that the President is Muslim and other leaders are more identified with other groups is a testimony to the country's being ripped apart. This government had stood for multi-ethnic representation. (C)

Secretary General Boutros Ghali: Yes, but there are two different points of view in Bosnia -- between the Prime Minister and the President. They're not on speaking terms and it complicates the ability to work on political reconciliation. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

6

The Vice President: Yes, the Prime Minister's a Croat and its very difficult to negotiate when the two don't work together. It is a very difficult situation, a symptom of the larger problem. (U)

The President: Yes, we're very worried about the situation. We're not sure that we can get all the parties to negotiate in good faith. We're hoping the airlift will be able to help the humanitarian aspects of the situation. But I'm very concerned about the geographical quilt that we've put together -- we're not sure we can guarantee its success. (U)

The U.N. has been on a roll lately in Somalia. Somalia will be a major triumph; Cambodia as well. It is important that we do something in Bosnia that does not ratify the bad faith that some have of the U.N. We will try to get the Bosnians and others to negotiate in good faith. We'll need the help of Yeltsin and the Russians, also, to work on some of these practical problems. I understand that Vance and Owen have done a great job; but I think they may have been acting in better faith in this process than the people that they're trying to pull together. (U)

We are very concerned about the impracticality of the plan and the feasibility of enforcing it. But, we are determined to play a constructive role in this and will cooperate with you. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, we need to give this process a chance. If they don't accept the situation and cooperate, we can not impose it on them. But this is the framework that we have. On Somalia, we should be able to get things on track in one to two years. Yugoslavia will be much longer. How long have we been in Cyprus -- twenty-nine years? And now Cyprus is back to square one. The failure of President Vassiliou in the recent election is a setback. Also, on Angola we're back to square one. After the elections the country went back to violence and now 70 percent of the territory is controlled by UNITA. But we have had success in El Salvador. (U)

The President: Yes, we can't win all of them, but we will do all we can to support you on these issues. I would appreciate it if I could take this opportunity, Mr. Secretary-General, to ask you for your counsel on the situation in the former Soviet Union and how we might be able to help stabilize the situation there. All of the instability could have an adverse impact on the United Nations and your ability to get things done. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, we've had some meetings to discuss this very issue... the role of the U.N and other agencies and how we can assist Russia and the other States of the former Soviet Union. (U)

We're opening offices in the former Soviet Union where we're going to integrate all our functions in one place to interface with the new States. UNDP, UNICEF and other agencies will all be consolidated in one office. We are sending many missions to the

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

7

former Soviet Union. We have two missions to the Baltics to look into the situation with the Russian minority there. We have two missions in Byelarus. We have them in Georgia, Tajikistan, Moldova and others; we are there and trying to help. There are many problems and they want more support. They want us to participate with observers in their peacekeeping operations. But for financial reasons and for other problems with our capacity, we're not sure what we'll be able to do. (C)

I've talked to Yeltsin about this and we will look to support him. He needs our support. Yeltsin says he needs the United Nations for support of his peacekeeping operations so that the Russians do not look like neo-colonialists in areas such as Tajikistan. Yelstin said if we were able to add U.N. forces to his operation this would help a great deal. We are ready to help within our means. They are a member nation and it is very important to us. (C)

It is interesting that we are playing very much the same role as we did in Africa in the 1960s. We are working with these new States to help them to make contacts with the international community. At a meeting one month ago on what the U.N. can do to help, we agreed to continue to try to help within our limited capacity. (C)

Mr. Goulding: I just wanted to make sure that in regard to the Bosnian airlift we follow the existing procedures and consultative mechanisms that are in place. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, if we are ready to provide this assistance we need to coordinate this very closely with the U.N. to avoid problems. (U)

The President: Yes, absolutely, we need to do that. We are also waiting for the participation of others, such as Russia. (U)

We are going to be operating at a sufficient altitude so that we should not have any difficulties. This is purely a humanitarian effort. There will be no fighter escorts. There will be no provocations concerning these flights. (C)

Mr. Lake: Yes, General Powell has made his intentions clear on this matter. He says this operation is an extension of the existing operation; that there will be no new name, it is the same operation. We'll have people on the ground to coordinate the flights and to work with UNHCR in order to coordinate the details. We're looking forward to close cooperation with UNHCR and we'll also have people in the staging area to look at the cargo and its content. (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, it's possible that some will claim that there are arms in the shipments. (C)

Mr. Lake: Yes, we'll be certain to assure the Serbs that this is not the case. We are also willing to send our humanitarian aid

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

8

to other areas in Bosnia and Croatia, where it is needed most.
(U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: The U.N. is a very weak institution. I need to retain its credibility. I am always trying to maintain cooperation with all the member States within the U.N. It is difficult for me to keep all the member States together. (C)

The President: Yes, I understand. I want the U.N. to be a strong organization. I'll work with you to ensure that. We'll do everything we can to work with you and like-minded allies through the U.N. For instance, I've had a lot of pressure in this country, but I believe it's wrong, to intervene in Haiti unilaterally. But I think the multi-lateral framework is the proper one. I want to continue to work within the multi-lateral process in Haiti. (C)

I appreciate your working with us on the airlift. We will continue to try to be constructive and work within the framework of Vance-Owen. I want to be able to work through this framework and enhance the strength and durability of the United Nations.
(C)

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, yes. We need the U.S. support very much. I need your support and support all around the world. (U)

Ambassador Albright: Would you also like to discuss with the President your plans of reform in the United Nations. We understand it's a weak organization and we want to help. Can you discuss some of your plans for addressing these problems? (U)

Secretary-General Boutros Ghali: Yes. When I first started the job I was able to eliminate fifteen top jobs and in the last several weeks I've been able to eliminate six more. I'm trying to help get better coordination between the U.N. and other independent agencies. It is essential that we integrate all the approaches in a comprehensive manner. For instance, in El Salvador we're trying to demobilize the army, run the elections, and conduct land reform. (U)

We need the cooperation of other agencies in order to do this effectively. We also need to obtain the support of the NGOs. They have lots of money but they're also difficult to work with. We need their support and we need their help, as in Somalia. They have been very active. They have the money, but they're also very aggressive and have their own ideas. We need to coordinate with these agencies and other NGOs. (C)

We also need to work within the regional organizations. In Somalia I've been trying to work with the Muslim Conference and Arab League. We need their political support in order to go to donors for more aid. We need African and Muslim cooperation. In El Salvador I have friends of the Secretary-General. In Guatemala as well. We need the cooperation of these regional

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

9

actors in order to gain support with public opinion and also with private corporations. (U)

We're trying to prepare a big event for the fiftieth-year anniversary so that we can renew the United Nations with a new image at the San Francisco meeting. Also at the social Summit meeting, sort of a follow-up to the Rio Conference. We need to work on the image of the United Nations within the United States and also international public opinion. Because from public opinion we get support of governments. That's key to the effectiveness of the United Nations. (U)

As an old Egyptian civil servant, I thought Egypt was the worst bureaucracy that existed. However, the U.N. is much worse. It needs a lot of work. (U)

The President: Well, we are willing to support you. It's tough, it's very tough. I understand your problems. I'm trying to do a little of that myself here. (Laughter) (U)

Ambassador Albright: The Secretary-General and myself have developed a very good working relationship. Perhaps you would be interested in sharing some of your insights from your recent trip to Japan with the President. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, it was a very interesting trip to Japan. It is very important that we get their participation. I was also in Germany. We need their participation, as well, for peacekeeping operations and other activities. But they wanted to offer a U.N. headquarters in Bonn, another building. But I don't need buildings, I need money. But I had a very good visit to Germany as well. (U)

Tokyo went much the same way. Again, they need to participate more in peacekeeping operations. They have a team in Angola and are planning to put a team into Mozambique. But they also must accept that they must make a bigger financial contribution and they also must play a role as a global power, not just in Asia. (U)

I have many problems. For instance, with Italy. They want a General to be in charge in Mozambique, as well as have the special representative. But, no, you can't have all of this. This is a classic problem. (U)

President: I'm glad your trip to Japan went well. (U)

Boutros Ghali: Yes, they are very interested in helping. I need to get out there more often. I've made three trips to London and four to Paris, but Japan is a very long way. It is a 14-hour trip. But I have to go to Tokyo more often. I was there to talk at the U.N. University there. I also talked with the different leaders of the parties and encouraged them for more cooperation. ((U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

10

Mr. Wharton: Have you talked about expanding the Security Council?

General-Secretary Boutros-Ghali: I'm very neutral on this. (Laughter). But why not, if they're willing to participate I think this is a good idea.

The President: Yes, we're very open to that suggestion -- to get them more into the action. The same with Germany. They know they need to participate more. (C)

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali: Yes. (U)

The President: I hope we'll be able to get a good report from the Middle East soon. (U)

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali: Yes. On the Middle East -- I spent the last 15 years of my career working on this issue. I think it was a great mistake by the Israelis on the issue of the 430 deportees. They've given the Muslim fundamentalists great propaganda. We are going to have problems in Tunisia, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and others. There was an excellent article recently in the New York Times. I called the journalist there to congratulate him. You also have problems with Islamic radicals working in pockets in the United States; also in Europe. (C)

I told Rabin, "Why don't you just put them in prison?" Every day we have CNN on the news. It's the best propaganda these people could have. They've got a billion dollar propaganda campaign out of this situation. They put us all in a very difficult position. Again, I think they should just put them in prison. (C)

The Vice President: Yes, but it seems we are making progress on this situation. (C)

The President: I believe Rabin knows he has made a mistake. (C)

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, I've worked with these people for the last 15 years and there is a great deal of mutual trust. We've worked together on these issues and they know it is in our mutual interest to resume the peace process. It is in the interest of the region. But I think they should be careful that they don't wake up tomorrow and find out that Yassir Arafat was a relative moderate. That we have a group of fanatics -- the Hamas, the Hezbollah, that are gaining stronger representation. They are also operating in the Gaza and on the West Bank. (C)

Under Secretary General Jonah: What about South Africa? (C)

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, we've a hundred observers in South Africa. Things are going very well. They're working closely with the South African police. I know the leaders there, Pik Botha. We've been very successful in South Africa. It's been a boost. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

11

The President: Yes, I have recently read a good editorial about that in the New York Times. (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, but in Africa we still have many problems. Zaire is ready to collapse. Also, Togo has some great problems. Zaire is possibly the greatest danger. If it deteriorates we could have a Somalia times ten. I've had a representative from Mobutu send me a message to get the U.N. ready to intervene. They want the U.N. to intervene between Mobutu and the Prime Minister and they want the U.N. to intervene between Mobutu and the three foreign powers with interests there: France, Belgium and the United States. This could be very expensive. I don't know if we'll have the money. We'll have to be in consultation. However, in terms of the financial situation, it may be better to send observers to prevent a problem so that it doesn't escalate into a bigger, worse situation. (C)

Mr. Lake: We've been coordinating with the French and the Belgians on this to encourage Mobutu to allow the transitional government to get in. Mobutu wants someone to come and save him. I don't think there is any way he can be considered as part of the solution in Zaire. (C)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, I think we're going to need more preventive diplomacy down there. We need to get something done. (C)

The President: Yes, I've been following the situation. We've both have a lot of problems to deal with. (U)

Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: Yes, Mr. President, thank you very much for having me here today. (U)

The President: Yes. It's been a very good meeting. Thank you very much. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~