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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State  
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary for  
European and Canadian Affairs  
Alexander Vershbow, Senior Director for  
European Affairs, NSC Staff (Notetaker)

Jacques Chirac, Mayor of Paris  
Jacques Andreani, Ambassador to the U.S.  
Pierre Lellouche, MP  
Didier Quentin, Director of International  
Affairs, Paris Government  
Deidre Durance, Interpreter

DATE, TIME September 21, 1994 4:00 - 4:25pm  
AND PLACE: Oval Office

Mayor Chirac: I met with Mrs. Clinton earlier today. We had a very good discussion. I am very interested in your health care bill. I am sorry that so many people are trying to stop it. I hope you will be able to do it in the next session of Congress. (U)

The President: There have been three problems in achieving health care legislation in the United States. The first is financial. The United States spends over 14% of its national income on health care. Canada only spends 10% and others spend even less. (U)

Mayor Chirac: In France we spend 9%. (U)

The President: We spend 4% more than anyone else and we cover fewer people. Fourteen percent of our GDP is spent on health care, or \$240 billion, and that means there is a lot of interest in not changing the present system. The lobbies have spent \$120 million against the health care legislation. (U)

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The second problem is a psychological question. In the United States, no one trusts government to do anything. Even though they know that there will be no solution without some action, no one trusts the government to do it. The third problem is purely political. The opposition party has enough votes in the Senate to block the legislation. The Republicans believe it is critical to winning middle class voters on ideological grounds. So we have three obstacles that we can't overcome -- though at least we did get the bill to the floor, which is further than has ever been done before. (U)

Mayor Chirac: Maybe you should submit it to the European Parliament. There you would get votes on the left and the right. (U)

The President: Yes, I could get a lot more votes in Europe than in the United States on a lot of things. (U)

Mayor Chirac: Congratulations on Haiti. It is not an easy situation. Do you believe that President Aristide will be able to return on October 15? (U)

The President: Yes. The great difficulty is trying to convince his enemies that he will respect minority rights as well as those of the majority. (C)

Mayor Chirac: Will he? (C)

The President: Yes. With U.S. forces there, even if he wished to do otherwise, he couldn't. We are planning to contribute over \$1 billion in aid and there will be no money if he doesn't conduct himself properly. Our troops will also ensure that the army doesn't kill his supporters. The third issue is getting them to agree to do what they agreed a year ago on Governor's Island. So we have difficulties, but I think it will be okay. (C)

Mayor Chirac: So far so good. Can I ask you a question about Bosnia? There is a lot of worry in France and in Great Britain about lifting of the arms embargo. It would be very dangerous from our point of view. Not only would UNPROFOR be withdrawn but it could lead to the disappearance of Bosnia. I don't think the Bosnian government would be able to resist the attacks of the Bosnian-Serb army. I met with Senators Nunn, Dole, Pell and Speaker Foley today and with Congressman Lantos. I don't think they see what is going to happen if the embargo is lifted. (C)

The President: Did you tell Senator Dole what you just said here? (C)

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Mayor Chirac: Yes I did. Senator Nunn shared my point of view. He agreed that you should not lift the embargo unilaterally. But you could not lift it any other way. Neither Great Britain nor France would agreed on October 15 to lift the embargo in the Security Council. So, if you do it, it will be unilaterally. UNPROFOR withdrawal would be imminent. There would be a dramatic risk for the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. (U)

The President: I agree. We have tried to head this off. The great problem is that an overwhelming majority of the Congress is for lifting the embargo right away. We've pushed back and I am against unilaterally lifting the embargo. It does risk collapsing Bosnia and spreading the war. (U)

Mayor Chirac: The Bosnians don't have tanks or heavy artillery. (U)

The President: President Izetbegovic may not be in favor of the lift anymore, but he won't say it publicly. Then Prime Minister Silajdzic comes and says he wants a lifting of the embargo. (U)

Secretary Christopher: There is some misunderstanding about the timetable. We don't have to act on October 15. It is the beginning of the clock and not the end. There would be two more weeks to go before we would propose a Security Council Resolution. After that, the further action required would be to consult with the Congress on unilateral lift. So October 15 is not the guillotine that it is seen to be in Europe. We are trying to do things that will give us flexibility up until Thanksgiving. (U)

The President: The Congress will want to lift the embargo even if there is a change after the elections. In the normal course of things the Presidential party loses support in the mid-term elections. The only time this did not happen was during Franklin Roosevelt's first term. So we may lose a few seats, though not as many as the Republicans hope. But after election fever passes, there may be an opportunity for a calmer debate. We don't want to force the UK and French troops out. That would mean the collapse of the UN mission; that would be a mistake. The Bosnians are getting the arms they need, there are holes in the embargo. I feel lifting is risky. When I advocated lift in 1993, the situation on the ground was different. (U)

Mayor Chirac: You are right. (U)

The President: If we had done it then, the Serbs would have come to an earlier peace settlement. The situation now is quite different. I am worried that NATO forces would not be willing to do the air war that is needed. One thing we don't want is for

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the European effort to collapse on October 15. We have lots of options between now and October 15 to avert unilateral lift. There will be complications after October 15. Europe shouldn't overreact. We will stay with the policy until we are forced off of it. (S)

Mayor Chirac: Senator Dole spoke of certain procedures and suggested that lift could take place next year. He was quieter than I thought he would be. (S)

The President: Dole has been somewhat toned down by the ambivalence of the Bosnians themselves. He knows that Izetbegovic has fixed feelings. (S)

Anthony Lake: If we are to sustain our approach, we need to do everything possible to show that there is an alternative. We have to get the border monitors in quickly and we have to do everything we can to enforce the existing exclusion zones through NATO action. If we can point to the rest of our policy as working, we can say, "Give us more time." We can't do this with nothing. So the more that we can do together, the better. (S)

Mayor Chirac: I share that point of view. It is also the position of the French government. We support including observers on the border. If we lift the sanctions step by step, he will accept observers and stop helping the Bosnians Serbs. (S)

Anthony Lake: The first monitors were going in this weekend. (U)

Richard Holbrooke: The first monitors are there already. (U)

Anthony Lake: We also need to convince the United Nations personnel to implement the exclusion zones. Therefore we have to tell General Rose and General DeLapresle to act. (S)

Mayor Chirac: I agree. The only difficulty is with respect to airstrikes. France agrees but the UK does not. And this is not a question of ideology, but relates to the position of their troops. (S)

Ambassador Andreani: The UK troops are more exposed. (S)

Mayor Chirac: Yes, the UK troops are more exposed.. They are too exposed to support an airstrike policy. We accept this policy because we are not in the same places as the British. We understand their viewpoint. (S)

I understand President Yeltsin is coming soon. (U)

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The President: I am looking forward to his visit. (U)

Mayor Chirac: How do you feel about the situation in Russia? Is it improving? (C)

The President: I feel better about the situation than I did when I visited in January. Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin have stabilized the economy. Inflation is down and 40% of the workers are now in the private sector.

Mayor Chirac: He has instituted many reforms. (C)

The President: Yes, and he is cooperating with us on denuclearization of the other republics. He has taken his troops out of the Baltic countries, which we asked him to do. The Russians are working pretty well with us in Bosnia. There are some uncertainties -- for example, he does not want us to expand NATO. (C)

Mayor Chirac: Is he very opposed? (C)

The President: Chris? (U)

Secretary Christopher: If we handle this carefully and relatively slowly, NATO expansion can be accomplished. An abrupt precipitous move right now to take in 3 or 4 countries could cause difficulties. Partnership for Peace is just the beginning. We need to get it up and running and then consult about broaden the Alliance. This is an area for moving carefully, not taking the plunge. There will be a debate over extending the security perimeters of the Alliance. We may need a special relationship for Russia. This is not a weekend project, but one for several years to come. (C)

The President: How and when we expand the Alliance while we (all of us in the West) manage our relations with Russia depends in part on whether we believe we can make the future markedly different from the past. Poland and Hungary and the others want to be in NATO because they believe that the impulse of Russian empire will reassert itself. They don't feel this anymore about Germany. Even though Russia is no longer the Soviet Union they believe that this element of history will reassert itself. (C)

President Yeltsin believes that Russia should be given, with the approval of the international community, a sort of primary right to settle disputes along its borders, and be given great responsibility in international groups, like the G-8. But Yeltsin doesn't believe there will be a new impulse toward empire building after he is gone -- at least in terms of geographic

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expansion. Russia will have political and economic influence, but not in terms of taking over other lands. So Yeltsin sees expansion of NATO as forcing him to react and reawakening forces in Russia he is trying to keep down. Therefore, I agree with Secretary Christopher. We should expand NATO, but in a careful way, so as to leave open the possibility that the future will be different, rather than recreating the certainty of repeating the past. We certainly do not just want to move the dividing line further east. We would do that only if we thought that conflict with Russia was a certainty. (C)

Mayor Chirac: No one can say what Yeltsin thinks today about this question, whether he will react firmly or not. We probably should ask him. Those countries that you mentioned are very worried. They don't know where they are. But we should not expand the alliance against the Russians. They need consideration. Anyway, I am not so sure this is the most important issue for Yeltsin right now. (C)

Secretary Christopher: I am sorry to be the one to interrupt but our time is up. (C)

The President: I'm having a good time. He always stops me when I'm having a good time. (U)

Mayor Chirac: I am very worried about drugs. Production is up and trafficking is increasing. (U)

The President: The problem is the worst here in the U.S. (U)

Mayor Chirac: Something should be done, although I don't know just what. (U)

The President: We are trying to coordinate law enforcement within the United States with efforts outside the United States. We have sent the Director of the FBI abroad to do this. Next year we should have an intense focus on the problem. (U)

-- End of Conversation --