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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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KBH 12/10/2024

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev
of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Strobe Talbott, Special Advisor to the
Secretary of State on the New Independent
States
Nicholas Burns, Senior Director for Russian,
Ukrainian and Eurasian Affairs, NSC Staff
John Beyrle, Director for Russian, Ukrainian
and Eurasian Affairs, NSC Staff (Notetaker)

Andrey Kozyrev, Foreign Minister
Vladimir Lukin, Ambassador to the U.S.
Yuli Vorontsov, Permanent Representative to
the UN
Sergei Krylov, Chief of Staff to the Foreign
Minister

DATE, TIME September 29, 1993, 4:55 - 5:40pm
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: We were just speculating on whether my popularity ratings would go up if I dissolved the U.S. Congress. We have this little problem of the U.S. Constitution, though. (U)

The Vice President: This is not a formal announcement. (U)

The President: This is a joke. (U)

The President: Tell me how things are in Russia. (U)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Things are complicated, but on track politically. There is a growing mood in favor of elections, growing support for the President. There are still some regional leaders who oppose him. The situation around the Russian White House is tense. There are still 150-300 deputies left inside -- less than a quorum. They are looking for trouble to justify their militant stance. Some of them -- many -- are negotiating with the government to get new jobs. Maybe half of them are waiting for some kind of miracle. There is real potential for

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provocation. Three policemen have been killed already. The other side may feel that they need some casualties now, too.

(S)

The President has asked me to convey his gratitude for the immediate and resolute support for him you expressed. He has the firm intent to stick to his schedule for, first, parliamentary elections, and then later, elections for President. We need this timetable, with a six-month gap, to guarantee stability at the time of the Presidential elections. He also asked me to reiterate his firm decision to avoid any bloodshed or the use of force as much as possible, unless attacked. No storming of the Russian White House is planned. (S)

The President: What is your strategy now? Do you plan to negotiate with them? (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Yes, we have offered them good jobs. At least half of them are negotiating for these jobs. About one-third of the number originally inside have now left. (S)

The President: Well, I think the President has handled this as well as possible. The way things have turned out has vindicated the approach he took, the restraint he has shown. It makes it a lot easier for us to offer unqualified support -- for the world to offer its support. This kind of restraint helps build support. (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: We don't see the need to use force. The parliament has not had much support now for some time. They are more and more isolated. But there is also tension among the police guards, who are facing criminals. This takes a lot of discipline. But on the political level, there is no question of using force. (S)

The President: I saw the reports of your U.N. speech. How did you think it was received? (U)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Well, the New York Times tried to show some difference between what you and I said. I had a long talk about that this morning with Secretary Christopher. I think we agreed that there is really little difference between our speeches. We agree with you on the need to streamline U.N. peacekeeping operations, to make them more efficient and focused, provided that certain requirements are met. That is the right response. The response from Boutros Ghali is a bad response -- that he has no finances or infrastructure to respond quickly when the need for peacekeeping arises. (S)

The President: That's why I said we need to review how U.N. peacekeeping is operated. Right now, we need to look at these on a case-by-case basis. Longer-term, the problem is that there is no organized system to manage the peacekeeping process. I made some specific recommendations. Since I returned from New York, I have called members of Congress and have found lots of support for the U.N., if it is willing to change. (S)

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Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Your criteria are more reasonable. But Rwanda is a bad case to cite. The French should do this, not the U.N. Also, the U.N. still has many rules and practices left over from the cold war. There are cases when a peacekeeping task could be accomplished quickly, if all the parties are willing. But no one can act until the Security Council decides. During the Cold War, maybe the Soviet Union would veto French participation. But the situation is different now. (S)

The President: I wanted to raise with you the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: That is a difficult situation. The leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians came to the CIS conference. I had meetings with all of them. One of the big problems was that they were working on an agreement document in one language, and when they translated it back into their own language they tried to change things. These things are constant problems. If we get them together in Geneva, how will they communicate with their capitals? We need the U.N. and CSCE to be ready to take part when agreement is close. When they finally come to an agreement, we will need CSCE observers, and there is no mandate for observers. No agreement between them will last more than two months without a huge peacekeeping force, one that can come in immediately. High authorities may sign agreements, but they don't have full control of the forces that act. (S)

The President: The Minsk group talks are scheduled to start again November 2. (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Yes. We will need a cooperative approach between the Minsk Group and us, who can work well together with the parties. The day after the agreement is reached, we need immediately for CSCE observers to come in, followed by U.N. Forces. Out of the 80 observers authorized, only 22 actually came -- and no forces. The parties cannot keep their political promises without this. It's the same problem in Georgia. Without a peacekeeping force, promises were not kept. (S)

The President: What will happen now in Georgia? (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Now that Sukhumi has fallen, we need to get to some kind of agreement. Whenever they are ready, observers and peacekeepers must come in. The European neutral states must be part of this. (S)

The President: Will Gamsakhurdia try to come back to power? (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Certainly he will try. If he will succeed, no one can say. Unfortunately, Shevardnadze does not have control. (S)

The President: So you think a peacekeeping force should include the European neutrals? (S)

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Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Yes. (U)

The President: Up in New York I spoke with the leaders of the Baltic states to discuss the troop withdrawal issue. I said it was important for them to respect the political rights of the Russians in their countries. (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: Yes, we want them to be accepted as citizens of Estonia and Latvia. We need to make progress on this. They need to be integrated into the society. If they are seen as foreigners, it could lead to ethnic divisions and eventually to claims for independence in certain regions. (S)

The President: Can this be resolved this year? (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: The citizenship question? I don't know. (S)

The Vice President: Mr. Minister, I wanted you to know that I had a wonderful phone conversation on Saturday with Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. The work of our commission is going forward rapidly. Six committees have already been set up, with chairmen. Secretary of Energy O'Leary and NRC head Ivan Selin are going to Moscow now. The head of OPIC, Commerce Secretary Brown, and NASA head Goldin will go later. (S)

I wanted to go back to what you said on Nagorno-Karabakh. You said you want to work closely with the Minsk process. We hope you can work with them. There is some conflict now, and we think the chances for success are better if we work together. (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: I would say it is more a question of "desynchronization," not conflict. If we can get these leaders in Moscow for 2 days, it is almost immoral for us not to try to get an agreement. Then we can have it supported by the CSCE. But we want to work with the Minsk process. (S)

The Vice President: There is also the problem of a center of gravity to the process. Where will it be -- with Russia, or with the CSCE? We think the chances for resolution are better if the center of gravity is with CSCE. (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: This sound very theoretical -- like a word with two accents. My experience with them is very unpleasant. I have visited their areas, met with them -- they all speak Russian, but their Russian reduces to very strong wording. (S)

On the Chernomyrdin commission, we appreciate your work with him in favor of economic reform. Chernomyrdin is gaining stature and knowledge, he is working with Gaydar and now sees the need for things that Gaydar is proposing. And Gaydar sees that Chernomyrdin has a certain experience. It's a unique moment -- the government will be composed of both practitioners and reformists. (S)

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The President: On the Baltics, are you saying if they agree on citizenship you'll set a date for withdrawal? (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: No, withdrawal depends not on the citizenship question but on negotiated conditions. If we succeed in negotiating these, then we can withdraw on an organized and speedy basis. We succeeded in this way in Lithuania. A final date is set in any case -- we will be out by the end of 1994. But if they negotiate the proper conditions, things could be speeded up. Now, they are saying they want us to write a blank check for damages done during 45 years of Soviet occupation. (S)

Mr. Lake: It is important for us that this proceed as quickly as possible. We have legislative problems. There is interest in Congress on this. (S)

The President: There is major interest in the U.S. and in Congress. We would like you to focus on an early withdrawal. (S)

Mr. Lake: As Secretary Christopher told you, don't get bogged down in extraneous details. Focus on setting a date. (S)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: I met in New York with Meri and Ulmanis. Meri knows better than anyone how much we have supported this. He doesn't try to tell me we are "waging imperial policies." Yes, there are difficulties. But he has promised to look into his negotiating positions with an open mind to try to find compromise. We will try to do this soon. (S)

Mr. President, it is my duty to transmit to you two messages from President Yeltsin. The first refers to some things you have already done, and touches on the \$2.5 billion support bill. (C)

Amb. Lukin: It is thanks for aid. (U)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev: And the second contains these photographs. (U)

The President: Thank you. These are wonderful. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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