

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Toby T. Gati, Special Assistant to the
President and Senior Director for Russian,
Ukraine and Eurasian States, NSC Staff
(Notetaker)
Peter Afanasenko, Interpreter

Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev of Russia

DATE, TIME May 21, 1993, 8:40 - 9:30am
AND PLACE: Mr. Lake's Office, West Wing

CONVERSATION BETWEEN ANDREI KOZYREV, WARREN CHRISTOPHER AND TONY LAKE

Secretary Christopher: If all proceeds well, then following the Hurd meeting, FM Kozyrev's trip to the UN, and discussions with Juppe, it may be possible to get a statement issued. The initial British reaction is that the paper drafted yesterday represents a good start. FM Kozyrev had earlier raised the question of including the Spaniards in the preliminary discussions. Should this be done? (S)

FM Kozyrev: Dealing with the Spaniards is no problem. The "Yugoslav 5" exists and it is established practice to include Spain. I will personally deal with them. If the Spaniards are included, it will be easier to deal with the rest of the Security Council, since they are seen as a bridge between the P-5 and the non-P-5. (S)

Mr. Lake: This will only be a problem if it becomes a precedent for all future consultations. Can we include them only this one time? (S)

FM Kozyrev: We will be flexible on this. If we exclude Spain it will create a negative reaction. Including them has no cost. (S)

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Secretary Christopher: I will talk to Hurd about this. (S)

Mr. Lake: How should we plan to issue the statement? (S)

Secretary Christopher: We will meet and plan to issue it tomorrow. The French will probably want to make some changes. If all of the P-4 are there, it will give added force to the press release. Meanwhile, there is fighting going on in several places. (S)

FM Kozyrev. This is why gradual implementation makes sense. There is no one center of authority. If Karadzic signs the agreement, this does not mean that every local commander will obey. It is important to make arrangements on site, province by province, to establish a modus vivendi based on local agreements. Under present circumstances, a national agreement does not mean much. (S)

Secretary Christopher: This is evident in Croatia. (S)

FM Kozyrev: Absolutely. (U)

Mr. Lake: We will have to address Croatian fighting too. We have been focusing mainly on Macedonia and Kosovo. (S)

FM Kozyrev: Churkin did some negotiations with Krajina. This is important because there are more refugees (Serbs) in Croatia than Croat refugees throughout the area. The refugee problem is creating problems for Croatia too. It will be years before the situation calms down. (S)

Mr. Lake: It will be very hard to deal with the vendettas that are now being created. (S)

FM Kozyrev: Both Tudjman and Izetbegovic are accusing the other of violating the agreements. Tudjman says there are no Croatian soldiers involved, just like Milosevic said last year that there were no Yugoslav soldiers involved in the fighting. After I went to the region last year, I asked Milosevic to call Mladic and remove him. Mladic is a good general, but a bad politician; he lives in a fantasy world, fighting with German tactics from the First World War in the belief that he is defending all Slavs. I told him not to concern himself with defending Russian national interests -- Russia can take care of itself. (S)

Mr. Lake: The weight of history is very great in that region. (S)

FM Kozyrev: Past and present are all mixed up. Each side lives in the past, bringing up events of decades and centuries ago to support their view. The truth is that each side is responsible for thousands of massacres. This is true in Serbia, it is true in Nagorno-Karabakh and in Tajikistan. (S)

Secretary Christopher: One of America's advantages is certainly in being a new society. (U)

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Secretary Christopher: What do the changes in Ukraine mean? (S)

FM Kozyrev: We will have to wait and see. Kuchma has made a good impression because he sounds more realistic and has some experience in the economy. It will be very difficult to sort out what is happening. All the actors are known to Russia because most of them are former communists. Kravchuk, for example, served in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the nationalists, many of whom also consider themselves Ukrainian democrats, are not playing a constructive role. It is hard to work with the democrats because they are so nationalistic. It is the democrats/nationalists who are for keeping nuclear weapons. Mr. Lake is correct that Kravchuk's move to assume extraordinary powers is welcomed by those not too eager for reform. There is a strange combination of neo-Communists and nationalists working together. The situation is now unpredictable. This is true partly because almost no one in Ukraine has a clear political orientation -- the motives for struggle are unclear, probably reflecting more of a classic power struggle than a fight over principled positions. (S)

The most important issue in Ukraine is nonproliferation. Ukraine interprets the American desire for better relations as a signal that the U.S. is removing the pressure in the nuclear area. This is very clear, and very dangerous. The Ukrainians can if they wish solve the technical problems associated with control of nuclear weapons rather soon. (S)

Mr. Lake: The United States has shifted its tactics, having come to the conclusion that a hard line position on nuclear weapons was increasing Ukrainian insecurity and playing into the hands of the nationalists. At the same time, we are making clear that there is no backing off the nuclear issue. (S)

DISCUSSION WITH THE PRESIDENT, MINISTER KOZYREV, SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER AND TONY LAKE

The President: Welcome. I am glad to see you again. (U)

FM Kozyrev: Best regards from President Yeltsin. After Vancouver, he, as you, is engaged in domestic politics, particularly in finding ways to deal with the Soviet-style Parliament. It is clear now that it is impossible to deal with them. The main issue is to approve the Constitution, knowing full well that the present Parliament won't vote itself out of existence. (S)

The most likely course of action is for a new referendum to be held in late September. The problem will be to get an absolute majority of the electoral vote. If that proves impossible, and Yeltsin can only get a regular majority, then he may decide to issue a decree to make the Constitution provisional until new elections can take place. Then the newly-elected Parliament can

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vote on the Constitution. It is very difficult to overcome the present constitution because the present Parliament won't approve a reasonable new Constitution. (S)

The President: It is a vicious circle. (S)

FM Kozyrev. Yes. The only way is to go to the people, whether through the referendum or through new elections. Perhaps the President can use the Constitutional Assembly [called for June 5] to declare that Russia has a new Constitution. But he can do this only if public opinion will see the Assembly as a legitimate body. (S)

This crisis will be overcome by the end of the year. It is the last crisis in creating a post-Communist democratic state, the last struggle with the legacy of the Soviet system. It is Yeltsin's hope that the old system will be crushed by the end of the year. (S)

As to the economic situation, it is still difficult. Yeltsin is trying to get control over the Central Bank and to establish financial discipline. In his letter to you, Mr. President, he outlined Russia's immediate needs in this field. It is good that there is constant contact between the two Presidents. (S)

The President: I admire what you are doing and am encouraged by it. We will do what we say, proceeding with the Vancouver package and getting the G-7 to contribute to the Privatization Fund. We will push ahead. (S)

FM Kozyrev: We look forward to the G-7 Summit. (U)

The President: What should we do about Bosnia? (S)

FM Kozyrev: There is no magic wand. Instead, we must explore opportunities that exist and work on a plan of action that includes the establishment of security zones. But even here, we must be careful, because things will be perceived in different ways by different leaders. For example, Izetbegovic was willing to support strengthened security zones only in the context of the Vance-Owen plan because he feared the creation of Bantustan-like ghettos. (S)

The important point is not to let Milosevic off the hook. Milosevic has aligned himself with Vance-Owen while Karadzic has rejected it. Milosevic is unlikely to accept this "no" because it sets a bad precedent. Milosevic said that he is the Serbian leader and only he can decide what is good for the Serbs. He will not allow Karadzic to assume the role as nationalist leader of the Serbs. Concern is, however, also growing about the development of a more hardline position in Serbia and in Montenegro. (S)

If Milosevic supports Vance-Owen, it does not mean that he will not cheat later on. Each side cheats whenever it has the chance.

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German Minister Kinkel has said that he will exercise influence on the Croats to keep them in line. (S)

There are two things that are of key importance: (1) to keep outside pressing on so as to pin the Serbs down and get them to accept our position and (2) to try to make some progress on the local level in the provinces. Everything in Yugoslavia is area specific. It is not true that the national leaders -- all of whom are illegitimate -- can enforce accords on the local level. Therefore a promising path to follow is to create in each province a mechanism, including peacekeepers and monitors with safeguards for their security. This is the essence of the Russian idea of "gradual installments of peace," of progressive implementation of Vance-Owen. (S)

The Commander of UNPROFOR thinks that this approach has merit. Russia firmly believes that it is better to do something than to do nothing and that it is even better to combine our efforts. No one should exaggerate the possibilities for progress, but no one should think that the Russians are living in a world of illusions about what is possible. (S)

President Yeltsin wants joint initiatives along the lines that I and Secretary Secretary Christopher discussed. The British and French should be brought along as well. On Saturday, it is to be hoped that the P-4 declaration can be issued with the ten specific points outlined. The result is still unclear, but it will keep the pressure on and give some momentum to the talks. It would be tragic if an illegitimate referendum gives Karadzic the power to flatly reject all peace plans. If this were to happen, then the Bosnian Serbs would get their way. We ought never to agree to this. The proposed declaration will say: we do not take a "no" as a "no." Milosevic will press this line too. Yesterday, the Secretary and I were able to add a few points to widen Vance-Owen by agreeing to seal the borders, enhance the security zones, and expand humanitarian efforts. (S)

The President. Yes, we have to do something. If you solve the Bosnian problem, you will each receive the Nobel prize. (S)

In dropping by, I want to emphasize that we will proceed with plans between our two countries in all areas. Please give my best to President Yeltsin. (S)

FM Kozyrev. Thank you. Please remember that my problem is survival, not praise or the Nobel Prize. Russian nationalists are looking at the situation and thinking how to apply what is happening to the internal situation in Russia. But President Yeltsin will never bow to nationalist pressure at home. (S)

CONTINUATION OF CONVERSATION AFTER THE PRESIDENT LEAVES

Secretary Christopher: The summary provided by the Minister is very good. (S)

Mr. Lake: It is hopeful without being naive. (S)

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FM Kozyrev: I know personally what cheating is, what it is to deal with the Serbian nomenclature. In this area of the world, you can't take anyone's word. You need not only special knowledge of the region as a Slav, but also an understanding of post-Soviet society. Nationalists and neo-Communists are easy to pick out but hard to deal with. (S)

-- End of Conversation --

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