

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526

2015-0782-M-1 (1.16)
3/13/2018 KBM

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Francois Mitterrand of France on April 20, 1994 (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Mitterrand
Interpreter: Stephanie von Reigersberg
Notetaker: Rick Waddell

DATE, TIME: April 20, 1994; 2:02 - 2:22pm
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello, Francois? (U)

President Mitterrand: Hello. (U)

The President: I wanted to talk to you about Bosnia. (U)

President Mitterrand: An inexhaustible topic! (U)

The President: After Gorazde, we need to something to put the negotiations back on track and to restore the momentum that we had. As you know, we also need to do something to reinforce the credibility of NATO. It seems to me, the best approach is to increase our collective pressure -- military and economic -- on the Serbs to reinforce the diplomatic efforts. I recognize that airpower alone may not prevent further Serb action. But if we demand that the Serbs withdraw a distance, and put their weapons under UN control, or if they fail to comply, their military targets -- including targets other than specific weapons firing on safe areas -- would be subject to NATO airstrikes. At least this would prevent further embarrassment. (S)

President Mitterrand: Why didn't they react before? The Japanese representative could have moved. (S)

The President: That's also something I wanted to talk about -- the need to streamline procedure so each incident doesn't become an endless debate. Also, I understand that there was bad weather and the Serbs were too close to UN people and to civilians. We couldn't hit the Serbs without hitting them, too....[This conflict] will never be settled without a negotiated agreement. You have proposed that. So has Yeltsin. What is your view? My thought is that you can only do this once -- best when the Serbs and Muslims are close to settlement and we could use a high-level meeting to push it over the top. But with Gorazde, and with

Russia being insulted by the Serbs, now might be the time. Of course, NATO has to agree, but now is the time for some diplomatic effort. (S)

President Mitterrand: I understand diplomatic efforts, but don't see what military efforts could do. It is a shame that NATO did not intervene in a timely manner at Gorazde as in Sarajevo. Now we can't intervene short of an all-out war, which nobody wants. Who would go there to fight? France wouldn't. I can see no way to intervene short of a real war. What would reoccupation of Gorazde do? (S)

The President: Oh no, I don't want that, just a change in the rules. What happens depends on Russian pressure on the Serbs. But I agree that we cannot go back into Gorazde, just change the rules in case Serbia moves on one of the other safe areas. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, but my dear friend, the principle danger that I see is that we make a pronouncement that we wouldn't accomplish....What I am afraid of if we continue on the path we are now on, we keep issuing statements which we don't follow through...for this reason I'm for going immediately into a diplomatic effort. Of course, I'm interested in hearing your proposals with respect to so-called safe areas. France would cooperate, but to do what? (S)

The President: To use the same rules as around Sarajevo for other safe areas....would streamline the rules to prevent another Gorazde....I agree that we shouldn't make empty promises.... (S)

President Mitterrand: I view the whole situation around Gorazde as a danger with respect to other safe areas. Either we get satisfaction around Gorazde or nobody will believe us on the other safe areas. Gorazde is now at the center of controversy. I really don't think any military offensive would be effective even with air power. That's why I'd very much like to see a diplomatic effort with major powers and the UN Secretary General. We must have a conference of four major powers -- of which you are the most important -- plus the European Union and the UN....I don't see the possibility of rapprochement between the Serbs and the Muslims. The "game" they are playing is complementary. The Muslims want to internationalize the war -- that's smart and understandable -- but we're not going to send our armies there, and the Muslims shouldn't be led to think so. I am ready to cooperate on making policy for the other zones besides Gorazde and Sarajevo, as well as explore what else can be done about Gorazde at the same time I'd seek to have the "four power" conference -- of course, there would be more than just four. The EU has Britain and France and Germany, for example...and if Serbia thought that at the end of the conference there'd be a lessening of sanctions.....The agreement that we almost had fell through because of the Muslims.... (S)

The President: Exactly. (U)

President Mitterrand: We need to explore further military actions...and concomitantly convoke this conference.... Otherwise we'll get bogged down in a war from which we can never get out.... (S)

The President: I'm encouraged by your views. I agree with your views on restoring Gorazde. I think the Russians are interested in that, too. We need to put our officials to work on the diplomatic front. (S)

President Mitterrand: This must be done simultaneously. We are willing to help but **not** to do just anything. (S)

The President: Good, let's get to work. (U)

President Mitterrand: We can talk anytime....,but we need to have a plan by the end of the week. (S)

The President: I agree. I'll be in touch. (U)

-- End of Conversation --