

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2460

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with French President Chirac

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Jacques Chirac

Notetakers: Carlos Pascual, Daniel Flessas and Elaine Florio

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 12, 1996, 9:52 a.m. - 10:13 a.m. EDT, Residence

President Chirac: Hello. (U)

President Clinton: Hello, Jacques. (U)

President Chirac: Hello Bill. I have a few things I would like to say. I hope you don't mind an interpreter. How are you? (U)

President Clinton: Oh, I'm fine. How are you? (U)

President Chirac: Fine. (U)

President Clinton: Glad to hear that. I only have two things I want to discuss: the G-7 and President Yeltsin, and the Nuclear Summit. ~~(S)~~

President Chirac: I'd like to say one word about Bosnia and Lebanon. You start Bill. Glad to know everything's going well. ~~(S)~~

President Clinton: We've had a bad week, very sad with the loss of Secretary Brown. (U)

President Chirac: Yes, I knew him. I met him in Lille. (U)

President Clinton: Yes, that was a couple of days before the crash. (U)

President Chirac: I met him several times. I was so shocked. It was an accident, right? ~~(S)~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Reason: 1.5 (d)

Declassify On: 4/12/06

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.5 (b)
White House Guidelines, September 11, 2006
By VR NARA, Date 6/3/2014
2015-0715-M (1.10)

President Clinton: Yes, there was very bad weather. We don't know yet but it was either equipment or pilot error. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: But it was an accident? ~~(C)~~

President Clinton: Yes, there was no misbehavior involved. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: We're very, very sorry. He was a man of great quality. (U)

President Clinton: Thank you. Let me say what I want to talk about. I want to talk about Yeltsin's role in Lyons and Russia's relationship with the G-7. Yeltsin wants a full G-8 and he thinks you and Helmut support him. ~~(C)~~

I want to talk about the problems with this. The Japanese and the British are opposed to it. My biggest concern is if we go to Lyons and Zyuganov wins. We don't want to send a political signal in Russia that either Yeltsin or Zyuganov is acceptable in a G-8. I think that's a mistake. ~~(C)~~

My second problem is this: it is easy to forget that our finance ministers have to make real financial decisions. They meet every quarter. I hope we will do more of this. For us, it's not a big problem to have Russia in the room. But it's a real problem for the finance ministers. ~~(C)~~

The third problem is: I think other countries such as China will presume we can expand to a G-12 or even a G-14. If so, we need to think it through. Those are my concerns. ~~(C)~~

On the other hand, I think we need to fully expand Yeltsin's partnership and we need to publicly announce it in Lyons. I'm calling you because the burden is on you as host. ~~(C)~~

Japan and Britain don't support full membership. I didn't fully understand until my Treasury Secretary explained to me fully the role finance ministers play. ~~(C)~~

I now think Yeltsin has a 50-50 chance in the elections. The number of people who say they will never vote for Yeltsin is 39 percent, and the number who say they will never vote for Zyuganov is increasing to 30 percent. Yeltsin is running a good campaign and Zyuganov has made some mistakes. ~~(C)~~

So I think things are on a good track for Yeltsin, but I think G-7 could be a real trap for us. ~~(C)~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

President Chirac: I fully understand all the arguments you have put forward. I believe a full meeting would be a mistake. This is not what I and Helmut are proposing. (C)

There are two solutions. The first which you proposed: we could have him come earlier than usual. A second solution would be to create a political P-8 and keep the G-7 for economic issues. In any event, the problem is to support Yeltsin. (C)

I believe we should only take a final decision on the morning after the first race. If Yeltsin is well-placed, we should make a substantial gesture such as having political discussions at eight and economic discussions at seven for reasons we all understand. In any event, nothing should be decided until after the first race. (C)

President Clinton: I fully agree with all of this. I would support either way or both. But there's one other point. If that is what we do, we'll have to tell Yeltsin or Yeltsin's people before we get to Moscow or when we arrive in Moscow, so that they don't think they'll get a full G-8. Otherwise, what might happen is they'll leak it and he'll be embarrassed at Lyons. This could be a disaster. (C)

We want the Nuclear Summit and Lyons to be successful. We have to let Yeltsin know that we do not support full G-7 membership. We could say we want you in politically but not economically, but that we want to do something to expand your role. He needs to know now so he won't be embarrassed. (C)

President Chirac: I agree completely with you. I think Kohl, you and me are on the same base, and I am sure John Major will agree -- and the Italians. It should not be a problem. I suggest that the sherpas see together how we do it. (C)

President Clinton: I agree with that, but now someone has to talk to Yeltsin. (C)

President Chirac: You or I or both could call. (C)

President Clinton: Let me make a suggestion. We ought to have our national security advisors -- yours, Germany's and ours -- talk about this in the next day or so, then leave the details to the sherpas. (C)

I'd like to have the national security advisors work out how to convey this message; let them recommend how we broach this. I'll plan to have Lake talk with your people in the next day or two and determine how to do this. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

We will have to go through Primakov because Russia's sherpa does not carry enough weight. (C)

President Chirac: I'll ask Levitte to call Lake this afternoon and call Bitterlich, and all three can talk today or tomorrow to decide how to confront Yeltsin and what to propose. We do not want to say anything officially before the first ballot. If Yeltsin is defeated, we should have the option of changing our minds. (C)

President Clinton: As long as he knows at the front end that he can not go the economic route, that's the main thing. (C)

Another thing: I don't think this is a big problem anymore, but the Summit communiqué has been written carefully to recognize the important role of nuclear power while keeping emphasis on safety first. Yeltsin signed off on it. (C)

Here's the problem: we had Yeltsin's support on it, but a couple of days ago he started saying it will hurt Ukraine. Russia's Minister of Atomic Energy has been giving him misinformation and keeps trying to pull Yeltsin away. He keeps saying Chernobyl is not dangerous. We need to convince Boris this is not a wise move. Primakov agrees with us, I believe. (C)

Like I said, I think this issue will not be a problem, but I would like to be able to contact you or your advisors on this issue. We can't afford to have a meeting with Kuchma that talks about cash and not about closing Chernobyl. (C)

President Chirac: I agree completely -- 100 percent. (C)

I have two other things I would like to talk about. First about Bosnia. I don't know when you will withdraw your troops, but I want you to know the French and British will withdraw troops the same day you do. We will not maintain our troops when you go. It costs a lot of money and so forth. I read an article that said if America withdraws, European troops will remain. (C)

President Clinton: Yesterday I was asked about that here. It was my understanding that we would go together, but we would support you and whatever decision you made. (C)

What is important is to make sure that the next six to eight months of IFOR are used well. Hopefully, we will try to restart the investment mission. The main thing is to have the reconstruction process well underway. We can't wait for time to pass. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

The elections are on track, the donors conference is about to meet, and we are going to restart on the economic initiatives which were set back by the crash. The colleagues of those lost in the crash and those in the American business community truly want to keep the initiatives going. ~~(C)~~

I think IFOR is going well and I am proud of the level of cooperation. We need to be sure the next six months go well.

~~(C)~~

We are committing \$3 million to OSCE and we will be kicking in a couple of hundred million dollars at the donors conference. I think we can pull out without the war starting again. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I agree completely. ~~(C)~~

I am worried about Lebanon, especially the impact of the elections. The Israeli bombings are very dangerous. They are bombing not only in the south but in the Bekaa and Beirut. Now, I hope Peres is elected again, he is the best alternative. But they are going too far, and I think it is counterproductive. If you have Peres on the telephone, tell him they shouldn't bomb them everywhere. ~~(C)~~

President Clinton: I have urged him to be restrained. But I think Hizballah attacked them in northern Israel. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: Well not more and not less than for years. They're going too far. They're very, very firm with the Palestinians. This is a step for elections. They are bombing the Bekaa and Beirut. They need to use finesse. ~~(C)~~

President Clinton: I think it has run its course. But I think you should call him and tell him what you think. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I'll do that. I think this bombing is counterproductive. ~~(C)~~

Did you hear what Yeltsin said yesterday about the stationing of nuclear weapons staying only in their original countries? ~~(C)~~

President Clinton: No, I knew that's what Yeltsin was planning to say. That's an interesting position. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: Then you agree with it? ~~(C)~~

President Clinton: I think we need to talk to him in private. We don't need a public discussion on this in advance of talking to him. ~~(C)~~