

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Chirac of France (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
French President Chirac

Interpreter: Paul Hersey
Notetakers: Sean Tarver, Frank Jarosinski,
Rob Williams, Don Gentile, and Hoyt Yee

DATE, TIME: October 2, 2000, 2:42-3:10 p.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Jacques? (U)

President Chirac: Yes, Bill. How are you? (U)

The President: Fine, thank you. (U)

President Chirac: I'm very glad to hear you. I had very good contacts with Madeleine Albright yesterday and today, and I have just now had a long call with Putin because Madeleine Albright asked me to call him just when he arrived in India. And the second matter would be the situation in Palestine and Israel. Would you mind if we had translation? (C)

The President: No. (U)

President Chirac: Do you want me to start with my talk with Putin? (C)

The President: Might as well. (C)

President Chirac: Putin's position is quite simple. He says first things first. That his public opinion supports Milosevic, he can't ignore it. He is saying that the best solution would be for Kostunica to accept the run-off and he is proposing offering to invite Kostunica and Milosevic to come to Moscow and he thinks if Kostunica agrees to this visit, then Milosevic will not. And then he would make an official demand that an international supervision of the elections be set up. And he also is saying that a visit by Kostunica to Moscow would have a very positive

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effect on the Serbian army. And he feels that in such a context, if there were to be a run-off, Kostunica would not fail to be elected. Obviously, he can't force any decision on Milosevic, because Milosevic doesn't trust him anymore, and that is likely. That is my comment. And, second, because of his own public opinion. I am convinced no one, especially not Putin, is in the position to force anything on Milosevic. That said, Putin is the only one in position to safeguard passage to Belarus far from the reaches of the international community. But I honestly don't think Milosevic will obey Putin. So I do feel the hypothesis of run-off agreed to by Kostunica would be the best possibility. I understand Schroeder is of the same opinion, and I can ask him when I see him tomorrow in Dresden for the tenth anniversary of the founding of the German Republic, speak to him. Madeleine will be there, so I will take it up with him. Before I did anything, I really wanted to hear your feelings on this issue. (C)

The President: First, I thank you for the lead you have taken in support of the democratic opposition. If the momentum can stay with the opposition, I think that so far the opposition has been right in rejecting Milosevic's call for a second round. He is just trying to buy time and maybe create a crisis, but I think the opposition might decide later to run in the elections and there has to be transparency in the electoral process. It appears to me that, if they could get organized, get the Montenegrins to vote, then Kostunica would certainly win, but I think the important thing is to try to follow the opposition's lead and not call for a second round before they do. We don't want to undercut the opposition. I think Putin clearly is in a dilemma. He knows his public opinion favors Milosevic. He knows Kostunica got a majority of the first round. I think he wants Kostunica to somehow send a clear signal that Russia won't be frozen out if he is the president. But, by asking them both to come to Russia and by not agreeing to meet with Kostunica, he didn't offer him enough to come. So, in short, I think we need to do what we can to keep the heat on, see what happens in the next few days, and see if the opposition declares its intent to run and stick with him. My guess is that if they can't keep enough energy in the street to force him out, they will agree to it, because they will win it with anything close to an honest count. And if they go through both rounds and Milosevic steals them both, their position in the world will be strengthened. But if you look at the communist countries that changed, it will happen in the streets eventually. (C)

President Chirac: I think we can get real control over the second round, and I think that we will have unconditional support of Putin. I think the swell in favor of Kostunica can only increase. On the other hand I would really need to have at least

major strike and perhaps a general strike, and yet the people are very poor. And they can probably afford to be on strike for a day, but two days or three days, a whole week, will cost them too much. Plus Serbian legislation provides you cannot be refunded for your medical costs if you are on strike. So it is possible for them to go on strike for a short time, but to have it last for a long time would be difficult. I really don't think in the current situation Kostunica can muster enough support in the street to change the situation. Now, obviously, he wants to have the better role in all of this, and that is understandable, but if Kostunica wants to be on the same line as Russia, he will eventually. But a trip to Moscow will not make any difference. Therefore, I do think a better or wiser solution will probably be a run-off. The question is, will Kostunica accept it. (C)

The President: I think first of all if they have a second round and he wins, and Milosevic tries to steal it again, Kostunica's hand will be greatly strengthened. He has been very careful not to rule out a second round. I also believe that a second round would have to be plainly stolen. Putin may feel then he can take action to be helpful. But the main thing, the most important thing is, for us to look like we support the will of the Serbian people in sticking with Kostunica. He is already squabbling with Djukanovic, and we can't afford division. If there is a second round, we want the Montenegrins and the other nine percent of the opposition to vote, and we want all his people to turn out again. We don't want to pour any cold water on Kostunica. If this is the only logical choice, he will come to that conclusion very quickly, and I don't want it to look like we are pushing. Maybe we should sit tight for two to three days, see what he does. (C)

President Chirac: I agree on this. (C)

The President: The other thing, Jacques, we may need to talk again in a couple of days. But this is a pivotal week. (C)

President Chirac: Can I maybe move on to the issue of the Middle East? I just spoke and met with Nabil Shaath, and he has been sent here by Arafat. I have to say I am concerned and worried. I thought we were ever so close to an agreement. I always said Camp David was a success and that Barak made significant steps in the right direction and that all this gave us hope that we would find a settlement by the end of October. And after my pessimistic phase as to Barak, I had become much more optimistic. I am very concerned by the fact that there was a deliberate provocation on the holy site. (b)(1)

(b)(1), EO 13526 3.3(b)(6)

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(b)(1)

I am very concerned, because I did feel that we were so close to an agreement under your leadership. The schedule, the calendar showed us that October was the right month to find an agreement and that there was enough time for you to establish and devise this agreement and to have it accepted. And then suddenly everything crumbles and collapses because of one initiative that Barak had to know of. Now I heard this idea of a fact-finding mission, and I think that it is necessary and I know that Arafat accepts that. I don't know what Barak thinks of that issue, but the cease-fire agreed to this morning has not been, up until now, enforced. I do think that Barak would ideally like to show his strength before he actually concludes negotiations and, given the current situation, I do think dealing with Palestinians like this would lead to failure. (C)

The President: Let me say, first of all, I don't know Barak knew Sharon was going up there and if he could have stopped him. There is no question Sharon did it to scuttle the peace process, although he may not have expected it to generate the reaction and effect it did. We have been working on this very hard. I talked to both to try to get them to calm it down. I am considering having Albright call Barak and Arafat to see if they can meet in Europe today, tomorrow, or the next day. And, if its OK with you, I would like them to come to Paris, because I think your influence would be useful. It could be, if we get lucky, that this is a very somber warning to both sides, of what will come if we don't get this peace worked out. I offered them this fact-finding trilateral group once we get it calmed down. We need to get back to the larger issues here. I think that if they could come to Paris and meet with you, it would be very positive. (C)

President Chirac: Okay. I will do whatever you ask me to do. I won't take any initiative so as not to cause any hindrance, but, obviously, I am ready to do anything. Indeed, Arafat did mention the idea of meeting Albright in Paris, and I said that would be fine. We could solve all the technical problems and do that very discreetly. But I really have to question Barak's state of mind. Is he still determined to make peace? (C)

The President: I think the short answer to that is yes. He was afraid, based on the action of the Palestinians, that Arafat saw this as a way out. There is still distrust on both sides. It

couldn't have come at a worse time, because Arafat was just at Barak's home for dinner and the personal chemistry was getting better. It is frightening to both of them. In the back of their minds, they must know that the only two people killed in political positions in the last 20 years were Sadat and Rabin, and they both know that they are not only risking their political lives but their actual lives in doing this. All this violence in a funny way may clarify to them what the long-term options are. It is important to get them back together and shut down the violence. Madeleine has not invited them to Paris yet so we need to try not to break this in the press until they get the call and agree. I think they will agree, so we will be back in touch on that. (C)

President Chirac: Obviously, if that would be the case, we would be at your disposal. Please, will you say my best regards to Hillary? (C)

The President: Yes. She is doing very well. (U)

President Chirac: Madeleine told me that she is very optimistic. (U)

The President: The presidential campaign may have some effect on that, but she has an 8-to 10-point lead. The other guy has more money, but that is always the case. (U)

President Chirac: That is good. (U)

The President: I think she can hold on. (U)

President Chirac: You tell her all our best and greetings and regards and lots of kisses. (U)

The President: Good-bye friend, and if we need to talk on Serbia, we can talk again in the next couple of days. We've just got to ride it out. (C)

-- End of Conversation --