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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Wilfried Martens, Prime Minister of Belgium

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
Maynard Glitman, U.S. Ambassador to Belgium
John Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the President
and Press Secretary
Margaret Tutwiler, Assistant Secretary of
State for Public Affairs and Spokesman
Notetaker: Philip Zelikow, Director for
European Security Affairs, NSC

Wilfried Martens, Prime Minister
Leo Tindemans, Foreign Minister
Guy Coeme, Defense Minister
Frans Roelants, Foreign Ministry Secretary
General
Alexis Reyn, Chef de Cabinet
Jan Grauls, Diplomatic Adviser, Prime
Minister's Office
Philippe Nieuwenhuys, Adviser to the Foreign
Minister

DATE, TIME May 28, 1989, 6:45 - 7:32pm
AND PLACE: Chateau Stuyvenberg, Brussels

Prime Minister Martens welcomed the President and commented that this was a difficult time for the Belgian government because of the SNF issue. The Prime Minister hoped for a solution at the Summit. (C)

The President thanked the Prime Minister for his hospitality and noted that bilateral relations were very strong. He admired the Prime Minister's economic success in lowering the government deficit without serious inflation or major tax increases. The U.S. was also trying to get its fiscal house in order. The President thought tax increases would slow economic growth and cause a net loss in revenue. He was working with Congress. (C)

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The President said he was not pessimistic about NATO or East-West relations. His policies were realistic. Their development had taken some time, and criticism for this had been expected. The President said it should be clearly understood that his Administration wanted Gorbachev and perestroika to succeed. The West had won the battle of ideologies and the Communist model was dead. Western values were prevailing. The Allies should try to capitalize on that success and reduce arms, but not be naive or base their foreign policies on one person. (Ø)

Turning to security issues, the President said the differing viewpoints on SNF were well understood. The President said he planned to make an important conventional arms control proposal, challenging the Soviets to reduce to equal levels of manpower stationed on foreign territory in Europe. The world would see the fairness in having the two largest powers deploy the same number of soldiers in Europe. This dramatic arms control proposal should strengthen Kohl in fighting his political battles. Yet, whatever the outcome of the SNF issue, it should not be allowed to affect the basic principles underpinning NATO strategy. (Ø)

The President was optimistic about the opportunities for change. The Soviets were moving toward the West on arms control, and Western values. The U.S. was prepared to help with the Soviet economy but would do so with eyes wide open. All these developments were good for the security of Europe. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens commented that he and Foreign Minister Tindemans had recently been in Poland. It had been interesting to hear the Polish government talk of its willingness to accept an opposition role. The Prime Minister thought the key was in Polish statements that they wanted a free market economic system. South Korea had been cited as an example. The same trend was seen in African countries, such as Dakar, which the Prime Minister had just visited. Although it was dangerous when so much depended on one person, the real reason for change in the East was economic. (Ø)

The President urged the Prime Minister not to underestimate the unquenchable thirst for freedom. In Chile, for example, a totally repressive regime allowed a free market economy to operate. However, the Chilean people still agitated for political change. Once Gorbachev had unleashed perestroika and glasnost, he could not put the genie back in the bottle. Ortega, in Nicaragua, now announced he was a socialist in the "Swedish model." If true, this would be a conversion without precedent since Christ had walked the earth. Ortega was being convinced by the failure of his economy and the increasing trend toward democracy among his neighbors. These were exciting times. The Allies just needed to be prudent in proposing and making significant reductions in armed forces. (Ø)

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The President appreciated that the Prime Minister took a tough decision in accepting deployment of INF missiles and got "bloodied" for it. This showed courage, and firmness. No one would ever convince the President that these deployment decisions did not compel the Soviets to be forthcoming at the negotiating table. Changes were encouraging, but the Alliance should not disperse out of euphoria. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens asked for an elaboration of the President's conventional arms control proposal. (Ø)

The President asked Secretary Baker or General Scowcroft to provide one. (U)

Secretary Baker said the proposal would pick up on Warsaw Pact acceptance of Western figures for tanks and armored troop carriers, with reduced equipment to be destroyed. It would urge agreement on reducing land-based combat aircraft and helicopters on each side to a level fifteen percent below the current NATO total. These Alliance-to-Alliance ideas would be complemented by a U.S.-Soviet manpower ceiling of 275,000 for troops stationed in Europe. The U.S. would cut 20% of its combat manpower, with withdrawn forces to be demobilized and deactivated. The U.S. would cut about 30,000 troops (29,200 being 20% of the combat manpower), and the Soviets would have to cut 325,000. (Ø)

The President added that the Soviets could decide where they wanted to take their troop cuts, but the U.S. cuts would be in combat forces. (Ø)

Secretary Baker said that, in the U.S. view, these moves should allow the timetable for an agreement to be accelerated to six months to a year. This timetable would be important in resolving the SNF issue. On that point the U.S. felt that negotiations, though accepted in principle, should await the beginning of implementation of a CFE agreement. This should take about a year. In any case, however, the U.S. was reluctant to proceed with SNF negotiations until a CFE agreement had been concluded and its implementation had begun. (Ø)

Secretary Baker asked that information about the President's CFE proposal not be made public in advance of the Summit meeting. (Ø)

Returning to SNF, Secretary Baker said the President had recognized the FRG's particular problems and the significance of the changes in the East. The U.S. had been forthcoming, beginning with the Secretary's meetings with NATO leaders in February. The U.S. had delayed decisions on production and deployment of a modernized system until late 1991 or 1992 and had agreed in principle to SNF negotiations, all to accommodate the concerns of the Federal Republic. These moves should now be considered along with the President's conventional arms control

proposal. It would be good to have an agreement on SNF and not dampen the Summit by kicking the problem over to a later date. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Tindemans said that, of course, the President's proposal was extremely interesting. It would be the event of the Summit meeting. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens, after cautioning that he was negotiating on the SNF issue on the basis of a political agreement within his government, asked the President for a commitment to early SNF negotiations, running parallel to the CFE talks. However, he said his priority was the conventional talks and that he was against the "zero option." Forces should be updated where necessary, without any production or deployment decision before 1991 or 1992. NATO did not need to decide on development. The President's conventional arms control proposal had overcome some of the problem, reducing the issue to one of immediate negotiations versus a link to an accelerated CFE timetable. (Ø)

The President hoped his conventional arms control proposal would take precedence over SNF negotiations. His fast track approach should change political calculations. (Ø)

Secretary Baker emphasized the accelerated timetable for implementation of CFE reductions as well, with 1992 or 1993 as the target date. He hoped this would give the Belgian government latitude as an alternative to parallel SNF talks. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens asked if he had correctly understood that an agreement would be sought in six months to one year. (Ø)

Secretary Baker said that was what the U.S. thought was reasonable, in light of the convergence in the positions of the two sides. (Ø)

Defense Minister Coeme thought the linkage between the outcome of the Vienna CFE talks and the beginning of SNF negotiations was potentially dangerous. (Ø)

The President said he would prefer no linkage, just a concentration on the conventional forces. The conventional force imbalance was destabilizing and should be addressed. This may be tough for those who, like some elements in the FRG, put SNF reductions over everything else, but the accelerated timetable could accomplish what everyone wants -- conventional reductions and SNF negotiations. (Ø)

Secretary Baker said the conventional imbalance was a primary requirement for the SNF deterrent. It was therefore prudent to link the two problems. This would also give the East an incentive to move more quickly toward a CFE accord. (Ø)

The President said this was true despite the Eastern advantage in SNF. He asked Ambassador Glitman to elaborate on the disparities. (Ø)

Ambassador Glitman noted that, according to our count, the disparity was 14 to 1 and was 11 to 1 according to Eastern figures. (U)

Prime Minister Martens said these disparities were a justification for SNF negotiations designed to correct the imbalance. (Ø)

Secretary Baker replied that the Western SNF forces were counterforce weapons designed against Eastern conventional forces. He asked if General Scowcroft agreed. (Ø)

General Scowcroft said the principal function was to counter the conventional imbalance. (Ø)

The President said the short-range nuclear forces were there to deter attack. He said the Allied views were different from those of the Soviet Union on this point but he agreed that linkage to the CFE outcome might help speed an agreement on conventional force reductions. (Ø)

Secretary Baker said that the President understood political problems in Europe, but the President had political problems too. One was the military's very strong belief that ground-based nuclear missiles were needed to defend the 325,000 U.S. soldiers in Europe. The Secretary understood the appeal of a third zero. That was why a conventional agreement was needed before embarking on that slippery slope. (Ø)

The President said he hoped not to refer to U.S. politics at the NATO meeting. There were some in America who did not support the commitment to NATO, but the President would not rely on this argument. However, when it came to protection of "our kids," the President had to listen to his military commanders. In his role as Commander-in-Chief the President felt SNF was vital as long as there was a massive conventional imbalance. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens wondered whether this argument against early SNF negotiations would still be valid if it was clearly accepted that a third zero outcome was ruled out by the Alliance. (Ø)

The President said the argument would be less valid, but valid. The levels of SNF were affected by the conventional imbalance. He looked forward to a lively discussion of this subject at the Summit. He hoped a solution to the problem could be negotiated with the Germans. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens said his government had reviewed the positions of many countries, including the Germans. His government would propose some ideas. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Tindemans thought that, rather than each government putting forward a position, it would be better to have experts draft a document and then have a political discussion of it. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens said this practice worked well in the EC, with the EC Commission proposing papers to the Council of Ministers. (Ø)

The President promised to consider the procedural question. He asked the Prime Minister for all possible consideration of what he, the President, had suggested during the meeting. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens referred to an earlier discussion on Zaire during the drive from the airport. (U)

The President asked the Prime Minister when he would decide upon a course of action. (U)

Prime Minister Martens said he would inform the government the next morning (May 29). If the government accepted the results from Dakar then King Hassan would mediate and the Moroccans would organize a meeting to confirm the conclusions. He thanked the President for his help and noted that (President) Mobutu (of Zaire) had said the Belgians were clumsy and the Americans have lost their sangfroid. (Ø)

The President commented that Mobutu was a flamboyant person who was useful in some ways. He had some human rights problems. Perhaps the Belgian government had sobered him down. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens said Belgium had an enormous effort in Zaire, five billion francs worth. (Ø)

Secretary Baker asked if this was commercial debt. (U)

Prime Minister Martens said it was a 25 year debt rescheduled with a grace delay of 14 years, but intervention was needed for payment of interest charges. (Ø)

The President said the problems were with the system and the need for reform. Without reform, money was being poured down a rathole. (Ø)

Prime Minister Martens said Mobutu had accepted adjustment from the IMF. (Ø)

General Scowcroft said the question was whether he would perform or not. (Z)

The President asked about (Senegalese President) Diouf. (U)

Prime Minister Martens said Diouf was a good man, having difficulty with reintegrating 90,000 citizens from Mauritania but maintaining a political system with opposition parties. He was a serious man at the Francophone summits. (Z)

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