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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Yevgeniy Primakov, Chairman,
Council of the Union USSR Supreme Soviet (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President
and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Robert D. Blackwill, Special Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
(Notetaker)
Interpreter

Yevgeniy Primakov, Chairman, Council of the
Union, U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet
Yuriy V. Dubinin, Ambassador to the U.S.
Anatoli A. Sobchak, Deputy of the Supreme
Soviet, Member of Supreme Soviet Committee
on Legality and Law and Order, Head of Law
Faculty of Leningrad State University
Ilmar O. Bisher, Deputy of the Supreme
Soviet, Department Chairman, Council of
Nationalities
Oleg A. Krokhaev (Interpreter)

DATE, TIME October 26, 1989, 3:50 - 4:30 pm
AND PLACE The Oval Office

The President: Welcome. (U)

Chairman Primakov: My colleagues and I are grateful for your
receiving us, especially since you are so busy. (U)

The President: Your visit is an important sign of the importance
and improving nature of our relationship. (U)

Chairman Primakov: After his visit here, Foreign Minister
Shevardnadze reported in detail to the Politburo; his talks here
caused great interest in the Politburo. President Gorbachev is
of the opinion that new possibilities have opened up in our
bilateral relationship as is indicated in the letter. 187

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The President: I look forward to reading it. (S)

Chairman Primakov: There was some tension while we waited for your review of our relationship but now we are optimistic. We appreciate your proposals on conventional weapons, Open Skies, and CW. They create the possibility of advancement. (S)

The President: What area do you think is the most important for progress in our relationship: CFE, CW, START, economic relations? What are the priorities? (S)

Chairman Primakov: They all are of high priority. We are witnessing a clearing up of START obstacles. We are impressed with your CFE timetable of an agreement in six months to a year. Our position has become much closer regarding CW. A considerable impulse to our relationship would occur if by the time of the 1990 Summit, a nuclear testing Treaty could be concluded. Speaking about economic matters, I am aware of some in the U.S. who believe something should be done regarding the Jackson-Vanik amendment. We highly appreciate your position on perestroika and its significance for our country and for the system of international relations. Indeed, within the context of perestroika we face considerable difficulty, both economic and nationality questions. I want you to know that we will go forward and overcome those difficulties. There is no question of this. It is our fate. We are doing everything we can to remove those difficulties by political means, including in the Caucasus. The situation remains difficult. The Armenian republic is blockaded there. We faced a dilemma: to use force or peaceful means. We chose the second road, although some pushed for the first road. In the economic area there are difficulties of an objective nature. We are laying groundwork for measures that would produce results in three years, while people want results of perestroika today. That produces problems. Nevertheless, we will succeed. There is no other possibility. A political struggle that is quite serious is underway. (S)

The President: We are impressed with how you have handled rapid change both inside and outside your country. Sometimes events snowball. But recent comments Foreign Minister Shevardnadze made were interesting and in accordance with what we would like to see. We are committed to democracy and a market-based economic system. But we are trying to conduct our Administration with a certain rhetorical restraint. We recognize some of the changes you are undertaking are difficult. We do not want to appear to exacerbate your problems. So we want to handle our relationship properly. We want to see perestroika succeed and will keep reiterating that. We listen to debate in your bodies and we applaud that. Debates are getting great credit for Soviet Union. That is building up enormous goodwill for Soviet Union and helping us move forward to improve our bilateral relationship. (S)

Chairman Primakov: Proceeding from our experience, don't

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televisе all sittings of your Congress. (S)

The President: Our country has a way of coming together. I know you will be talking with Senators Dole and Mitchell about these matters. In our system there is built in conflict, especially when the party that controls the White House does not control Congress. But somehow the system works. I'll get some of what I want; they will get some of what they want. I will run U.S. foreign policy because that is what the Constitution says; and they will try to micromanage it. But there is good conversation going on behind the scene with both the House and the Senate. I was in the House for four years myself. We do have fundamental respect for Congress. We will work out these important problems. As you work out your new system, I want you to understand the frustrations a President feels. You can be sure that if we sign a treaty, we will do our homework from this office to be sure it can be ratified. You will not be frustrated as you have been in the past. (S)

Chairman Primakov: We have set a precedent in our Parliament. Speaking of foreign policy, we don't have pluralism. We are all united in the Parliament on foreign policy issues. The only Minister who was confirmed by 100 percent of votes was Foreign Minister Shevardnadze. But we have a vast range of opinions on tactics of solving internal issues. But consensus is gradually working out. Our Parliament used to be a preprogrammed voting machine. Now all is changed. But I take it you wouldn't mind if your party controlled Congress. (S)

The President: I have a son who is 36 who has never been alive when Republicans controlled the House. The system rewards incumbency. But in this situation compromise is crucial. My Chief of Staff, John Sununu, visits regularly with the Speaker of the House. (S)

Chairman Primakov: Our arrival here marks an important stage in our relations, since Gorbachev became General Secretary in 1985. We do expect much from the Summit meeting that is forthcoming. You are known in the Soviet Union as one of the most informed, professional Presidents. (S)

The President: Too cautious? (S)

Chairman Primakov: A month ago yes, not now. You are now both cautious and dynamic. (S)

The President: But you can be sure that if we reach a deal, I will be able to bring Congress and the country along because I have taken time and been cautious. I don't want to miss a big opportunity, but I want to build on a firm foundation. I hope you will convey this to Mr. Gorbachev for whom I have great respect and good personal feeling. (S)

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Chairman Primakov: With pleasure, I will convey your words to him. (U)

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