

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis of Greece (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Lawrence Eagleburger, Deputy Secretary of
State
Michael Sotirhos, Ambassador to Greece
Thomas Niles, Assistant Secretary of State
for European and Canadian Affairs
Nelson Ledsky, U.S. Special Cyprus
Coordinator
David Gompert, Senior Director for European
and Soviet Affairs, NSC Staff, Notetaker
Katherine Stewart, Interpreter

Greece

Constantine Mitsotakis, Prime Minister
Antonios Samaras, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Christos Zacharakis, Ambassador to the United
States
Efthymios Christodoulou, Minister of National
Economy
Byron Polydoros, Deputy Minister to the Prime
Minister
Constantine Lymberopoulos, Director of
Political Affairs
Loucas Tsilas, Director of the Diplomatic
Office of the Prime Minister
Dora Bakoyiannis, Member of Parliament
Anna Kyrtsoy, Interpreter

DATE, TIME December 12, 1991, 12:15 - 1:30 p.m.
AND PLACE: Residential Dining Room

The President: I am very anxious to talk to you about the Yugoslavia crisis. I would like to get your views on what our role should be. We have been behind the EC so far. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: We agree with you on policy. We disagree with most of the other members of the EC. Recognition

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of Croatia and Slovenia will create problems instead of solving them. It won't solve the problem of the Serbian minority in Croatia but instead make it worse. And Greece has an additional reason. Once recognition starts it will spread to what is known as the Republic of Macedonia, which we call the Republic of Skopje. Civil war will move from north to south. We therefore oppose recognition, and we oppose selective sanctions. What we need is a ceasefire. We need to get United Nations peacekeepers in. It is true that we have good relations with Serbia but we are trying to use those good relations to influence them. I spoke with Milosevic recently. I told him to retain Markovic and to also respect the ceasefire. And I think he might make good on his promises to me. But Kohl says he is going to proceed with recognition and I have to tell you tentatively that Andreani claims that the Pope is pressuring him. (P)

The President: Let me ask Larry Eagleburger to offer our comments on the question of recognition. (P)

Deputy Secretary Eagleburger: The UN Secretary General has sent a letter to the EC appealing not to recognize. They have predicted everything that has happened. Over the last two years we knew when the Soviet Union and Croatia declared independence that it would come to this. Now recognition will create an even worse blood bath. (P)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: The so-called Republic of Macedonia cannot stay with Serbia. Their constitution is inadmissible to us. It creates a real problem for Greece. Their constitutional forces the expansion of so-called Macedonia. I sent our Ambassador to talk to the leader of Macedonia and I think this was an important gesture on our part. But I don't think we will get any results because nationalism is stronger than the government is in Macedonia. You have to understand that we cannot accept the dispute of our borders or a republic setting a fire within our borders. Therefore the unity of Yugoslavia must be maintained. And, Mr. President, let me comment on other parts of the Balkan situation. (P)

With regard to Bulgaria, their new government is a center-right government. We supported Zhelev, but his party is broken up. We won't intervene. Actually Bulgaria is more stable than the other countries in the Balkans. Albania is facing a political crisis. A void has been created. We have to watch Albania very carefully. The problem there is a great minority, but we have to watch it carefully and we are trying to help. We see Romania in a positive light more than before. The political situation is moving in a positive direction. We need to understand that the former communists must be included. (P)

The President: Thank you very much. (U)

Under Secretary Eagleburger: With regard to Yugoslavia we are not as confident as you in the word of Milosevic and the JNA. Clearly Milosevic wants a greater Serbia. We do not know what to do about Yugoslavia. All we know is what not to do. Perhaps if

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there is a ceasefire and the peacekeeping force for them, things could turned around. (Ø)

The President: Is the political opposition within Germany for or against recognition? (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: All parties in Germany are in favor of recognition. (Ø)

The President: Does anyone here have any guess on what the situation in Yugoslavia will look like in one year? Will the war continue? Will we see independent Yugoslav states? Will the whole thing be resolved? (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I think we will see independent republics within one year. The main reason for this is that the Serbs and Croats cannot co-exist peacefully. But the question is whether they can get from here to there peacefully. It is absolutely important that we try to win time. (Ø)

Minister Samaras: We should work on the Germans too. They agreed not to provide arms to the conflict. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Even if the governments don't provide arms, organizations will. Mr. President, Greece wants to work with the United States and the Balkans. We obviously work with our European partners but this does not exclude working with you too. At the end of the day, the United States will play the key role in this part of the world. The EC is not yet ready to do so. Maybe some day it will. But the United States will have the last word about the region. We want you to know that through all my contacts in Europe it is clear that U.S. prestige is greater than ever. Europe is still a dream and they all look toward the United States. (Ø)

The President: Well, in a way, that is nice to hear but in another way it really complicates our lives. We are trying to manage change in the Soviet Union carefully. We are under pressure to recognize republics there but we think it is better to let them sort out their relationship between the Center and the Republics. They both look toward the United States. Our position is that we will support the forces of democracy and reform. We will support Kravchuk Yeltsin but we will support Gorbachev too. We don't say that you must absolutely have a Center. My point is that even though they look to us, it is better to leave it to them to sort out their arrangements while we look after our own interests -- such questions as the control of nuclear weapons, the sanctity of borders, CSCE norms, human rights. We will help the situation in the former Soviet Union with humanitarian assistance but we can't sort it out, all we can do is see to it that our interests are protected. That said we are quite apprehensive, above all, we do not want to see military force used so far with regard to the nuclear weapons and the avoidance of force in order to affect change we are getting these assurances we want. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: There are some similarities between the situation in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. We must maintain some unity in both. In a way the Soviet Union is easier than Yugoslavia because it does not have differences as bitter as those between Croatia and Serbia. Humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union is crucial. The U.S. role in providing help is of paramount importance. (Ø)

Minister Samaras: My prediction for one year from now is that economic matters will have grown in significance and the economic powers of Europe will have great influence. The U.S., Germany, Britain and France will get the inside track. But there are companies both in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, except for oil, I do not see the American private sector moving very progressively. (Ø)

The President: Well we are trying to get our business engaged. We don't really want to leave the field to others. (Ø)

Minister Samaras: Take Albania for example. I could see us doing U.S.-Greece joint ventures. There are some things that could be the basis for business in Albania. We want the United States private sector involved. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I think one general conclusion we have Mr. President is that it is very difficult to forecast. Therefore, it is best to concentrate on specific objectives. You are right about humanitarian assistance to the Soviet Union. This is urgent. (Ø)

The President: That is why we are expediting our effort. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: EC also agreed to do more in Maastricht. We will not only accelerate our effort but we will also support triangular assistance whereby the East Europeans are able to sell some of there surpluses in food. (Ø)

-- End of Conversation --

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