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RESTRICTION CODES

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Richard von Weizsaecker of Germany (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker III, Secretary of State
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Jonathan Howe, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert Kimmitt, Ambassador to Germany
David C. Gompert, Senior Director, European and Eurasian Affairs, NSC Staff
Thomas M.T. Niles, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Robert Hutchings, Director, European Affairs, NSC Staff

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PER E.O. 12958, AS AMENDED

2008-0705-MR

20 6/16/10

Richard von Weizsaecker, President
Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Foreign Minister
Andreas Meyer-Landrut, Chief of Staff of the President's Office
Dieter Kastrup, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Juergen Ruhfus, Ambassador to the U.S.
Frank Elbe, Chief of the Planning Staff, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Thomas Matussek, Chief of the Foreign Minister's Personal Office
Hasso Buchrucker, Office of the President

DATE, TIME April 29, 10:58-11:40 am
AND PLACE: Cabinet Room

The President: Let's see: your schedule has you here until 11:30, then to the State Department for your luncheon. This evening at the State dinner we will have some private time for further discussions. Let me say to all of you how very pleased we are about this visit. The weather is perfect, and the enormous turnout is a manifestation of the friendship that I tried to touch on in my remarks. So welcome to all of you. (U)

Before turning to you, Mr. President, let me say a few words about the domestic situation here. Don't believe everything you may see on CNN, we are not about to turn isolationist. At the time of New Hampshire there was a lot of criticism of foreign trade and investment and even some foreign-bashing. In the

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democratic party there has been a little of that and my right wing opponent has perfected it, but there is no substance to it. No serious person as president would try to pull the U.S. into isolation, to pull back from Europe or from supporting the new democracies in Eastern Europe and the CIS. If there is any fear about this in Germany, it is not true. Ross Perot has the idea to have Germany pay \$50 billion for our forces. Maybe I'll take that up with Chancellor Kohl (laughter). I hope we will talk about Europe and the U.S. presence. (C)

If it is not inappropriate, let me say to Hans-Dietrich that we will miss you, you have been superb to work with and we have had wonderful cooperation during these historic times. I mean that from my heart and will say so tonight. (U)

I have some other points but I would rather hear your views. Let me reiterate what I said to the press a few minutes ago: our relations are good and strong and very important to us. (U)

President von Weizsaecker: Thank you very much for your very warm words. It is a great honor for me. I have been in the U.S. many times but never in this solemn way and also never with such a feeling that our relations really are good. (U)

I have to apologize because someone included in my program a visit to CNN (laughter). (C)

The President: That's a good thing to do but don't make the same mistake Saddam Hussein made. He listened to CNN and heard that no one supported our efforts in the Gulf. CNN made him miscalculate; I'm absolutely convinced of that. First, he didn't think we would go in and second, he thought that even if we did, it would be a Vietnam-like standoff. (C)

President von Weizsaecker: My position is a little easier than Saddam Hussein's. (C)

The President: I was hoping to clarify that (laughter). (U)

President von Weizsaecker: We are satisfied that the economic development in the U.S. is going up, not only because of its influence on the campaign but also the importance of the economic situation in the U.S. For us, relatively speaking, we are more interested in trade than you, but the size and strength of the American market is of vital importance to the rest of the world leading with us. (C)

I think our relations are very good and sound because we do not have to bring one another to do something he doesn't want to do on his own. Our interests really coincide. A U.S. pullout of Europe is not even a question in Europe. There is a question of whether it will be 150,000 or less, but the more important question is what are those forces for? It is not just to protect us but it is very important that there be one global, integrated nuclear security system, which can only be under U.S. leadership. I think most Americans will understand, especially after the Gulf

War, how important the European factor is. It is not a matter of our begging you to stay; it is in U.S. interest to stay. (C)

Second, the exemplary cooperation between Secretary Baker and Herr Genscher shows that it is our common task to move from the Cold War to a "democratic peace". Except for Cuba and Haiti, there has been an enormous change in the Americas. In Africa it is more difficult, but the message African leaders bring to us is that they want to try to approach democracy and human rights. After the Cold War we have that great chance of expanding democracy east of Germany and all the way to Vladivostok. We have to try to include this whole region in the world economic system -- especially the G-7 and the international financial institutions -- and in the world order. We started this in a multilateral way in Helsinki with Basket Three which was addressed to the people rather than the governments. To develop that further into a world order sphere is from the German point view among our most important tasks. What the two foreign ministers have done together with the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and also the CSCE is extremely important. (C)

Let me make two more remarks which will be very familiar to you. We have a great problem with unification. No Germany would be a reliable partner if it failed to succeed in this, so our unification is also in the interest of the world. Second, at the end of the last century our nation was in the middle of the continent, which gave us options (east and west) that led to so much tragedy. Then with the division of Germany the option in the east was no longer open. Now that we are unified some think that option is being revitalized and that Germany will again go it alone. This we don't want, neither the people, who know that we are a western country, nor the responsible political leaders. That is why we wanted from the beginning to combine German unification with European union, this was the idea of Kohl and Mitterrand. You should not worry about European union, it is the guarantee of the place of Germany as an integrated Western nation. There is no other option. While I join you, Mr. President, in regretting that Minister Genscher is leaving, I am sure there will be no change in our foreign policy. (C)

The President: Thank you, Mr. President. Let me make a couple of points. We have been wondering among ourselves: what would it take in Europe for opinion here to change about the U.S. role? One thing would be voices rising to say "America out". We are reassured about that both in Germany and elsewhere. But I must be honest, we worry that as France pushes for other security arrangements where they will have a larger role, that will undermine the confidence of the American people. We will do our best to persevere, but sometimes we wonder whether they might go too far and inadvertently undermine the U.S. presence. I believe from my talks with Francois, and think the same is true of Jim Baker and Roland Dumas, that they really want us to stay. But still they present ideas like the four-power talks that present problems. If it goes too far, if people here are made to believe that NATO is just one more defense organization or its mission is murky, it could swing public opinion and our Congress. I would

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welcome your comments -- without getting into France-bashing, because we have good relations. (S)

President von Weizsaecker: Let me say first that German-French friendship was and remains a vital interest for us in Europe. As it was for Jean Monnet, it is still true that the French and Germans are the main movers in the direction of European union. There are problems that come up from time to time. It is true that France and Britain have, under your leadership, won two world wars, but they also lost those wars. (b)(1)

(b)(1)

The arrangements made by Herr Genscher and Chancellor Kohl are certainly not meant to encourage the French in this thinking but rather to bring them back. (S)

A second issue concerns national identity and ratification of the Maastricht agreement. We find in France an unlikely coalition of Communists, Gaullists and supporters of Le Pen who say the agreement must be rejected. They say benefits will all go to the Germans, (b)(1)

(b)(1)

(b)(1)

I still think the French will ratify Maastricht. Mitterrand has committed himself in a very personal way to it. French cooperation in the field of security will move rather slowly but it won't prevent us from doing the necessary. (S)

The President: Jim, what did I leave out? (U)

Secretary Baker: Nothing, Mr. President. Let me just elaborate on a couple of points. Many of us on both sides of the table are familiar with what happens at every NATO meeting. Our efforts, U.S.-German along with others, are aimed at strengthening the alliance and emphasizing its political nature as we did at London, but at every stage we have a battle. The French don't want us to leave, but they believe we will leave. Therefore they are preparing for a new arrangement. We worry that will become a self-fulfilling prophecy if every time we try to strengthen NATO, which is our ticket to Europe, they obstruct. One example is the Franco-German corps. We have talked about this, but now we understand that Germany's first commitment will be to the corps and only second to NATO. We worry about that. CSCE is a wonderful organization, but it is not a security organization. It has the flexibility of three Baskets, but the French propose that we turn it into a security alliance by way of a full fledged treaty. That's what worries us. (S)

Foreign Minister Genscher: Jim, you should go back to the years after the Second World War. You decided to stay, unlike your decision after the First World War. At first your engagement was based on the East-West conflict. Now some here and in Europe may

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give thought to new considerations. So from the beginning we had the idea of giving your presence a new justification. Therefore I am so glad that we could agree on the NACC, which shows a follow-up to the old confrontation of blocs and gives a new, and maybe more important, role to NATO to bring in the states of the former Warsaw Pact. (S)

Never before has the U.S. been more interested in CSCE than under this Administration. It is a great institution for change in Europe, and it is now very important that you are involved. The Transatlantic Declaration, which we issued parallel to the Paris Charter, we understood as a basis for a connection between the U.S. and Europe that was not only defined by East-West conflict. (S)

France is very much occupied by the Yalta system. They gained a strong position, especially with regard to Germany: nuclear power, not integrated into NATO, and having a seat on the Security Council. Some in France are concerned that the U.S. will leave; therefore, they want structures to constrain Germany. We can meet their concerns, but not at the price of relations with the U.S. I just met with Roland Dumas and Skubiszewski. We had a discussion of the security treaty idea and agreed that at a later stage we could consider if a security treaty could be useful. Dumas has backed off. He understood that this is not the time to create a new problem for your presence. (S)

Secretary Baker: But they have opposed every initiative we have taken, many of them jointly with you, to revitalize NATO. The NACC for example: the French vetoed every meaningful element of our work plan. Why do they object? (S)

Foreign Minister Genscher: We have to proceed step by step. It takes time. (U)

The President: Is there anything coming out of the political process in France that would cause them to look differently at NATO? (S)

Minister Genscher: No. (U)

President von Weizsaecker: The French won't spoil our plans. France remains difficult but lovable. They have given up on convincing us of their positions. Sometimes they say, "we French are monogamists, you Germans bigamists." They always worry that we have another wife. (S)

The President: This would be a good time to break off so that we do not delay your luncheon. Thank you very much. (U)

-- End of Conversation --