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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Presidents Ruutel of Estonia,
Gorbunovs of Latvia, and Landsbergis of
Lithuania

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker III, Secretary of State
General Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Robert Zoellick, Counselor
Robert Hutchings, Director, European Affairs,
NSC, Notetaker

Arnold Ruutel, President of Estonia
Anatolijs Gorbunovs, President of Latvia
Vytautas Landsbergis, President of Lithuania

DATE, TIME July 10, 1992, 10:25 - 10:55 am
AND PLACE: Helsinki Fair Center, Helsinki, Finland

(Continuing conversation begun during photo op.)

President Landsbergis: Some high persons in Russia are speaking
even aggressively. (S)

The President: Against all three countries? In what sense? Are
they making aggressive statements like wanting to take over? (S)

President Landsbergis: They are using tactics. Military
officials also imply things. For example, the Minister of
Defense issued a decree that soldiers could defend themselves by
force of arms. This is creating a psychological atmosphere that
is quite dangerous. (S)

The President: Is this with regard to defending the Russian
minority or overall? (S)

President Landsbergis: It is an additional gimmick I would say.
(S)

President Gorbunovs: It is evident that Russia admits to a
strategic interest in the Baltics. If the statements by
President Yeltsin would be matched to their commitments we would
see over the next year a withdrawal of all troops at least from
capitals. This would stabilize the situation and create an

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atmosphere of trust that would be the basis for further negotiations. (§)

President Landsbergis: There is no danger of a denial of human rights for Russians in the Baltic countries. (§)

The President: That is very important so that there will be no excuse for those forces being there. (§)

President Ruutel: The Estonian proposal was for there to be a withdrawal this year of offensive troops. I have proposed this also in a letter to Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev. But we have information that recently Russian units in Estonia were supplied with combat munitions. We know there are social difficulties with the accommodations of soldiers in Russia but we could help them in building housing, we could offer the capacities of our construction organizations. The Russians say they can finance additional construction work but maybe they should also get credits from the West so that they could pay us for this. But if housing is built or not built this should not be a pre-condition for the withdrawal of these forces. (§)

The President: No, I understand that entirely. (U)

President Ruutel: But we could do our utmost to help build houses there so as to reduce social difficulties in Russia. If this problem could be solved in this positive way it could do a great help for Russia in the reconstruction process. (§)

The President: I worry about the red/brown problem, the reactionary right and the military right, will that complicate your lives or can you manage? (§)

President Ruutel: If Russia should be helped in building houses and in addressing the problems with their military it would also be a great help for Yeltsin. (§)

Estonia Foreign Minister: The only way to help Yeltsin is to be tough with him and not repeat the error we made with Gorbachev. (§)

Lithuanian Foreign Minister: We pushed Gorbachev into the arms of the military, Gorbachev lacked a hard message from the West when he returned from his trips abroad. If Yeltsin receives such a message it could help him in dealing with his hard liners. (§)

Estonia Foreign Minister: We must help him with his arguments. (§)

The President: That message is pretty clear but I'm interested that you think it may not be that clear. (§)

President Landsbergis: The troops can go home, it is not a problem of hundreds of thousands of houses but a relatively smaller number. (§)

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The President: It is true that they are not putting new people in as attrition takes place? (S)

President Landsbergis: We demanded that many times but it is not true. They are trying to introduce new truths, it is a strange game they are playing with us. (S)

Lithuanian Foreign Minister: They promised us that also just last week but still they are coming. (S)

The President: President Yeltsin said to me that they are not replacing enlisted men. (S)

President Landsbergis: Yeltsin promised the same thing to me but they have been continuing to replace their troops. (S)

The President: We have made the point very clearly there is no doubt in Yeltsin's mind, we may be able to be helpful. These points are helpful because we want them to honor their public line, we want this to be followed through. (S)

President Ruutel: In my opinion western aide should be made dependent upon Russian behavior in the Baltic States and the withdrawal of Russian troops as well as dependent further democratization in Russia. (S)

Estonia Foreign Minister: You were told in Munich by Yeltsin that the task of redeploying these forces would be formidable. They used numbers like a 100 or 120 or 130 thousand housing units, but we know that many of these soldiers have homes in Russia or other means of getting houses, so the question is not one of 120,000 but maybe 18-20,000 housing units. So Yeltsin's not given you an honest number, they are just playing for time. (S)

The President: What possible good is it for Yeltsin to have these troops there? (S)

Latvian Foreign Minister: If you read Russian military doctrine you will see four points. First, free access to the Baltic Sea; second, that no third states stationed forces in this area; third, that there be no military alliance against Russia; and fourth, that the rights of the Russian minority be protected. (S)

President Landsbergis: They say that they will defend mother Russia. (S)

The President: That's a good reason to get them the hell out. (S)

Lithuanian Foreign Minister: Housing is an excuse, many officers have apartments in Russia, many others in our capitals have apartments in our towns. So this social issue is no excuse. (S)

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The President: Why are they keeping their forces in Germany?
(S)

Latvian Foreign Minister: That is a different kettle of fish because of their doctrine regarding the Baltic states. (S)

President Landsbergis: They want to keep troops in our countries as long as possible. (S)

Ambassador Meri: It is the new Brezhnev Doctrine. The Russian Deputy Defense Minister said that Russians have a duty to protect all Russians with military means if necessary. This is the new Brezhnev Doctrine developed by the Russian military. There was an interview that Kozyrev gave in Izvestia that was very important and frank. If there is another coup I would not like to be in Kozyrev's position, this document has been underestimated in the west. (S)

The President: What did he say? (U)

Ambassador Meri: That Russian policy is made by the generals and the mechanisms to implement these policies are military. (S)

The President: I would like to see this article. (S)

Mr. Zoellick: This is the red/brown article that you referred to Mr. President. (S)

Ambassador Meri: It is a game of pretext to show that Russian officers are loyal to him. (S)

The President: Perhaps it is a document to make the military feel better, we'll take a look at it. (S)

Ambassador Meri: Russia has no European policy just as the West and the U.S. don't have a Russian policy. (S)

The President: You don't think we have a policy toward Russia??!
(S)

President Ruutel: Mr. President, (U)

The President: Wait, I want to finish this. We think we have a pretty sound policy. You don't think so? (S)

Ambassador Meri: It is so dynamic a period that we have to adjust every month, there cannot be a tactical approach. But as you said recently, we need to deal with principle. (S)

The President: That is what I believe, that is our doctrine.
(S)

President Landsbergis: There is also the problem of defense conversion. (S)

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The President: We have sent teams there but you know we are facing the same situation in the U.S. Out in California where we are closing many bases they ask what I'm going to do. It's not easy but we have sent teams there. It's very important that defense conversion be successful so as to break up the military industrial complex there. This is in the interest of the Baltic states, it is also in the interest of the U.S. We've spent trillions of dollars over the years to defend against Russia but it won't be easy to address this defense conversion issue, there is so much they must do in the area of market reform for this to work. (S)

(Side discussion between Estonian President and President Bush regarding Estonia's desire to bring two Americans of Estonia background now working at the Pentagon into Estonia as military advisors. The Estonia President referred to a letter recently sent to Secretary Cheney. President promised to look into it.)

- End of Conversation _

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