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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Meeting with President
Richard von Weizsaecker of the Federal
Republic of Germany (S)

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.
The President
James A. Baker III, Secretary of State
John Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the President
for Press Relations
Robert Zoellick, Counselor-Designate of the
State Department, Notetaker

Federal Republic of Germany
President Richard von Weizsaecker
Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Minister of Foreign
Affairs
Mr. Blech, Vice Minister in the President's
Office
Mr. Pflueger, Presidential Press Officer
Mr. von Pfetten-Arnback, Foreign Policy
Advisor

DATE, TIME February 24, 1989, 3:00 p.m. - 3:20 p.m.
AND PLACE: American Ambassador's Residence, Tokyo, Japan

President Bush and Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) President Richard von Weizsaecker met for about twenty minutes February 24 at the American Ambassador's residence in Tokyo. Much of the discussion between the two leaders focused on alliance issues and the Soviet Union. They also addressed trade and other economic subjects. The tone of the meeting was warm and friendly. (S)

President Bush began by thanking President von Weizsaecker for coming by; the President offered to discuss anything that von Weizsaecker wished. (U)

President von Weizsaecker congratulated the President on his recent election. He said he admired the skillful way the new administration was approaching its tasks and said he was grateful

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for Secretary Baker's recent NATO trip. He was also pleased by General Walters' Ambassadorial appointment, which he saw as a fine symbol of the close relationship between the Federal Republic and the U.S. General Walters, he said, was a trusted friend, experienced and well-equipped to represent the U.S. (U)

The President replied that a non-career ambassador, especially to an important country like the Federal Republic, should be a skilled professional and able to identify with the President. The President said General Walters was a close friend. (U)

The President noted that some had commented that his new administration was moving too slowly, so he appreciated von Weizsaecker's compliment. The President said it was important to review policy carefully before moving ahead. It was this spirit that led Secretary Baker to visit our NATO allies early to seek their views. The President said his administration would proceed in this prudent manner. He believed Gorbachev understood this. (U)

President von Weizsaecker agreed the U.S. should not rush into action. What was needed, he said, was a longer-term analysis to create a firm and unchangeable basis for policy. Both countries needed such a base, of course, to face challenges in the Atlantic sphere and around the world. (Ø)

President von Weizsaecker said he expected economic issues, not security or East-West matters, to prompt the most difficulties. However, he added, it was important to remember that while we may expect some tension over economic issues, basic defense policy would remain as is: reliance on the nuclear umbrella and the Federal Republic's commitment to conventional defense. Von Weizsaecker explained that German public opinion was more sensitive to defense issues and had been since 1977. Before that time defense experts could proceed with their plans without public questioning or scrutiny. He was sure, however, that we would find ways to work within the Alliance on common problems without questioning our Allies' basic commitment. Drawing on the recent experience with Prime Minister Thatcher's visit to the FRG, von Weizsaecker said it was unfortunate that the media had focused too much on one item (apparently modernization) that is not in fact foremost. He repeated that even if the European Community now and then caused friction as it moved toward a single market, defense policy would not change and would remain the backbone of the Atlantic alliance. (Ø)

The President said he agreed with the importance of the Alliance and respected the different opinions of our Allies. Nevertheless, he said, we don't want Gorbachev to win a propaganda offensive. We must be sensitive to our local public opinion, but also must stay together and not be naive. The President said that Gorbachev had his own serious problems at home and it was difficult to foresee who or what we would be dealing with in the future in the USSR. Referring to Sakharov's recent statement about Gorbachev's risks, he said he was not sure

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what was in fact happening in the Soviet Union. But there was no question that the USSR had to confront big economic problems and that Eastern Europe was in flux, presenting both challenge and opportunity. (S)

On trade, the President said that there are problems looming. He said the U.S. is making the appropriate positive statements about EC 92, but that we would need some understandings about the EC's commitment to open markets. We face some challenges, especially in agricultural trade. He warned that the U.S. cannot become protectionist without causing great harm. Therefore, we needed to make progress on agricultural and other problems so as to avoid protectionist moves. He said von Weizsaecker was right to place an emphasis on the importance of economic issues because we must avoid confrontation. (S)

President von Weizsaecker replied that regional cooperation may be able to assist in addressing this global problem. He assured the President that the Federal Republic would stress keeping the EC open because the FRG could not live with a closed market; it depended too much on exports. He said that he was well aware of the agriculture problems of overproduction and high prices, and acknowledged that European farmers did not have a bright future. He said Germany would also contribute to GATT-Uruguay Round success. (S)

President von Weizsaecker said he shared the President's assessment of Gorbachev. Of course, von Weizsaecker observed, Gorbachev was not seeking to do the West any favors. Gorbachev recognizes the USSR won't remain a world power if it relies only on military strength. He must catch up in economics as well as other areas. To achieve these changes, Gorbachev must pay a high price. He must motivate his people. If he succeeds, he would be a competitor of the West, but he would have become so through acceptance of our ideas. The West must remain careful. It will take the USSR years to progress and the result remains uncertain. Gorbachev has to transform his whole society. (S)

The President said that we could not let Germany and the U.S. be divided by economic issues or by the Soviets. The U.S. fully understands the importance of the Federal Republic. That is why close and continual consultations are vital. He said the U.S. would try to be sensitive to the Federal Republic's domestic concerns, just as the Federal Republic is sensitive to our concerns. (S)

President von Weizsaecker said he was pleased with the expertise and knowledge in the Bush administration and remembered with appreciation receiving the President's views after a trip to Poland. (U)

The President replied that he was fascinated by Poland and would love to return. He said, however, that the U.S. did not want to exacerbate problems there, and he recalled the tragedy of Hungary

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in the 1950's. He said he was pleased by Jaruzelski's changed view of Solidarity. (C)

President von Weizsaecker responded that both Jaruzelski and Walesa have extremists with whom they must deal. (C)

The President said he wished they could have had more time to discuss these issues and stressed the need to keep in touch about Eastern Europe. (S)

President von Weizsaecker said he might visit Washington in June. (U)

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