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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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June 14, 1989

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Foreign Minister Roland Dumas of France

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
John Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President
Rozanne Ridgway, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Notetaker: Robert D. Blackwill, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Roland Dumas, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Jacques Andreani, Director of Cabinet to the Foreign Minister
Ambassador Emmanuel de Margerie

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 11, 1989, 4:30 - 5:05 pm
The Oval Office

The President began by asking how Minister Dumas' visit was going so far. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas said he had a good discussion with Secretary Baker earlier in the day and a productive talk with General Scowcroft at dinner. (S)

The President observed that we live in promising times. He was looking forward to the May visit of the President of the Republic and hoped that he could provide some good weather at Kennebunkport. (S)

The President was especially eager to hear President Mitterrand's views on what lies ahead at the NATO Summit and beyond. Turning to Lebanon, the President said that he used to go there in the old days and what was now happening was a horrible tragedy. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas said that he had a good exchange with Secretary Baker on Lebanon and believed that the West should support, reinforce the efforts of the Arab League. (S)

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The President asked what the Syrians really want out of Lebanon. For a while, he said, Syrian policy had seemed to be somewhat constructive. But that was a couple of years ago, and today Damascus appeared to be entirely unhelpful. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas opined that Syria does not want any real change in the situation in Lebanon. Instead, it simply wants to continue and even increase its influence there. The Syrian army was securely positioned in the north of Lebanon, and for 14 years Assad had simply tried to get an ever tighter grip on the country. (S)

The President said that, given the extraordinarily hostile environment in Lebanon, it was difficult for him to understand the source of Syrian satisfaction. Syria seems to like what it has in Lebanon. But what has it got? The President then asked if France had any hostages remaining in Lebanon. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas answered that all the French hostages had been released. (S)

The President responded that he wished he could say the same. The American hostages in Lebanon were a real weight on all our consciences. But there was no clear policy answer. Certainly, the US could never acquiesce in the demand that the prisoners in Kuwait be released. If we did that it would only guarantee the taking of more and more US hostages and the problem would never end. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas wondered if the Iranians could help on the question of the American hostages in Lebanon. (S)

The President said our relations with Iran had not improved. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas said French relations with Iran were not very good either. Moving to Central America, Dumas noted that he had a good discussion with Secretary Baker on events there. (S)

The President replied that he hoped the US and our European allies could get on the same wave length with regard to Central America. He wanted especially to see eye-to-eye with France. It was crucial that the West stand together in compelling the Sandinistas to do what they said they fought their revolution about: freedom. The sandinistas were simply not implementing policies toward this objective. After a period of bitter partisan dispute, the Executive and Congressional branches in

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this country had now come together, thanks to the heroic efforts of the Secretary of State. It was now agreed that the US should provide humanitarian aid for the Nicaraguan resistance and push the Sandinistas hard for democracy. (S)

Continuing, the President recalled that Oscar Arias had recently stood outside the White House and called for Cuba to stop exporting revolution into El Salvador and for the Sandinistas to live up to their pledge to bring democracy to Nicaragua. Guatemala and Honduras were on board with regard to these goals. But we need outside pressure from democracies on the Sandinistas and France can make a big difference in this regard. We had also made it clear to the Soviets that future improvement in their relationship with the U.S. would be accelerated if they stopped their flow of arms in Nicaragua. There were no results yet, but we hoped that there would be a change in Soviet policy towards Central America. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas thought there was a chance for a fair election in Nicaragua and said that France would insist on it.

(S)

Secretary Baker observed that there had been a change in attitudes and approach on the part of Latin American leadership with regard to Nicaragua and that we would work closely with the Latin democracies to try to pressure Managua toward fulfilling its democratic commitments. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas asked if there were any conditions placed on the US statement to Moscow concerning Soviet arms transfers to Nicaragua. (S)

Secretary Baker said he had not conditioned his statements to the Soviets, but had said this issue was very important in US-Soviet relations. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas noted that these would be good items for the President and President Mitterrand when they meet in May.

(S)

The President stressed that he very much looked forward to hearing President Mitterrand's views on the subject and asked Dumas' thoughts on the NATO Summit. (S)

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Foreign Minister Dumas thought that the Summit, and especially the SNF issue, embodied a complicated set of problems. This was particularly true in Germany where the situation is not so good. Dumas said that when he was in Germany in early April he found the coalition badly shaken. (S)

The President asked if this was only because of the SNF issue. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas said the problems were much broader than that but Chancellor Kohl certainly wanted to postpone the SNF modernization decision until after the 1990 election. (S)

Secretary Baker asked Dumas if he was sure about that. Kohl sometimes says that he wants to get the modernization issue out of the way before the 1990 election. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas said that was no longer the case. (S)

The President noted that he understood how tough the coalition was in Bonn. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas observed that recent election results had been very bad for the coalition. (S)

The President recalled that Herr Vogel had been here the other day and there was not much agreement on these SNF matters. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas emphasized that the NATO Summit would be an extremely important event, not only because of the anniversary. It would be the President's first NATO Summit and his first trip as President to Europe. Europeans would be waiting eagerly to hear from the President on that occasion. (S)

The President replied that things were basically going in the right direction for the West. We want perestrioka to succeed. The Soviet Union has enormous financial problems and we certainly do not want to stir up problems for them around the world. But Gorbachev has unleashed freedom and the consequences of that are unclear. The Polish roundtable agreement was welcomed and was just another example that history is on our side. With regard to our policy reviews, we are not stalling. We will have sensible proposals. And we will not surprise our friends. (S)

Foreign Minister Dumas said the West had done well in Vienna at the CSCE meeting and we have to keep on the offensive with regard to Gorbachev.

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The President noted that in Gorbachev's visit to England, he seemed to be personally popular but there was not much substance in his public remarks. (S)

Secretary Baker said that, with respect to Gorbachev's visits to Cuba and the UK, the press for the first time was giving him negative treatment. He was being criticized by the fickle media for not meeting his own aspirations. (S)

The President indicated that he was looking forward to seeing President Mitterrand in May at Kennebunkport. (S)

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