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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Ciriaco De Mita, Prime Minister of Italy (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
John Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert Blackwill, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (notetaker)
Maxwell Rabb, U.S. Ambassador to Italy
Interpreter

Ciriaco De Mita, Prime Minister
Giulio Andreotti, Foreign Minister
Rinaldo Petrignani, Ambassador to the U.S.

DATE, TIME May 27, 1989, 10:10 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
AND PLACE: Villa Madama, Rome

Prime Minister De Mita renewed his welcome and said he was sure Rome would get the President off to a good start for his European visit. Italy and the U.S., he said, now face an exceptional international situation. Today, we are building on peace and no one is prepared for that. We must be ready for the future. Therefore, the Atlantic Community, which has been the equilibrium for keeping the peace, should be the center of future efforts to build peace. Solidarity within the Alliance should grow, should take advantage of this new era. In previous decades, there were arguments about whether the Alliance was the correct choice for civilization. But now the Western Alliance has won, because its military position of strength deterred the Soviet Union. Now that the Alliance was winning, it would be a shame if it was troubled by self-doubt. (Ø)

The President thanked the Prime Minister for his welcome. He said it was no accident that Italy was chosen as the first stop

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on his trip. This decision signaled the importance of this bilateral visit and the closeness of the U.S.-Italian relationship. Americans felt very special about Italy in their hearts, and the President wanted all Italians to understand that. There were few bilateral problems, so it was possible to concentrate on broader questions. (U)

The President agreed that the Alliance was winning -- Western values, and the resulting peace and economic prosperity were capturing public attention. As a result of this success, there were pressures on the Alliance. So the President felt the Allies must have a united and successful Summit in Brussels. NATO would be judged on whether it could settle one contentious issue: SNF (short-range nuclear forces). (Ø)

The President believed the Germans, torn asunder by their domestic politics, had been reluctant to move toward the kind of compromise that the President thought must come out of the Summit. Recognizing that the conventional force imbalance was a major problem, and recognizing that Soviet forces were the biggest threat, the U.S. had come up with a conventional arms control proposal on which the Prime Minister had been briefed. That proposal should be an enormous help with the German problem. The President had made an appeal to Helmut Kohl to compromise, to accept a text which would be sustainable politically because of this U.S. conventional arms control initiative. The President felt Chancellor Kohl should accept the U.S. compromise text on the SNF issue. If the Prime Minister agreed with that assessment, the President would love to have the Prime Minister's support in Brussels if the matter was not resolved before the Summit. (Ø)

Prime Minister De Mita said he had talked about the SNF issue with the German Chancellor. He thought he understood the German position. There was, the Prime Minister thought, no real objective conflict in views. The Prime Minister and Chancellor Kohl had discussed the unacceptability of a "third zero" and an eventual negotiation on SNF missiles after a significant agreement reducing conventional weapons. The problem was in the timing of the relationship between SNF negotiations and a conventional forces agreement. (Ø)

Prime Minister De Mita then turned to the general problem of Germany, which was not always discussed between the U.S. and Italy. The problem stemmed from the fact that East-West relations were no longer characterized by conflict. In the

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"space" that was opening up, many things can happen. So the U.S. and Italy should endeavor to be sure that the elements that fill up this new space should not be a source of conflict in Europe. Washington and Rome must help those conservative Germans, including Chancellor Kohl, who want to remain within "Europe," within the Alliance. Others in Germany have different ideas. (S)

The President asked if the Prime Minister was concerned about reunification and a neutral Germany. (S)

No, replied Prime Minister De Mita. The problem of reunification was not immediate; if it was immediate, the U.S. and Italy would not be able to handle it. But the problem does exist in the long run. Italy was worried about those forces in Germany who would like the FRG to be equidistant between the USSR and the West. Next year in Germany there would be difficult elections. The Prime Minister put the problem in this way: Do we wish to help the Kohl Government or will we remain indifferent to the outcome of the next German election? If the Allies keep Kohl's situation in mind, and their strategic objectives in mind, a compromise could be found. But the result must not be a mess. If the Prime Minister understood the U.S. position correctly, the U.S. did not exclude SNF negotiations, if the CFE negotiation "makes good progress." This is a reasonable position. So the SNF negotiations could begin when there was a good result in the CFE talks. Prime Minister De Mita knew it was difficult to define when a good outcome has been achieved. But the U.S. and Italy had to be mindful of the timing of the West German elections. When Prime Minister De Mita spoke to Chancellor Kohl, Kohl said that he was not for the "third zero." (S)

Secretary Baker asked if the Germans were willing to say explicitly that a third zero has been excluded. (S)

Prime Minister De Mita said that, in his press conference a month ago, Chancellor Kohl had said it must be clear that we Germans do not want a denuclearized Europe, a zero option. (S)

Foreign Minister Andreotti observed that the Allies had always been able to find agreements. Germany has always done its duty, while some countries, like Holland, seem to be more clever and did not accept INF missiles when Italy and the Germans did. In addition to the concerns described by the Prime Minister, Germany was also dealing with the 50th anniversary of Germany's invasion of Poland. So this psychological element must be taken into

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account when thinking of German and East European reaction to the whole SNF issue. (Ø)

Continuing, Foreign Minister Andreotti said that too much emphasis was being given to the SNF problem. President Reagan's nuclear-free world was a wonderful vision and Reagan's idea was that such a vision should be implemented step by step. The question was to explain how the West intended to get to a nuclear-free world and how conventional arms negotiations would push the world closer to this noble goal. Foreign Minister Andreotti thought inclusion of aircraft in the West's CFE approach was a good idea. Too much emphasis should not be given to SNF missiles because the Alliance might lose prospects for a successful NATO Summit. (Ø)

The President said the world press was focused on the SNF issue, so it would be difficult to push it off to another meeting. The Alliance must find a compromise solution on SNF at the Summit. The President thought it could be done. Otherwise, the Summit would be overridden, soured by that one contentious issue. (Ø)

Prime Minister De Mita understood that, because SNF had been discussed so intensively, the Allies could not pretend at the NATO Summit that the problem did not exist. Yet he agreed with Minister Andreotti that, in celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Atlantic Alliance, the Allies should stress NATO's political accomplishments. It would be a mistake not to emphasize the triumphs of Western values throughout the world. The Allies should stress the strong justifications for the Alliance's continued existence. At the same time, NATO should describe how it wished to proceed in the future, to stay together, and avoid concentrating on one divisive item. The Eastern Bloc was changing strategy and causing problems. NATO's challenge was to assess East-West relations. This was the real subject for discussion in Brussels, rather than this or that specific problem. (Ø)

Prime Minister De Mita added that the Alliance also needed to talk about disarmament. Prime Minister De Mita knew President Bush was about to put forward a conventional arms control proposal in Brussels. Prime Minister De Mita thought President Bush had to stress the importance and the meaning of this proposal. The Alliance would be looking at the future by trying to bring about a conventional military equilibrium at the lowest possible level. Within the context of the U.S. proposal, the

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Allies could say that, if "concrete results" were reached in CFE, there could also be an eventual SNF negotiation. This vaguer formula would get past the SNF problem at the NATO Summit and avoid a serious problem with the German friends. Thinking aloud, Prime Minister De Mita suggested that the Alliance could say SNF negotiations would begin when the CFE talks reached a "positive result." "For a given time," the Alliance would say it could not do without nuclear weapons, and thus could not denuclearize Europe. On SNF modernization, the Allies could say that if short-range nuclear forces are kept in Europe ("if in the SNF negotiation, we keep something...") then those forces would be modernized if necessary. (Ø)

The President asked Secretary Baker to review the three central points for the U.S. on SNF. But, first, he wanted to reply to what Prime Minister De Mita and Foreign Minister Andreotti had said. The Summit's emphasis must be on the future of NATO. The Alliance should address the tremendous changes in the USSR, in Eastern Europe, and around the world. This was a time of great optimism, of bringing the Soviet Union into the community of nations. The West's success was so great, and the future was so exciting, that the President did not want the SNF issue to destroy the climate of celebration. (Ø)

Secretary Baker commented that, because the President wanted to stress larger issues at the Summit and because the U.S. recognized the problems of its German friends, Washington had been trying to work out the SNF problem with Bonn for several months. The President had taken three actions that were very forthcoming: first, indicating a willingness to delay production of a follow-on system to the Lance missile until the end of 1991 or early '92; second, embracing the principle of SNF negotiations dependent upon "tangible implementation" of a CFE agreement; and third, deciding to propose, at the NATO Summit, speeding up the CFE negotiations through a major new NATO conventional arms control initiative. All this would, it was hoped, meet Chancellor Kohl's problems in Bonn. Secretary Baker also noted that the U.S. was anxious that the text of the President's arms control initiative not become public until the President presented it at the Summit in Brussels. (Ø)

Secretary Baker added that with these three actions, there remained two important principles that mattered to the U.S. and to other members of NATO: first, explicit rejection of a third zero and, second, an understanding that any agreement on SNF forces cannot be implemented before there is full implementation

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of a CFE agreement that would redress the significant imbalance of conventional forces in favor of the Warsaw Pact. Secretary Baker believed this last point was acceptable to the Federal Republic. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Andreotti asked why, if the Alliance spoke of reducing nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future, it was necessary to say that the West needed nuclear weapons for all time. This changed the policy of the Reagan Administration, which wished to get rid of all nuclear weapons, and it gave the other side a propaganda advantage. Foreign Minister Andreotti recalled that NATO had a difficult moment in the 1960s when it moved from massive retaliation to flexible response; the Foreign Minister was Defense Minister at the time. The Alliance found a good strong formula that took into account the psychological situation in Bonn. (Ø)

Secretary Baker said the U.S. had taken into account changing circumstances in Germany and the psychological factors there. That was why Washington had substantially changed its position on modernization and agreed to the principle of SNF negotiations in certain circumstances. The U.S. was not suggesting that the provision ruling out a third zero say that there can never be a third zero. That was not the U.S. formulation. But the U.S. was suggesting that the text be silent on the duration of the period when there would be no third zero. This approach should therefore, in the U.S. view, be acceptable. The SNF negotiation should seek lower and equal levels, but not go to zero. The German language saying that under the present circumstances there should not be a third zero created major problems because the present circumstances end tomorrow. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Andreotti said the Alliance should not express a view one way or the other. (Ø)

Secretary Baker recalled that General Scowcroft had made a good point that, in the 1960s, it took five years to develop Alliance consensus on the flexible response doctrine and the Allies did not have five years to solve the SNF problem. (Ø)

The President asked if West German Foreign Minister Genscher could accept Foreign Minister Andreotti's formulation. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Andreotti said it was important not expressly to rule out the zero option, since Genscher could not accept that. (Ø)

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Secretary Baker said there should be some statement in the text of NATO's Comprehensive Concept document that an SNF negotiation would not produce a zero outcome for SNF missiles. (Ø)

Prime Minister De Mita said that lower and equal levels did not mean zero. (Ø)

Secretary Baker answered that it could mean just that. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Andreotti asked why the Allies should today exclude the possibility that, in thirty years, there would be no SNF missiles. (Ø)

Secretary Baker replied that the U.S. was not saying that forever and always there would be no zero. But, in connection with an SNF negotiation, the Alliance must say it was not going for zero now. The text of the U.S. language did not say NATO needed SNF missiles forever. But it must say that the Allies were not aiming for the third zero in this SNF negotiation. There were strong views in the United States, including in the Congress, that America needed those SNF weapons to help defend the 324,000 U.S. troops in Europe. The Alliance was faced not only with substantial Warsaw Pact conventional advantages, but also with a tremendous Warsaw Pact SNF advantage. Public opinion in U.S. and some other Allied countries would not support any position that does not make clear that the Alliance was not intending to go to zero. (Ø)

Prime Minister De Mita said that the SNF problem had to be solved without making a statement of principle, without saying yes to the zero option or no to the zero option. This was not only a German problem; it was a problem for other members of the Alliance. If this problem was not solved, there will be problems with other countries. Mrs. Thatcher was inflexible on everything, pretty close to a Cold War approach. At the same time, she has the closest sentimental attachment to Gorbachev. (Ø)

The President said the U.S. was working with the Germans, getting close to a common position. The U.S. now understand Italy's views better. A discussion of SNF could go on all day. (Ø)

Prime Minister De Mita, concluding, said that the Allies needed to work the SNF problem out. (Ø)

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