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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Ciriaco De Mita, Prime Minister

DATE, TIME May 27, 1989, 5:20 - 5:25pm
AND PLACE: Villa Taverna, Rome

Prime Minister De Mita told the President that, as a citizen of the free world, he was very happy with the President's conventional arms control initiative. It would have a great effect on the world and in Europe. (P)

The President said that the spirit this morning had been very good. (P)

Prime Minister De Mita turning to the SNF issue, noted the tension between Great Britain and Germany. He hoped that Prime Minister Thatcher could eventually agree to the "communique." (P)

The President observed that there were still difficulties on the issue of a "third zero." President Mitterrand had been very diplomatic and generous. (P)

Prime Minister De Mita said that, when he had heard the President's proposals, he thought they would help with Germany. The German situation was very difficult. There had been many criticisms of Germany in recent weeks. Chancellor Kohl was in a difficult situation. It was impossible to say exactly why this was so, because the German economy was so strong. Perhaps it was a product of the emotions of the German people, "searching," as they had so many times before. (P)

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The President asked the Prime Minister whether Gorbachev had awakened Germany's aspirations for unity. (P)

Prime Minister De Mita thought that Gorbachev had done this, but what was most important was for Germany to have a chance to express itself. The Germans did not feel that they were treated like the French or the British, despite their great strength. (P)

The President asked whether the June elections for the European Parliament were likely to have an impact. (P)

Prime Minister De Mita thought they would, especially in Germany. He noted that detente and East-West relations were a major problem. (P)

The President said that, in his Boston University speech, he had reiterated his intention to remain fully involved with Europe, not to turn isolationist. He wanted the Prime Minister to know how he felt on this subject. Most Americans, though not all, felt the same way. (P)

Prime Minister De Mita said that there was a consensus in Europe that the speech was very important. (P)

Continuing, Prime Minister De Mita said it was difficult to know how to proceed with Eastern Europe on economic matters. Some wanted to go too far too quickly. The U.S. and Italy should cooperate closely on such issues. (P)

The President said he would like to help Poland and Hungary bilaterally, but there must be economic reform or the U.S. would just be wasting money. (P)

Prime Minister De Mita agreed. The East Europeans had told him that they welcomed Western economic help but did not want Western advice. (P)

The President returned to the idea of a united Germany and said he would like to say the Germans should do what they wish, but he must be responsible. (P)

Prime Minister De Mita said one could think about the problem on two levels. On the level of ordinary people, a desire for reunification was strong. At the political level, the entities wanted to remain distinct. (P)

The President referred to the unrest in China and said he had been very circumspect recently about the student riots there. It was tough to know what line to take. (P)