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WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President
Alfredo Cristiani of El Salvador (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Cristiani
Notetaker: David A. Pacelli, NSC

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 19, 1991, 10:04 - 10:13 a.m. EDT
The Oval Office -- Presidential Office

The President: Hello. (U)

President Cristiani: Hello. (U)

The President: Fredi, how are you? (U)

President Cristiani: Fine, how are you? (U)

The President: Alright here. I am calling to tell you that I received your letter and will be happy to send a U.S. representative to the Mexico City talks when you think that the time is appropriate. (U)

President Cristiani: Great. I really appreciate that. We had mentioned this possibility previously, I think. The four foreign ministers of the friends of the Secretary General are coming down sometime next week. That would perhaps be a good time. (U)

The President: Yes. (U)

President Cristiani: It would be good to be able to count on a U.S. representative to come down. (U)

The President: One other thing. I want to repeat what I have said before. I want you to know that you have our strong support, both moral and political. I appreciate your taking the time to meet with General Colin Powell on his visit. You did meet with him, didn't you? (U)

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President Cristiani: Yes, yes. It was a great pleasure to meet with him. (Ø)

The President: Good. I received a report from my staff that you had a good visit and I appreciate you seeing him. (Ø)

I talked to Carlos Andres Perez on April 9. He told me that he thought the negotiations in Mexico City were in trouble. He also said that he would be calling you to press you for more flexibility in the talks. I just wanted to let you know about this and to ask how you see the prospects for reaching a solid agreement before the end of April? (Ø)

President Cristiani: There are many problems with the issue of constitutional reforms. (Ø)

The President: Yes. (U)

President Cristiani: The other issues -- military reform and a cease-fire agreement -- we are closer, and we have a good chance of reaching agreement. (Ø)

On the constitutional reform, the FMLN is insisting on reforming the reform mechanism. We have a debate internally about that. Most lawyers and constitutional experts here have pronounced against it mainly because of the constitutional aspect, that it can not be done this way under the constitution. (Ø)

We are now looking for another possibility and have explained it to UN representatives who flew down to see us yesterday. The idea is for the political parties to support a package of issues on constitutional reform developed by the parties and present their package as a possibility for the UN and the FMLN. (Ø)

This is the main aspect of the issue. The FMLN has been inflexible in its position regarding that matter. (Ø)

Because of the legal dimension on the matter, we have to be inflexible, because of the constitutional angle, and to change our position would be the wrong way to go. Now, we have approved a decision to go with specific reforms to the constitution. That would handle one of the main problems. (Ø)

Carlos Andres Perez called me. His position is somewhat simplistic in saying that we should put peace above everything and consider giving in to the FMLN position. I think that if the parties can pass constitutional changes without changing Article 248, it would be the best way. When I told him of our plan, he calmed down a little bit. Also, I asked his help with his party to contact the social democratic party here to support our position. (Ø)

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We are going back today to the political parties to see if they agree with our proposals or not. We have had a meeting and I think agreement is basically a reality. (Ø)

The President: Yes. (U)

President Cristiani: Convincing the FMLN on this is the main issue. (Ø)

The President: I know that you want me to call Presidents Salinas and Perez, and Prime Minister Gonzalez to urge them to use their influence with the FMLN to be flexible. At least, I gather this from what my staff has told me. I am willing to do so, but I wanted to touch base with you personally first. We have no influence with the FMLN, and I understand these countries do. I am glad to do it if you want me to. (Ø)

President Cristiani: I really appreciate that. Yes, [not heard]. If they can be pressed into accepting what the majority of parties are asking for on constitutional change, it would be most helpful. [Gap in transmission] because of all the different parties. (Ø)

The President: How many parties are there? Are there lots of them? (Ø)

President Cristiani: Our reform mechanism provides for constitutional changes to be approved by two legislative assemblies. The first assembly we are more concerned with, since it ends on April 30. We are with four parties in this assembly. The idea is that after this assembly, we will have an expanded number of parties in the next elected assembly. In this one, there are four: the Christian Democrats; the Christian Democratic Movement, which is a splinter from the Christian Democrats; and the PCN, and us. In the next assembly, we will add the Democratic Convergence, which is a coalition of parties of the left. (Ø)

The President: Yes. (U)

One other point, on arms aid to the FMLN. We are troubled by the intelligence we have about Cuban shipments of SA-16 missiles and other equipment to the FMLN. We have gone to the Cubans on this, as well as to other friendly governments. (Ø)

I had a good discussion with Dona Violeta during her State Visit on Wednesday about Sandinista aid to the FMLN and other guerrilla groups. Speaking frankly, I asked her to provide us with all the serial numbers of SAMs which the Sandinista Army has received so we can check them against what has showed up in El Salvador. (Ø)

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There was no response on that, but we made very clear that this aid must stop. I made the effort and wanted you to know that. We will keep up the pressure on this issue, and I hope that you will too. We want to be very helpful. (Ø)

President Cristiani: It definitely is. I had the opportunity to talk to the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico and I asked him to go back to the Cubans on this. I asked him to pressure Castro. Basically, Castro had promised the Mexican Government that while he would support the FMLN morally, he would stop shipping weapons. The Vice Minister was very keen on getting into this, and I think he'll help. (Ø)

The President: I hope that you are right, not that I trust the word of Castro. (Ø)

I appreciate your good will, and I will contact these leaders. (Ø)

President Cristiani: I appreciate it, Mr. President. (U)

The President: Give my love to all your wonderful family. (U)

President Cristiani: Yes, and the same to yours. (U)

The President: Okay, goodbye. (U)

President Cristiani: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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