

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Call to Prime Minister Ante Markovic of Yugoslavia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Ante Markovic, Prime Minister
Notetaker: Robert L. Hutchings, NSC Staff
Interpreter: Victor Jackovich

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: May 20, 1991, 2:07 - 2:27 p.m.
The Oval Office

The President initiated the call. (U)

The President: How are you, Mr. Prime Minister? This is George Bush. I have been watching with concern the latest developments in Yugoslavia. (U)

Prime Minister Markovic: Thank you, Mr. President. We are grateful for the attention and interest you are showing and your expression of concern. We received your helpful letter, and we take this conversation as a continuation of your expression of support. (U)

The President: That is why I am calling -- to express our continued support. You know that the United States supports the unity of Yugoslavia and the establishment of genuine democracy throughout Yugoslavia. But what we are witnessing in the collective Presidency is unconstitutional and inconsistent with democratic principles, and it could even lead to disintegration and possibly hostilities. I know what you stand for, and that your office is the strongest institution that still represents reform and unity. If you are able to strengthen your role and fill this dangerous void of authority through constitutional means, you will have our support. We would have no objections if you make public the fact that I called to express my concern and expressed this support.

Prime Minister Markovic: Mr. President, your information is absolutely correct. The Presidency of Yugoslavia is blocked -- not functioning. The situation is difficult, but it is under control. The Parliament is still working, and the Government is functioning. We have control over all movements in the country.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Declassify on: OADR

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 12958,
AS AMENDED
8/12/2009

The Minister of Defense has complete control. Tomorrow there will be a reduction in the state of military readiness and a demobilization of those reserve forces which were called up during the previous crisis in the Presidency. (C)

The President: In other words, you feel things are going better?
(U)

Prime Minister Markovic: I cannot say that we have completely overcome the crisis, but we are seeking a political resolution. We are continuing discussions in an effort to find a constitutional, democratic resolution of the problems facing us.
(C)

The President: Good. Let me raise another matter with you. We and others in the international community want to help. Do not think you are alone. If it would be helpful, we could organize some kind of CSCE statement or, if you wish, mediation by a third party. I know that our European friends would join us in responding to a request from you. Finding the right channel would not be an obstacle. But the request would have to come from you. If you made such a request and got a prompt positive response, it could strengthen you and stop those who would destroy Yugoslavia or want to use violence. If the CSCE or third-party mediation idea is of interest, I would be interested in hearing from you, now or in the future. I want to know what we can do to support you and to support your Government and the principles you represent. I would also like to know if you have any other ideas. (C)

Prime Minister Markovic: I want to thank you very much for attempting to find the best way to support me and my Government and to help us carry out reforms and democratization and to resolve the problems we face. I think the best way at the moment is for the delegation of the European Community headed by Messrs. Santer and Delors to proceed to Yugoslavia as scheduled on May 29 and 30. We will arrange for them to have discussions with us, with all republic presidents, and, if necessary, in other fora such as the mass media. I think it would be good -- this is my suggestion -- that you publicly issue a statement supporting this visit. It would be especially good if you could say that after this European Community visit, your own Secretary of State Baker will be visiting Yugoslavia. This would be an excellent and important sign of support and would demonstrate your personal involvement to support and strengthen our Government's efforts.
(C)

The President: Let me say that we will publicly support the European Community and its mission. Let me think about the Baker suggestion and see what we can do. As you know, he is pretty tied up right now with the Middle East, but I will talk with him. If you think it would be helpful and we think it would be helpful.... We will see. I just don't want to make a commitment yet until I talk to him. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister Markovic: Of course, but please give it some thought. There are two more things I would like to mention. One is the Nickles Amendment. I understand why the Nickles Amendment was adopted. I even believe it could have a positive effect on the situation in Yugoslavia. But its announced implementation today strikes squarely at the government and at our efforts in reform and democratization. Through provisions of the Amendment, technical assistance would be closed off to us, as well as loan guarantees and access to international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and others. We think it is important, for example, for an IMF delegation to come to Yugoslavia now to negotiate a stand-by agreement. Fortunately, we understand that the law has not yet been fully implemented, because we understand that Secretary Baker has not yet decided. (Ø)

The President: That is true. We sometimes have differences with our Congress. In this case, we have decided to defer challenging this until we see how the situation develops in Yugoslavia. But we are making it clear publicly that these measures are a result of actions by the Serbian government, while we continue to support you and the Federal Government. We want to support and strengthen you. Let me see what we can do with the Congress. (Ø)

Prime Minister Markovic: Your assessment is the correct one. The situation in Yugoslavia is such that the Federal government is the promoter of a democratic resolution. It has the trust of the people and is capable of solving the problems which exist. But the Nickles Amendment is harming us. (Ø)

The President: I understand. We will try to work with Congress. Good luck to you. (U)

Prime Minister Markovic: Thank you. I would like to thank you in the name of the government of Yugoslavia and in my own personal name. With me during this conversation was our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Loncar. It is my wish to be able to come to Washington personally as soon as possible. I would then be able to convey my gratitude personally and discuss not only the situation in Yugoslavia but also developments in other formerly socialist countries, including the Soviet Union. I believe this could be of interest to you. (Ø)

The President: Thank you. Please give our best regards to Loncar, who is an old friend. We think the world of him. Second, when your own travel plans become known, please tell Ambassador Zimmermann. I am sure we can accommodate it. Good luck to you, sir. (Ø)

Prime Minister Markovic: Thank you. Goodbye to you in Washington. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~