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19. Memcon	Memorandum of conversation between President George Bush and Prime Minister Charles of Dominica [SENT FOR AGENCY REFERRAL] (6 pp.)	7/26/91	(b)(1)	C

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Minutes of the President's Meeting with Prime Minister Charles of Dominica on July 26, 1991

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Lawrence Eagleburger, Acting Secretary of State
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Bernard W. Aronson, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs
G. Philip Hughes, U.S. Ambassador to Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines
William T. Pryce, Senior Director for Latin American and Caribbean Affairs, NSC Staff (Notetaker)

Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica

DATE, TIME July 26, 1991, 10:30 - 10:50 A.M. EDT
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The meeting opened with a friendly banter with the press where the President reiterated a practice of not talking to the press during photo opportunities. (U)

Prime Minister Charles: I remember you (to Helen Thomas, Dean of Press Corps). (U)

Helen Thomas: We remember you well from Grenada. (U)

(Meeting officially starts)

The President: I had a talk with Prime Minister Manley not long ago. I have great respect for him. I think that he is trying very hard. (U)

Prime Minister Charles: I think he is doing well, if he can just get the people to follow him. (U)

The President: He has taken a courageous leadership position and we hope he will succeed. But how are things coming in Dominica? How is the economy? (U)

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Prime Minister Charles: Well not very well. We will only have a 4.1 percent growth rate this year instead of 7.5 percent. ~~(C)~~

The President: Like to trade? (Laughter) ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Charles: Well, this will cause us some trouble, but it really is not that bad. ~~(C)~~

The President: Seems to me that it is pretty good. (U)

Prime Minister Charles: We have strong opposition, which is giving us some problems. ~~(C)~~

The President: You had a confidence vote I think not long ago, how did it go? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Charles: We won by one vote. They thought that with all the internal discussions within our party that some of ours would go over to them. But, no, that was not going to happen. We have our own talks but I think the people felt that you can't do anything for your country on the other side. I think the person who they were thinking of will be with us. ~~(C)~~

The President: When was that confidence vote? (U)

In April? (U)

Prime Minister Charles: They are always making noises, but not about the right things. We had a budget and I sent it up fifteen days ahead and they walked out in protest. ~~(C)~~

The President: Eugenia, what happened in Grenada? How is that working out? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Charles: They are all convicted. They will be hanged. This is supposed to happen in August. Whether the government will have the strength to hang them, I'm not sure, but the people want them hanged. I think it's fourteen out of the seventeen that were sentenced to be hanged. I said if you want to send them over to me and we'll hang them. Mr. Bishop says they must be hanged. ~~(C)~~

The President: When do things happen? Is there a date? ~~(C)~~

Ambassador Hughes: They appealed their sentence under the law and the appeal has been upheld. ~~(C)~~

The President: What is the next step? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Charles: The order will be sent to the Governor-General who will listen to the recommendation of the Prime Minister. ~~(C)~~

The President: What are the issues we should talk about? What can we do to help? I know that there is a problem with an airport. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Charles: Well that is one reason we are here.
(U)

The President: Isn't there some talk about how this could come about? ~~(C)~~

Acting Secretary Eagleburger: We are having lunch with Prime Minister Charles, Bernie and I and she will have a chance to beat up on both of us. (U)

The President: Well, we would like to be helpful. (U)

Assistant Secretary Aronson: We have checked and we think the figures would make it possible to do a little bit of assistance in August. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Charles: We've had considerable experience in trying to move this project. It is difficult because of the earth which was to be moved. I was hoping that we could have some help from National Guards units in the United States. ~~(C)~~

The President: Maybe it would be possible to do something on moving ground with the National Guard. ~~(C)~~

Acting Secretary Eagleburger: Governor Sununu says that maybe this would be possible. ~~(C)~~

The President: The National Guards are under the control of the Governors and they would want to control the activities to a certain extent. Probably couldn't have them for a year, and they would want to have some control. ~~(C)~~

Governor Sununu: We wouldn't get them for a whole year, but perhaps in groups at different periods of time. We could talk to the Governors about this. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Charles: I know that we could not do that. Perhaps we could have three groups, one at a time. I would like to say that there is a real problem. At the airport we are only three minutes from 500 foot mountains. It is important for our diversification to broaden our economy. But you can't for example rely on sending cut flowers for shipment because it is too undependable. (C)

The President: We worked out a difficult situation on cut flowers with Colombian, didn't we? ~~(C)~~

Assistant Secretary Aronson and Mr. Pryce: Yes, we did. (U)

The President: We are off to Moscow to try to ease tension. We will sign a START agreement. I think this is important. I mention this because I think people from various countries, especially youth appreciate the signing of the agreement. This will lessen the tension in the world in which they live. And it should be helpful in the Soviet Union. I think they spend about

four times as much of their gross national products on armaments as we do, don't they? (C)

Governor Sununu: Yes I think so, we spend about 5 percent, they spend 20 percent. (C)

The President: There is an economic impact for others in the Soviet Union of this approach, and there are people in the Soviet Union who are still suspicious of us, who want to continue producing weapons and not reduce them. They have an interest in maintaining the old ideas. Gorbachev has to deal with the people on his right. There are people who still think that they should emphasize armaments. There are people who still think the United States has aggressive intentions. Brian Mulroney handled this with Gorbachev very well. He looked down toward the United States and said well, there is New York. And Gorbachev wondered what he was talking about. Mulroney said do you know how much of a border we have with the United States? Gorbachev said no. Mulroney said well, it is about six thousand miles. And Mulroney then asked do you know how many troops we have on the border? Gorbachev said no. Mulroney said none. He said if the United States was an aggressive power and had aggressive intentions, why would they go to the Soviet Union, if they could go just right north where there are 24 million people with a good economy. I think that the more we can do to lessen tensions, the better off all the world will be. (C)

Prime Minister Charles: Well, I think that the Communist groups have made a mess of things wherever they are. (C)

The President: It was interesting in Greece, I spoke to the Parliament. There you can tell how the people feel, and who is with and who is not with the government. People not with the government literally sit on their hands and those in favor of the government clap loudly and wildly. There was a Communist group there; there was a woman who was rather plain but not unattractive sitting there listening, but behind her were about ten people who looked like Old Line Communists who had come out of central casting. They were so stern and sinister looking and they were the Stalinists. (C)

And look at Gorbachev, what's he saying now, "we don't want any Communists in this party any more." (C)

Prime Minister Charles: That is why we are recognizing North Korea. I told them that we don't like you as much as South Korea but we'll have relations. They don't like me much. I told them that I will come and visit you when you give us as much as south Korea. They don't like me. (b)(1)

The President: Well, there may be some change in North Korea; it's happening all over the world. Look at Mongolia, see how things have changed there since you and I last talked. (C)

Prime Minister Charles: I told them, "I'm not going to see you." You have been destroying young people and I hope that you will give your people more freedom. (C)

The President: Do you think they will do something? (C)

Prime Minister Charles: I hope so. We won't go until they do. (C)

The President: How is your friend Fidel doing? (U)

Prime Minister Charles: He will be the last Communist around. My feeling is that the Cubans won't change. We refuse to talk to them because they give scholarships which require indoctrination. Now they go through Paris, which means that you can't require Marxism-Leninism as part of the educational program; we are getting somewhere on this. (C)

The President: Do you find the Cubans are more outgoing in meetings? (C)

Prime Minister Charles: They talk to you one-on-one, but in their groups there are always one or two people who are not what they seem to be. [REDACTED] You should ask Gorbachev to do this. (C) (b)(1)

The President: Castro may not want to go. We may never get him to open up the economy. He looks scared. (C)

Assistant Secretary Aronson: He wishes but. (C)

The President: But get C. and C. But they could help with the Communists. (C)

You don't have a major drug problem. (C)

Prime Minister Charles: We have just had a major bust. The (U.S.) Coast Guard did a fine job. (C)

The President: Was this a transit? (C)

Prime Minister Charles: Yes, but a little bit stayed behind. We had a call and we didn't know where they hid it. We are very keen on getting rid of cocaine. (C)

The President: Are you having to spend a lot on rehabilitation? (C)

Prime Minister Charles: Not so much, but it's a real problem. When we captured the twelve drug suspects, we had to put them in the prison and four of our other prisoners escaped during the process. We have a prison system where we are trying to get our prisoners to work and we are paying them, but only at the end of their term. Some people say they should be paid while they are there but they will simply send their money to their families,

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and they won't have anything when they get out, and their families will be encouraging them to stay in jail. So I say pay them when they leave. (e)

The President: Encouraging self reliance, I see. I hope they become readjusted. (e)

How are things shaping up for the future? (e)

Prime Minister Charles: I could run again in 1995, but I don't intend to. We don't have a strong party. I'll retire and I'll look after the party. (e)

The President: Will there be a successor to you? (e)

Prime Minister Charles: There is a person that I have in mind. I think we need a younger person. I've talked about retiring early so that I can press the buttons. I'll need to get the right successor. (e)

There are a number of things that I want to get done before I leave. I want the airport and a new sewage system and there are three or four things I would like to do before I get finished. (e)

The President: Well, it has certainly been wonderful to see you and I know that you'll have a good lunch with Larry and Bernie and talk about the airport and other things. (e)

(Meeting begins to break up)

The President: One of the things I hope you know and that I've tried to make known is that as I'm off on other problems and I think Eagleburger is the same, I don't want people to think that I am forgetting Latin America, for I am not. I know that Carlos Andres Perez used to worry about that. I have continuing interests here in the Hemisphere and particularly in the Caribbean, and I hope people know that. (e)

Prime Minister Charles: I think they do. Some people will always criticize but I think most people know. (e)

--- End of Conversation ---

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