

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Ruud Lubbers, Prime Minister of the Netherlands

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Ruud Lubbers, Prime Minister
Notetaker: Barry Lowenkron, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME: August 19, 1991, 2:36 - 2:43 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Hello, Rudd. How are you? (U)

Prime Minister Rudd: I'm fine George. Yourself? (U)

The President: All right. I'm concerned about what has happened in the Soviet Union, and wanted to touch base with you as the head of the EC. (U)

Prime Minister Lubbers: Yes, we are trying to react as united as possible. ~~Jim Baker had a good discussion with Hans van den Broek and we expect a declaration on behalf of the Council, but I guess you know that already. I support the idea of having a NATO ministers meeting as well on Thursday morning.~~ (§)

The President: I don't want to be the only one against a NATO meeting, but I want to be careful. We don't want to send scary military signals around the world by having a NATO meeting. You know our position is the same as the yours. (§)

Prime Minister Lubbers: If you like, we can decide that tomorrow. We have an EC meeting tomorrow here in The Hague where we will take a position on the same things you did already, such as suspending aid. We will also discuss the possibility of calling a meeting in the framework of the CSCE. On CSCE, we have this strange conference coming up in a few weeks in Moscow on human rights, which seems silly. Our EC declaration will also deal with the concerns of the central European countries. Every one of them have been calling and asking us to pay attention to their concerns. These are the main points for the moment. We expect the foreign ministers tomorrow will advise us to have a special European Council meeting by the end of next week, say Friday. That is what Major as well as Mitterrand have requested. So for us the question of a NATO Ministerial is a tactical deliberation we can do with or without. (§)

The President: Well, we don't want to be the only ones opposed and Baker is prepared to come over tomorrow night. (§)

Prime Minister Lubbers: We proposed that he keep in touch with his NATO colleagues so as to avoid any misunderstanding on the scheduling of a NATO meeting. We will ask Hans to coordinate the position with the members on this part of the ocean. We will check with Jim Baker for a yes or a no on the scheduling of a NATO Ministerial. (S)

The President: That's fine. Again we don't want to stand alone. I am very concerned that inadvertently our position in NATO will look like commitments that would be a repeat of Hungary in 1956, or, on the other hand, send a signal of total impotence. We have to be very careful to keep on the political, as opposed to military, side as much as we can. (S)

Prime Minister Lubbers: I agree fully with you and will try to lead the European Community along the same lines as you. (S)

The President: Maybe we could highlight a political strategy at NATO. (S)

Prime Minister Lubbers: Certainly, the NATO position can be in accordance with what you have already said, or with what the European Council will be saying. (S)

The President: I think we are thinking along the same lines. It is important to stay in close touch. I plan to touch base with ~~Eastern European leaders as well. The Polish Prime Minister has~~ called John Major. These leaders are nervous, and we want to reassure them we don't want a return to the status quo ante. (S)

Prime Minister Lubbers: Is there still resistance in the Soviet Union or is it all over already? (S)

The President: We don't know. Yeltsin is making some forthright statements. I don't have any reason to feel it's over in the sense of the people accepting all of this. I think we still should be calling for support for the democratic process and the legal process. What they've done is strictly illegal. There is an urgent message coming to me in 15 minutes from the new Soviet leaders. We will receive the ambassador, not at my level, and he will pass this message to us. I'm interested to know what it will say. The Soviet Vice President made a statement that Gorbachev is tired and sick and he hopes to work with him in the future. Nobody knows what that means. It sounds ridiculous. (S)

Prime Minister Lubbers: I agree. The new leaders are going to face the resistance of some republics, especially the Baltic states. (S)

The President: If it looks like we are prepared to do something in NATO that we really are not prepared to do, such as military action, we can end up inciting violence. This hardliner in Lithuania may end up calling for troops. (S)

Prime Minister Lubbers: I see your point. We can expect that -- at least in the Baltic states, and beyond that in certain republics -- some of these leaders may think that this will be their last chance to declare independence. (S)

The President: Then there could be a big fight and the world will issue a cry: what are we going to do to help these people? But let's stay in touch. (S)

Prime Minister Lubbers: We'll do that and if there is something special in the Soviet message, please let me know so we won't be on the wrong track for our EC meeting tomorrow. Please, use your own channel or tell Jim Baker to let us know. (S)

The President: I'll do that. Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --