

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Carlos Menem of Argentina on August 20, 1991 (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Carlos Menem, President of Argentina  
Interpreter: Barbara Phillips  
Notetakers: Robert Morley, James Waurishuk

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: August 20, 1991, 6:02 - 6:13 P.M., EDT  
Kennebunkport

The President: Carlos, hello, are you there? How are you? (U)

President Menem: Hello George, how are you? I am worried about what is happening in the Soviet Union. (Ø)

The President: I am concerned too. I have been in a plane for the last hour, so I may not have the latest on what is happening. (Ø)

President Menem: I just returned from Brazil. I met with President Collor. We made a joint statement about our concern over the future of the democratic system in the Soviet Union. We have spoken out. What else can we do? (Ø)

The President: Well, in the first place, the statements you have made are very good. I talked with Yeltsin earlier today for 25 minutes. He asked that we demand that Gorbachev be released and be given a medical examination if the coup plotters continue to say he is sick. I told him we will not recognize the coup leaders as legitimate and we are saying over and over again that what they have done is against the law. Yeltsin said there are one hundred thousand people in the streets and the strikes he has called for are beginning to be effective. But I think we have to watch the situation there, insist on the restitution of constitutional government, and not conduct normal relations with the Soviet government until the situation clears up. I am also concerned about the Baltic republics. The coup leaders may use force to hit hard at the Baltic governments. (Ø)

President Menem: We will also follow the situation very closely, George. I heard that shots were fired in Moscow. Maybe this is only the beginning. We are not going to recognize the present government. We are going to insist on the return of democracy. But I want to know, George, when you call for the liberty of Gorbachev, do you mean he has to be restored as President? (Ø)

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The President: Yes, that is what I mean. He is the constitutional leader of the Soviet Union. The coup leaders have said they will work with him, but Yanayev is acting as if he were Head of State. Gorbachev is, legally, not him. I have tried to call Gorbachev twice, but have been unsuccessful. (Ø)

President Menem: Finally, George, I would like to know if I can make this conversation public in Argentina? (Ø)

The President: Yes, of course. I would welcome that. I would like to make it public up here as well. I think we are both looking at the situation in the same way, and will say so. (Ø)

President Menem: Good. I am going to make it known to the press, and would like you to do the same in the United States. If you can think of anything we can do to help, just give me a phone call and we will do it. (Ø)

The President: Good. Statements from you and other leaders are important to the cause of democracy in the Soviet Union. If you talk to any of the other leaders in the region, please tell them to speak out with the same determination you and I have. Your support is important. (Ø)

President Menem: Good, George. I will get in touch with the other Presidents in the region and let them know about our conversation. Please accept my best wishes for you and your family. (Ø)

The President: Thanks. The same to all your family. Barbara is with me now, and she appreciates your thoughts. I am on vacation now in Kennebunkport, and will be here until the first week in September. I will be following the situation from here. Please call me if you need to discuss this further. Just give me a call. (Ø)

President Menem: Okay, thank you very much. As always, I have the greatest affection for you and wish you the very best. (Ø)

The President: One last thing. Be sure to practice up on your tennis so we can play this fall. (U)

President Menem: Okay, thank you. I want to congratulate you. Your football team won against our team in Italy today. (U)

The President: Oh, really? Great. Good-bye, now. We'll be talking to you soon. (U)

President Menem: So long. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)