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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Boris Yeltsin, President of the
Republic of Russia

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Boris Yeltsin, President
Interpreter: Peter Afanassenko
Notetaker: Ed A. Hewett

DATE, TIME: October 8, 1991, 2:22 - 2:34pm
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Boris, can you hear me? This is George Bush.
(U)

President Yeltsin: Mr. President, I greet you. (U)

The President: Where did I find you, in Moscow, or are you still
on vacation trying to get some rest? (U)

President Yeltsin: No, I go back to Moscow on the tenth [of
October]. (U)

The President: Good. Take care of yourself. I repeat my offer.
If you need help at any time, specialists, or whatever, I'm glad
to send someone over to you. Or, you're always welcome to come
over here. (S)

One other matter. We had a call to Jim Baker from Bob Strauss,
who met with Silaev today. Strauss told Baker that your
government was undecided on an economic treaty. (S)

Clearly this is an internal matter, not really any of my
business. But I just wanted to share one thought with you. Some
voluntary economic union could be an important step for
clarifying who owns what, and who's in charge, thus facilitating
humanitarian assistance, and any economic investment which might
be forthcoming... (S)

President Yeltsin: I understand your concern, Mr. President.
The treaty is not signed yet. There were two teams which I
called down here twice, and we are continuing to work on our
draft. I called President Gorbachev, and we agreed that on
October 11 we will get together in Moscow, hear reports, and then
Russia will sign the treaty. (S)

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We understand we have the least to gain; as a matter of fact we might even lose something. But we'll sign, because of the bigger political goal -- to save the Union. As President I do have that right, even though it may be tough to get through the Supreme Soviet for approval. We'll sign on the 15th of October. ~~(S)~~

The President: I was just calling because Secretary Baker had told me of his call from Bob Strauss. Don't let them work you to death when you return. ~~(S)~~

President Yeltsin: Thank you very much for your best wishes. First, we will sign the agreement. Second, after your momentous speech on arms control, I spoke with Gorbachev. We decided to work in a parallel fashion with you to reduce arms. I heard his speech. In fact he sent Defense Minister Shaposhnikov and the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on a special plane to talk to me. ~~(S)~~

We had a long, detailed conversation on arms control, and on the role of Russia and what we could do. You see, Russia could act as a bloc, to take even more radical cuts in the context if the Soviet cuts. That would enhance your confidence in what we are willing to do, so that other countries would have more confidence in us, and confidence vis-a-vis Russia and the Union's intentions. Russia has an enormous military potential, and could act as a separate bloc. Also Russia could provide an additional measure of verification. Let me assure you, the work is going on, and we are working with Gorbachev. ~~(S)~~

The President: I understand. I knew you'd be responsive, based on our previous talks. I'm very appreciative of the prompt and positive response Gorbachev made. He told me you had talked on this. ~~(S)~~

President Yeltsin: Yes. Thank you Mr. President for your attention. We in no way want to lose control of the situation. Russia is in favor of shouldering its responsibilities for the good of the state and the country. And even if only eight, or nine, or ten republics sign, the country as a whole would survive. First, we get everyone to sign to the economic union, and then use that as a foundation for a formal political union. ~~(S)~~

The President: Good luck. We'll be talking to you from time to time. (U)

President Yeltsin: Thank you, Mr. President. (U)

The President: Thank you, and goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --