

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting between POTUS and President Mitterrand

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Secretary Baker
Secretary Brady
General Scowcroft
Robert Zoellick (notetaker)DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 135262009-0649-MR
SCS 1/6/11President Mitterrand
Minister Dumas
Hubert Vedrine, Presidential Assistant
Anne Lauvergeon, Presidential AssistantDATE, TIME July 5, 1992, 8:30 - 10:30 p.m.
AND PLACE: Munich, Germany

President Bush: Thanks for coming over. Hope we can work out dates for a meeting at Camp David or some place else. Sorry for being less flexible than I would like about the exact date. (U)

President Mitterrand: No problem, we will work something out. (U)

President Bush: It's important that we meet. I don't want to see a disconnect between the United States and France. We may have differences. But it's better to talk about them, get them on the table. This is an interesting period in the United States. We're in a presidential year; some are saying the U.S. has done its part, and that it's time to come home. It's a mood right below the surface. We also are facing a sluggish recovery. This adds to feelings of people asking why we should spend money abroad. My view is that it's in our own interest to have our troops here in Europe. I also believe most Europeans want us here. But I'm not sure I fully understand the heartbeat of the French on this question. I think I understand it when you and I discuss this subject, but then problems arise. There is a broad feeling in our government that the French are ambivalent about the U.S. presence. (U)

Perhaps you have concluded we'll leave. For us to remain, we need to put our emphasis on NATO. We know of your historic differences with NATO. But that's one reason I was anxious to meet, so I hope you'll be frank about our existing problems on questions of security for Europe. We get different answers on the Franco-German Corps from the French and from the Germans.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

We also have had differences in the NACC. I need to know where you're coming from. France is important to the security of Europe and elsewhere. I don't want us to be ships passing in the night. (S)

President Mitterrand: Our position is simple. We are members of the Atlantic Alliance. There have been no serious circumstances where we have failed to meet our obligations. We're present at political meetings. The status was designed by de Gaulle because of our nuclear armament. We couldn't deal with your nuclear doctrine in the way you wish, to put our very physical existence at stake. But then again this is speaking as if the Soviet Union is still as it was. I don't see how you believe that we make things difficult. My impression is we have good relations with the U.S., although they seem to complain. We pay for the Atlantic Alliance. We don't want to dismantle it. Of course, we won't move into the integrated command. But we have good relations between military staffs. So where are the difficulties coming from? I understand that you regret that France is outside the integrated command. But this has no serious impacts. We've been living with this since 1966. In all serious circumstances, the French and the U.K. have been very close to the U.S. So, I don't understand why the question is asked. (S)

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, I haven't understood the reasons why you're trying to give NATO a new content. At the time that the threat of war is receding, it seems you want NATO's mission to expand. Why is this? You never discussed it with us. What does the U.S. want more than it had before? Do you want a political role? That's difficult to give a military organization. If I have any qualifications, it's that. But I'm not seeking to be stubborn. If you're keen on some ideas, let's discuss them. I remember at Williamsburg, when Ronald Reagan submitted a text talking about Japan and the Atlantic Alliance as if they were the same thing. Not to me. So I disagreed. In the Middle East, you saw our position and support on Iraq. In North Africa, you see our position. But I feel alien to Tokyo ... Taiwan. If there's a problem, we should discuss it. What responsibilities do you want to give to a renovated NATO? It seems you're striving to make NATO the only place to discuss defense problems. But there are other places. I know of the U.S.'s anxiety. In Rome, you showed great understanding on the WEU. But then we thought your position became firmer, that you hardened. (S)

It seems that any military unit alongside NATO gives you worry, even if it's in harmony with NATO. You had the same reaction to the Franco-German Corps. I don't see how I could differ with Kohl. The Corps represents the most we can do. Its value is primarily political. For more than a century, France and Germany were enemies. Now we meet together in Munich. What incredible memories. There were mistakes before the war. We abandoned the Czechs. I have neither illusions, nor ambitions to make the Corps into a new army. What is done is done. It's difficult to take it further. Others will join, but not many, perhaps the

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Belgians, the Luxembourgers, the Italians. But if they don't, it is of no matter. The Corps illustrates the reconciliation between France and Germany. It is a duet that demonstrates strength and power. We're not asking for more. It is not to conquer foreign lands. We intend no offensive actions anywhere. (S)

I don't see U.S. troops leaving for a long time; I'll be long dead, so that's not my aim. There are, of course, elements that could undercut you: public opinion, the press, budget. For the next four years the President will be you, I won't hide my feelings, but your successor may not have the same policies. So we need an organization to ensure our own security. Not against NATO, but with NATO. Look for a single example to the contrary of what I'm saying. (S)

President Bush: If you felt because of pressures that we'd pull out I would understand. But I have to ask myself what does the Franco-German Corps do? I understand that it would shore up your friendship. But our problem is that more differences seem to be appearing. We thought we'd agreed on the definition of CSCE security. We thought that France believed the U.S. should remain. But the more differences we encounter, the more questions raised in our minds of whether the U.S. is wanted. I would understand it if you think that we are pulling out, returning to 1938. And that's the Catch 22 that's created: that theme plays on sentiments in the U.S. As long as I'm President, we will stay. How much of our differences -- in NACC, CSCE, with the Franco-German Corps -- are because you think we're going to pull out? (S)

President Mitterrand: We don't feel a need to say yes without consultations. When you define your broad strategy, you're the most powerful, (cites various recent examples) and we don't want to learn what you're doing by reading it in the press. Of course you've been kind to write about the things you're doing, but others may not be. (S)

President Bush: Take the case of Yugoslavia, we didn't push. We said let others proceed. (S)

President Mitterrand: I'm trying to explain my reasoning. On each problem, it seems possible for us to reconcile our differences. If the Franco-German Corps is of no particular use, how can it hurt? (S)

President Bush: We get different definitions of the Franco-German Corps. Let Secretary Baker say a word. (S)

President Mitterrand: Let's be precise. All armed forces of the Western allies will inevitably exist within NATO. France is not within the military integrated command, but our own strategy operates within NATO. We want distance between the integrated military. But this Corps is a small part of the German army, perhaps 35,000 men. You're giving very

formalistic answers. I can't imagine the Franco-German Corps will engage in any action outside of NATO. It would have to be complementary. (S)

President Bush: We're not seeking to encourage antagonism. (U)

Secretary Baker: The key is in your words. If the Corps is indeed complementary, fine. We've supported the European security and defense identity. But what we're worried about is duplication. We respect the French view on the integrated military command. But German forces would normally have priority assignment to NATO. The Germans tell us that their forces in the Corps will, but the French tell us something different. (S)

President Mitterrand: I don't understand. The Franco-German Corp has no direct instrument without NATO agreement. How would it do so? For example, if there's a conflict with Russia. The Franco-German Corps is an embryo, it would take 25 years or longer for Europeans to develop their own security. The Corps is as far as I can expect to go. (S)

Secretary Baker: Our concern is that the embryo will grow into a rooster and be duplicative of NATO. If its role is not clear, it will undermine the United States' consensus for NATO. You mentioned a possible political role for NATO. Yes, that is what we want. NATO is not just a military alliance, but it's a political alliance and that has been demonstrated in the past. So the new roles and missions for NATO means the enhancement of its political role as well as strengthening its military role. We have no problem with the European defense identity if it complements NATO, but doesn't duplicate it. But when we ask Germans if their forces have first priority to NATO, the Germans say yes, but you say something different. (S)

President Mitterrand: But this is devoid of content. Even the question is odd. How can we be different from NATO? To do what, to go where? (S)

Secretary Baker: Go wherever the head of it goes. (U)

Minister Dumas: We saw an example in Yugoslavia. The U.S. didn't want to get involved. But Europe may be concerned. So we need flexible relations with NATO and a European view. Europeans need something to help deal with such situations without being incompatible with NATO. Look at the Gulf. The WEU forces complemented the U.S. But for the moment we're only discussing German and French forces. On doublehatting, some nations will say they would like to participate but all troops will be in the integrated command. That's no problem. They'll be allocated twice. (S)

President Mitterrand: I have seen that the Franco-German Corps seems to be worrying the U.S., why is this? (S)

President Bush: It sends signals to the U.S. that you believe we won't remain. (S)

President Mitterrand: It's not as clear as that. (U)

President Bush: It's clear to us. Congress says why should U.S. troops be in Europe? France has a new answer. We say NATO is a stabilizing force. Either you think we're leaving or that NATO is not important. It's fine to go march into Sarajevo. But the problem is if you think that the U.S. can't be counted on. (S)

President Mitterrand: It's impossible to compare this to the tremendous power of NATO, and I repeat we're part of NATO, we're one of two European countries with nuclear forces, small but enough to make a difference. This is not the same as all the forces with NATO. (S)

President Bush: I'm not being articulate on this. The signal is that we're not going to stay or that we're not wanted. (C)

President Mitterrand: Then what should we do? Leave the United States' military in charge of all decisions? (C)

Secretary Baker: No, establish true complementarity. Answer the questions about the Corps the same way as the Germans are answering them. You will develop it as a European defense identity to deal with problems that NATO won't. Where there's a conflict, it can be complementary, but not duplicative. (S)

President Mitterrand: Secretary Baker is the best spokesman of France's policy. (C)

President Bush: We have some CSCE problems. (S)

Secretary Baker: This is referring to the problem of NATO as a component of CSCE peacekeeping. We encountered great trench warfare in Oslo. Now we're repeating it in Helsinki. (S)

President Mitterrand: I'm not interested in that war. We're not going to return to trench warfare. Maybe it's possible for all of Europe to be in the same alliance, but I don't see how Bosnia and others would be a part of it. CSCE enabled us to join the former Soviet Union with Western Europe. I even had difficulty convening CSCE in 1989. But there was instability in that period. I held the conference in Paris. We were behind making CSCE a success. You were more concerned. I was all in favor of CSCE. If you can say they're all ready to join the alliance.... (C)

Secretary Baker: No, but all agree with the idea of a NATO peacekeeping force except France. (S)

President Mitterrand: Well, then we have the pleasure of an original position. Look at the heads in the former Soviet Union, they are all apparatchiks. They save their skin by becoming super nationalists. They're not the ones to give us lessons on loyalty to the alliance. (C)

Minister Dumas: We would like to agree to call on NATO or the WEU as needed. (S)

President Mitterrand: This is not a problem for us. (S)

Minister Dumas: But in some situations it may not be a good idea for NATO to intervene. (S)

President Mitterrand: This is not a big problem. We don't care much. What other forces are there than through NATO? (S)

President Bush: Put on your historian's hat. Do you believe the United States will be in Europe in ten years? (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes. I'm not sure about 50 years -- not because of the Europeans but because of the Americans. I understand the Franco-German business concerns you because of our different status in the alliance. But we all have constitutional differences. We can find a solution if we work on it. And we have no problems with the CSCE issue, I just find it amusing. (S)

President Bush: Our objective is to achieve stability. (S)

President Mitterrand: I have two worries: First, Russia has been rolled back from its achievements over three centuries. In some barracks or elsewhere, people will argue that Russia has been betrayed. They will feed on the discontent. This is not a probability, but I fear a coup even if through civilian leaders pandering to nationalism and for people seeking revenge. Second, I worry about Europe splitting up. We're going too far in splitting. This is counter to the historical trend. There are new states that never existed. Take for example, Byelarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Ossetia. There'll be wars. Specters are coming back. I'm not joking; I'm talking to the President of the United States, the most powerful country in the world. Watch Russia and Ukraine. That relationship will be of primary importance to Germany. Poland has always been a friend of France, but it's never been capable of governing itself. Do you think I have the illusion we could solve all this without you? (S)

President Bush: The best signal to all of them is a strong united Western alliance. It avoids a signal to the United States that throws doubt on us. (S)

President Mitterrand: Does it add suspicions on your part, with the press? (U)

President Bush: Don't feed the feeling in the U.S. I can contain it. Avoid a signal that sends the clock back to the '30s. (S)

President Mitterrand: We can't give up on our personal thoughts. The things we propose aren't all stupid. We know Europe well.

For example the Court of Arbitration. We set up one in the EC. It's a good system. Let me give you an example, through Yugoslavia. Once Yugoslavia started to break up the Germans wanted to recognize Slovenia and Croatia. I felt it was wrong to move quickly. We needed to define principles in law on the frontiers and minorities. But they rushed into unconditional recognition. A Court of Arbitration would have been useful in this circumstance. The minorities fear that they will be massacred. But we didn't succeed. We had a map. We were trying to determine which villages belonged to which groups. What I'm saying is not all French initiatives are bad. (S)

President Bush: I saluted you for your acts in Sarajevo. (U)

President Mitterrand: The idea was not to get negotiations started. We just wanted to open the airport. (U)

President Bush: It was very important symbolically. (U)

President Mitterrand: The plane had to land in Croatia. Tudjman wanted to have dinner with me. I said no. I'm not here to negotiate. Milosevic said don't land in Sarajevo it's too dangerous. I said I didn't want to ask the Serbian President for permission to land. (S)

President Bush: You stayed out of the political side, you stressed the humanitarian. (U)

Secretary Baker: It also sent a clear signal to the warring tribe that there's a price to be paid. (U)

President Bush: How was it received in France? (U)

President Mitterrand: Well, when I landed, a Serbian general there said that the international press was slandering the Serbs, but it's really the Moslems. I said how can they kill your men? Only because you're here. Why are you here? (S)

Coming back to CSCE, I don't see how there can be differences between the United States and France on where we want it to go. I think you're wrong on the Court of arbitration. (S)

Minister Dumas: The other problem is CSCE calling on NATO for peacekeeping. (S)

President Bush: Our difference isn't just one about the role of arbitration. It's the role of NATO. Everyone else agrees on this, but I know what's it like to be alone. Like me in Rio. (S)

President Mitterrand: Dumas says you want CSCE to call on NATO. We want the WEU to be available too. (S)

Secretary Baker: That's OK with us. The exact difference is that you want to make it difficult procedurally. (S)

President Mitterrand: I'm not legalistic to that degree. Let's talk about things that exist. NATO does, luckily. The WEU barely exists. CSCE will do what it wants. That's no problem. Can you accept the Badinter proposal? (Ø)

[Then there follows a discussion in which we tried to explain that we hoped to figure out a way to let Badinter proceed even if we could not agree with it. We also explained our directed mediation proposal and how it would be complementary.] (Ø)

President Bush: I stopped in Poland on the way here. Walesa is trying but things are very difficult. I said we'd convert \$200 million from the stabilization fund to other uses. I hope you'll look at it. (Ø)

Anne Lauvergeon: The French shared 600 million on francs, we'd always planned to use it for Polish development projects. You have no problem with us. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I'm very happy to do this. (U)

President Bush: I worry about Poland. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: Yes, there's disorder, there's chaos, there's not much political weight. They have a key role to play as a buffer between the Germans and the Slavs. Silesia and Pomerania are part of Poland now, but they were German. The Russians occupy part of Poland. (Ø)

President Bush: You're nice to say you'd see Baker on the Uruguay Round. We thought the European Community might come forward with some flexibility. But they were silent. So we didn't feel that the meeting was worth your time. We made two proposals. I just wanted to apologize for the lack of the meeting. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: It was better not to meet if there were going to be no change in position. (Ø)

President Bush: I know it's tough for you and us, but I think we're not far apart. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I want GATT to be a success. It would stimulate the world economy. But we have big differences on agriculture. We've moved forward. The new agriculture policy is almost causing a peasant revolt. It goes in your direction on export subsidies. Exports will be cut at least 18 percent. It comes part of the way. We're ready to discuss the rest. We've fought on agricultural terms since 1985, but it's no longer the main issue. We have to focus on services and industry. (Ø)

President Bush: We understand. But too much of a departure from the Dunkel text will lead to a revolt in the United States and the Cairns group. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: I think we're a lot closer than the parties and the public realize. We also need an agreement on market access in services. Your actions on CAP reform make a solution possible. I know it's painful. But we need to incorporate your CAP reform proposals in a text. If we can guarantee the sanctity of income support payments to farmers, what could you do for us on export subsidies in volume terms? I think that there is an agreement to be made. (Ø)

Anne Lauvergeon: There's a big difference between 18 and 24 percent. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: We think we can satisfy you on internal supports and then you can meet us on export subsidies. Some of our people say that there should be no agreement without the other areas that we are still lacking, but we don't agree. An agriculture deal would be a big step. We're not sure where to deal. Delors and Andriessen need to consider and consult with each member. But if you, Kohl, and Major instruct them to look at the income supports, to make payments inviolate, and then look at what you can do for us in exports subsidies. It would codify your past reform policies. If you gave them that general instruction, I think we can reach an agreement. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I think we can move in this direction. We can't agree here, but we can move in that direction. (Ø)

Let me summarize. On NATO, WEU and the Franco-German Corps, you discussed the different explanations between German and France. The Franco-German Corps should be able to fulfill its own missions, NATO need not intervene, but they should decide jointly. I'm not closed to discussing further along these lines. On CSCE, we are prepared for conciliatory formula on using NATO and the WEU. We're quite prepared to give the maximum flexibility to reach agreement. Finally, I would be grateful if you would examine the Court of Arbitration. (Ø)

President Bush: We will have a look. (U)

President Mitterrand: As for GATT, the new CAP reforms can bring views on farm products closer. But 18-24 percent is a big difference. What could you do that would be comparable? We also need a comprehensive agreement for GATT. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: I wonder if it's useful to try and get a clearer understanding on complementarity in a working text. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I agree. (U)

President Bush: I think the EC has offered 20 percent on export subsidies. (Ø)

Meeting closed with various pleasantries. (U)

-- End of Conversation --