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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Central European Foreign Ministers

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
The Vice President  
Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Secretary of State  
James A. Baker III, Chief of Staff  
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Thomas M.T. Niles, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs  
Jane E. Holl, Director, European and Eurasian Affairs, NSC

Dr. Alois Mock, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr. Friedrich Hoess, Ambassador of Austria  
Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Kazimierz Dziewanowski, Ambassador of Poland  
Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr. Ernest Petric, Ambassador of Slovenia  
Geza Jeszenszky, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Janos Herman, Head of Department of Information and Spokesman to the Foreign Minister

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: December 22, 1992, 10:00-11:00am  
Cabinet Room

The President: Welcome. I want to hear your views on this crisis. This region has many new democracies, and we are concerned for their stability and to see that they are not damaged by this crisis. As you know, Secretary Eagleburger has just returned from Europe where he took a leadership role in discussions on the former Yugoslavia. This issue has long been at the top of his agenda. This is also true for General Scowcroft. (S)

I'd like first to reiterate for you what our priorities are and then hear your views. First, we believe the time has come to get an enforcement resolution for the no-fly zone. Second, we want to explore ways to step-up the humanitarian aid effort. Third, we want to get agreement to issue a stiff warning to Milosevic in

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order to prevent the outbreak of violence in Kosovo. Let me invite Secretary Eagleburger to elaborate. (Ø)

Secretary Eagleburger: I don't have much to add, Mr. President. We spent much of last week wandering around Europe discussing this crisis. At the end, NATO addressed itself to various measures -- in support of the UN's efforts on no-fly, preventing the spillover of violence in Kosovo, etc. But this problem is not going to go away. And it has been made worse by the recent elections in Serbia. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Mock: Thank you, Mr. President for receiving us today. My colleagues and I want to express our deep concern over this crisis and what we see as negative long-term effects it will have if the crisis is not contained and settled. (Ø)

For the first time after World War II, there is a member state of the UN, of CSCE that has managed to disappear from the political map. This is one of the most influential events that challenges the Paris Charter, the New World Order. Genocide, mass rapes of women. We have all different reports of the atrocities going on. When Europe was built up after the Second World War, your policies, Mr. President, contributed to the demise of Communism. The intensive effort of the UN, CSCE and the decisions of many bodies brought little progress -- they are not respected at all. We need forceful action in this crisis and the U.S. only can lead the way. (Ø)

I am very pleased to hear your statement that we need to enforce the resolutions of the United Nations. Who would have believed that it would take forceful action for Serbian troops to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina? But what is happening now, one can read in the newspapers. For us, the long-term effects cause the most concern. (Ø)

First, there is the concern that widening the conflict is a long term danger. Kosovo, Macedonia, Vojvodina, but also Albania, Bulgaria, and perhaps at a later date, even Greece and Turkey -- which belong to NATO. Second, if this conflict goes on, I don't know how long Kozyrev and Yeltsin can maintain their policies. If there is a change in Russia, and sooner than we expect a change will occur, we will have a trouble on our hands. Third, there are those who are offering their help to the UN. But what about the Islamic states? We could have a situation on our hands where the remaining Bosnians are the Palestinians of Europe. We need support for the Vance plan. Forth, after the UN example of the U.S. in the lead in rescuing Kuwait in the Iraq war, there is a tremendous belief in collective security. Fifth, the values of democracy and self-determination will not be respected and others in unstable situations in other parts of Eastern Europe might discover that force is successful. They might be encouraged by the "success" of the Serbian government. The security of the whole region is at stake. (Ø)

We were in New York yesterday to see Secretary General Boutros-Ghali and members of the Security Council. We appeal to the long

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tradition of the United States in standing up for the free world and we are sure that now, again, the United States will have to take the lead in restoring peace to this area. (Ø)

I know that if you intervene, you are criticized; if you do not intervene, you are criticized. It is a burden and plight of a superpower. So we hope that action will be taken to create respect for international law and the new world order we want to build. We must contain the present crisis. Thank you. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Jeszenszky: Mr. President, we represent a whole region from the Baltic to the Adriatic-- historic places -- we represent genuine democracies of former communist countries. We are ready to collaborate to maintain what we have achieved. There is a danger that we could all fall together. National communism exists everywhere. It is like fascism. Yeltsin is in danger. The Russians are openly supporting Milosevic. There is a Slavic alliance -- a national communist alliance that will violate NATO's southern wing. This a main threat to our security. (Ø)

The embargo that is not really hurting Serbia is also hitting the neighboring countries. But we come to speak for security in Central Europe. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Skubiszewski: Mr President, there are broader ramifications for these countries. The ideology we see as the fundamental basis of those states is exactly the phenomenon we liquidated in becoming free states. Repressive, undemocratic elements continue to exist. The developments in post-Yugoslavia have led to the liquidation of much of the CSCE Third Basket. The impunity with regard to the violation of human rights and ethnic cleansing will find imitators in Europe and beyond. (Ø)

Also in the Balkans we see a line developing between Christians and Muslims that we avoided during the Iraq war. We are already seeing the Islamicization of Bosnia and Albania. (Ø)

The use of land forces is a line one should not cross, but there are other military sanctions: enforce the no-fly zone; open, by force if necessary, humanitarian aid routes; liberate the extreme cases of those held in war camps. The issue of lifting the arms embargo must be taken carefully to prevent arms from reaching the wrong hands. We should envisage measures which guarantee the autonomy of Kosovo, such as with observers going to Macedonia. (Ø)

Finally, regarding refugees. They should be helped on the spot. Setting up safety-zones should not mean that they cannot be returned to their homes. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Rupel: Mr. President, the next thirty days are very important for this crisis. There are actions necessary in this time. I was in Sarajevo one month ago. I flew in with UNPROFOR. There is no gas, no water, no food. Sixty percent of the food disappears on the way to Sarajevo. But people have

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organized their lives. The will to coexist among the three groups is impressive. (Ø)

We know about the objections to safety zones that they contribute to ethnic cleansing. But Sarajevo as a safety zone would not contribute to ethnic cleansing. Saving Sarajevo is indeed a priority. There is no goal that can compare to it. We are asking you to do something about it. (Ø)

The President: If you were in my chair, what would you do? (Ø)

Foreign Minister Rupel: As we have discussed here: enforce the no-fly zone, create safe havens, increase UNPROFOR; open aid corridors to get into and out of Sarajevo. The images in Sarajevo were like a horror movie. Sarajevo is like a big concentration camp. I met a group of Serbs, Croats and Muslims who want to live together. The victory of Milosevic will contribute to a dramatic character of the situations. The resolve of the Serbian fighters will increase. (Ø)

My criticism of western policies -- not American policies, mostly of European policies -- is that they have not sent a clear message to Milosevic. They are saying that we should not intervene. This is a very clear message to Milosevic that he took as a guarantee that nothing would happen. If the U.S. is in a position to give a clear signal to Milosevic that he should stop what he is doing, he would listen. The West should try to encourage those in Yugoslavia who don't support Milosevic. Otherwise, I only see more horror. (Ø)

Another instrument is diplomatic isolation. Slovenia is trying to establish itself as an independent state. Yugoslavia has kept everything -- they have confiscated \$7 billion in reserves and property and nothing has happened to the Serbs. So I have come here to ask you for a clear signal. (Ø)

The President: This is a very impressive presentation. We're wrestling with these questions. But as you know we are in a bit of a dilemma because of our internal situation. We're in a changing mode. We don't want to saddle the incoming President with new burdens. We have been trying to figure what in addition, the U.S. might do in response that you have so dramatically talked about. (Ø)

But we don't see any dramatic, single U.S. act that would guarantee that Milosevic would pull back and start to behave. We've wrestled with the concept that "If you do this, this is what will happen to you," but the risks to the people on the ground are always great. -- UN and UNPROFOR personnel. It is not as clear to us as it probably is to you what would make Milosevic take notice -- no single thing we could do. (Ø)

In the Gulf War, we told Saddam to get out of Kuwait. He didn't believe us. I wish it were clearer that there was one thing that we could do. You can shoot down a few helicopters, or if there is an airfield, you can bomb it. But would those actions have

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the results you want, or would you have to set up your acts after that? And what about attacks on forces already in place? I don't ask for answers, but only to tell you that this is what we are wrestling with. (Ø)

Secretary Eagleburger: Mr. President, there has not been one thing said on the other side of the table today that we haven't been saying ourselves for a long time. We've known pretty clearly what the consequences would be. There has been nothing said that we would disagree with. (Ø)

But any action must be a collective effort. My experience last week showed me that the Europeans are very restrained. Jim Baker tried himself for months with the Europeans. I tried very hard on the arms embargo and got nowhere. We did get some progress on the No-Fly Zone, but at the same time the Europeans are very cautious. The U.S. has had the lead, but we can't act alone. (Ø)

The President: We also have a UN problem. The other day Cyrus Vance was here urging great caution. (Ø)

Secretary Eagleburger: This group should talk to the Western Europeans. (Ø)

The President: To be effective, we need a coalition mentality. We're not shifting blame, we have been actively engaged. (Ø)

Secretary Eagleburger: Are there some other signals we could send? It is my view that safe havens are a fine idea. I don't believe that it contributes to ethnic cleansing. But safe havens require 40,000 troops to ensure security. But we should think about what other signals we could send. (Ø)

Mr. Baker: Everyone on the other side of the table will remember that in June 1991 we were in CSCE and then I went to Belgrade shortly after that. At that time, we said that unless there was a negotiated settlement, there would be an unfortunate civil war. We all agreed. Now, eighteen months later, here we are. The United States has fought three wars in Europe in this century -- two world wars and one Cold War. We have been at the forefront of those pushing for action in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (Ø)

At the Lisbon conference on aid to the former Soviet Union, I made some rather undiplomatic comments that embarrassed the Europeans, but they were absolutely true. We have the muscle, but we also have concerns for U.S. lives, and we don't have the support of the international community. (Ø)

My main point is that what we were afraid of and said a year and a half ago, has happened. That doesn't diminish the reprehensibility of what is going on, but the United States cannot do it alone and we can't do it if the Secretary of State or the President can't get strong support for resolutions. With 21 days to go, it is difficult to take a single decisive step. The U.S. has been leaning forward. (Ø)

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The President: I agree with Jim. But let me be clear. We are not going to just do nothing. But what we do must have support from around the world. I can't present my successor with a unilateral act that doesn't have any support. It would set back the whole collective action cause. If a plan and the collective will can be collected, we're prepared to act. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Skubiszewski: One last point, Mr. President. When we talked to Boutros-Ghali, he drew our attention to the financial aspect. It is difficult for him to take action when there is no money. (Ø)

The President: Did he also draw your attention to the fact that he would pull UNPROFOR out of Bosnia if we moved ahead on enforcing the No-Fly Zone? (Ø)

Foreign Minister Skubiszewski: If we could be more creative with financing, for example, one-half of a percent from each state for peacekeeping and enforcement? (Ø)

The President: I'd hate to tell you of what it is costing us in Somalia. But nobody can stand to see those children starve to death. But I'm not sure how the money issue would be worked out in practice. Our effort is very expensive and I'm not sure how we would sort it all out. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Jeszenszky: But we can't let a Lebanese situation develop in Bosnia. Appeasement of Milosevic would result in failure again. Our future is at stake. (Ø)

The President: We agree and we'll keep pushing and I want to thank you for your views. (Ø)

-- End of Conversation --