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United States Department of State

The Deputy Secretary of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

April 13, 1995

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"We're playing fumble forward"
- When do we go to the summit
who is when?
- When do we go to the summit?
Korshak / Steadley

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NOTE TO THE SECRETARY

Chris:

I represented you this morning at a meeting of the President's foreign policy team. We met for nearly an hour, entirely on the Moscow summit. Tony asked me to take the lead in reporting on my trip, making a presentation on the prospects for the Summit, and laying out recommendations on how to deal with the NATO/PFP issue, since that has, for better or worse, become the centerpiece. Those present in the Oval, in addition to the President, were the VP, Tony, Sandy, Chip Blacker, and the two Leons.

I began a 10-minute presentation by saying that May 10 is a moment of truth for the Administration's ability to keep on track two strategies that are crucial to the President's vision of post-Cold War Europe: admitting new members to NATO, and developing a parallel security relationship between the Alliance and Russia. There are two possible outcomes at the Summit -- one that we must try as hard as we can to get, and another we may have to settle for:

1) The best outcome would be for the President to succeed in allaying Yeltsin's concerns about the pace of NATO expansion and securing Russia's engagement in PFP. The necessary assurances are a not a matter of compromising or retreating on our policy; rather, they are a matter of disabusing Yeltsin of his mistaken fears about what is happening -- and what will happen during the next two years. If he can convince Yeltsin that it is in Russia's interest to participate fully and promptly in the Partnership for Peace, and if Yeltsin commits himself to a date-certain for signing the PFP documents, thus making Russia a full Partner, the two President will then be able to initiate the NATO-Russia dialogue. That dialogue should yield, by the end of this year, a "framework" for NATO-Russia relations. Such an agreement will be welcomed by our Allies, by the Central European aspirants for NATO membership, and, in our own country, both by most advocates of NATO expansion and by many critics of our policy, who fear that NATO expansion jeopardizes Russian reform.

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just to know you

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The (distant!) second-best outcome in Moscow would be for the two leaders to have a tough, serious, inconclusive but not acrimonious exchange on an extremely difficult subject. In short, no breakthrough -- but no repetition of Budapest either. I reported that both Chernomyrdin and Yeltsin's national-security adviser Ryurikov asked me to assure our President that even if he and Yeltsin can't solve the NATO/PFP issue, Yeltsin will not be a "bad host."

Based on my talks in Moscow, I reported that virtually all major players in Russia, all across the political spectrum, are either deeply opposed to, or at least deeply worried about, NATO expansion. Therefore we cannot realistically expect a Russian blessing or endorsement of expansion now, or probably any time soon.

However, almost as much as it fears NATO's expansion, many in Moscow fear Russia's own isolation. Moreover, the Russian military very much wants to cooperate as much as possible with NATO. (Grachev made this quite clear to Bill Perry.) Therefore Russia wants a relationship with NATO, an agreement along the lines of what we're prepared to negotiate, especially if that relationship/agreement can, for now at least, be defined in a way that finesses the question of how large a NATO we're talking about.

As for Yeltsin personally: much as he dislikes NATO expansion, he wants a good Summit, and he wants to keep open as many doors as possible for Russia's integration into the West. Therefore he has a strong personal motive for trying to square the circle -- and for doing so at the Summit. There are two possible outcomes that we must try as hard as we can

All the major players in Western Europe and Central Europe -- i.e., NATO members and would-be members alike -- want to see a NATO-Russia relationship. Whether they're ambivalent about expansion (the West Europeans) or enthusiastic about it (the Central Europeans), they don't want the process to provoke spasms of paranoia and countermeasures by the Russians. They know from experience that there's nothing more offensive than a Russian on the defensive. His mistaken fears about what is happen

Therefore our goal for the Summit should be

- o Yeltsin's agreement to sign the outstanding PFP documents -- if possible before May 10, failing that at the Summit, or at least at an announced date certain soon after.
- o A joint commitment to negotiate, by the end of this year, a "framework" on the NATO-Russian relationship that answers concerns on both sides.

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- o A joint statement released at the Summit laying out the parameters of a new European security order and Russia's role in it.

Knowing (from Tom Donilon, among others) that there had been quite a bit of debate in the White House over whether the President should give a major, pre-Summit foreign-policy speech, I argued that he should. It would help, I suggested, if, before the Summit, the President made a definitive statement on his vision of European security and integration. One purpose of such a speech would be for him to put on record, yet again and in the clearest possible fashion, our objectives and an authoritative sense of the pace of the process. This message will be in fundamental ways reassuring to the Central Europeans, for it will reaffirm the seriousness of our approach: we are moving forward. At the same time, it will be reassuring to the Russians (and the West Europeans, who are also nervous about "rush"), since it would signal a time frame for actual expansion that is in keeping both with realities of the situation (no way is NATO actually going to expand next year) and with the assurances you gave Yeltsin in September: our forward movement does not put us on a collision course with the Russian presidential elections.

I said I thought it was important for him to deliver this message in advance -- I'd say well in advance -- of the Summit so that what he says in Moscow (and what Yeltsin says he said) does not appear to be a concession to him on that occasion; rather, it will be -- and will be understood to be -- fully consistent with long-standing policy. A pre-Summit speech would be a way to inoculate ourselves against "new Yalta"-type headlines out of the Summit.

I then suggested how to use the remaining 25 days. We are expecting any moment a Yeltsin reply to POTUS's letter on European security. It will ask for some familiar assurances that an expanded NATO won't threaten Russia's security or commercial interests. Knowing the questions, we are also ready with our answers. We don't know whether Yeltsin is insisting on another American presidential letter, or whether private assurances, delivered via our ambassador or by you to Kozyrev, will do the trick. How far we can go in answering Yeltsin's letter will depend on the format of the reply. A letter signed by the President cannot go as far as nonpapers or oral notes.

We should work this issue over the next several days so that the President can include reference to his letter when he talks to Yeltsin by phone. The Russians have asked for a presidential phone conversation Monday or Tuesday. In addition to previewing his answer to the new letter, the President might stress the importance of resolving these issues as much as

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possible before the Summit, so that in their face-to-face talks in Moscow they can concentrate on the future rather than having to haggle over the unfinished business of PFP. We'll have the following opportunities to do that:

-- Jim Collins and Mamedov are meeting in London at the end of next week;

-- You and Kozyrev are meeting at the end of the month. I mentioned that if the Russian response to our initiative is sufficiently forthcoming by the time Kozyrev gets here, it might be helpful if the President had a brief meeting with him;

-- I add that it might be a good idea if I were prepared to make another trip to Moscow either just before or just after the next Chris-Kozyrev session, depending on how the Collins-Mamedov talks next week go.

The President first called on Bill Perry, who said he agreed that we should do everything we can to achieve progress on PFP, both because it was important in its own right and also because there was so little progress likely on any other issue. He noted that the press was already establishing a "litmus test" for the success of the Summit on the NATO/PFP issue. He also agreed that we should find some way to "finesse" whether the Russians were endorsing NATO expansion per se. As he put it, we should "define success in terms of PFP and the NATO-Russia dialogue, not Russia's acceptance of our argument on expansion."

Bill also urged that both in advance of the Summit and at it, we stress that "the relationship is more than the sum of the individual issues we'll be discussing... The key is engagement -- military-to-military, and economic engagement through Gore-Chernomyrdin."

He pressed for addition to the schedule of an event that would dramatize denuclearization. With apologies to WH schedulers, he said the President should visit the Engels Air Force Base, where Soviet-era bombers are being chopped up with Nunn-Lugar help. I said we'd have to make sure there were also images of available of U.S. bombers suffering a similar fate, and Bill agreed, saying we could arrange for the Russian media to have access to Davis-Mantham AFB in Arizona, where that kind of work is done.

It was at that point that President pronounced himself "very, very, very concerned... profoundly worried" about the Summit being a bust and about its being "extremely detrimental to the U.S." He said we should do everything we can to get what I'd called Outcome Number 1 (a PFP/NATO-Russia arrangement) -- especially because he believes that I was too sanguine in presenting Outcome Number 2. He believes that "if Yeltsin

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stiffs us on PFP and NATO, he wins politically [at home]" -- and that President Clinton himself loses politically at home: "there's positive political benefit to him, and nothing good for me, if it looks as though, yet again, he's put the brakes on NATO." Even if Yeltsin cooperates in trying to put a good face on non-progress on NATO etc., "it will still be another Budapest -- actually worse than Budapest. That was just comic relief: I flew 18 hours to spend six hours getting the shit kicked out of me... An inconclusive meeting [in Moscow] will be a bad meeting -- including bad for me politically. Such an outcome would turn up the heat on expansion, and I hope the Russians understand that."

At the same time, the President has deep misgivings about the West Europeans, believing that they are indeed playing off against us with the Russians: "I'm not sure it's realistic to say that the Russians will be isolating themselves rather than isolating us if they continue to play hard-to-get on NATO. The Europeans are vulnerable to being split from us on this. They're probably sympathetic to some of the arguments they're hearing from the Russians. They're madder than hell at us over Bosnia, and on NATO expansion, they worry that I'm being driven by the Polish-American vote in '96. The Republicans just aggravate this calculus."

He then went to Bill Perry's point and agreed that "we definitely need for this trip to be about something other than just NATO, Iran, Chechnya and START II, especially since it looks like Yeltsin is going to stiff us on those, too."

The Vice President then spoke. He said Moscow was indeed a "high-risk venture," that the press (he mentioned Safire in particular) "is setting a very high bar." But he then went on to say that even minus progress on PFP, the Summit could highlight how "the glass is half-full, how the Russians have been taking three steps forward, two steps back." He mentioned economic reform, the IMF stand-by, privatization, Baltic troop withdrawals, Russian restraint over the Crimea ("Yeltsin's been looking the other way as Kuchma reestablishes control over Crimea"), Moscow's deal with Shevardnadze over Abkhazia, and parliamentary opposition to Russian military presence in Tajikistan. He believes that their disaster in Chechnya has made the Russian "more dovish on their periphery."

The VP acknowledged that there was also plenty of bad news. He cited "the threat to liberty and democracy from the growing security apparatus" and recent evidence of continuing ominous behavior by the Ministry of Atomic Energy.

The VP concluded by saying that we should gear our Summit plans toward a "no-disaster scenario, while trying to get progress on any issues we can," particularly NATO etc. We

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should also make the most of the World War II commemoration, "remembering that the Russians lost 100 times as many people as we did."

Picking up on that, the President said that any speech he gives, whether before the Summit or during it, should "do something that explains the connection between World War II and the post-Cold War phase we're in now" -- i.e.: we were together before, we can be together again. He also wants us to find a way to establish a "subtext" to the Summit along these lines: "the more integrated Russia is into the West, the less likely Russia is to be aggressive in other contexts."

He agreed with the VP that we should not let ourselves be stampeded into the general pessimism about Russia. He recalled that when he was in Russia in January '94 and the reformist ministers of the Chernomyrdin cabinet were on their way out, "everyone thought the whole deal was that the Russian economy was going into the tank. We've got to push back against those who want to declare the whole thing over there a disaster."

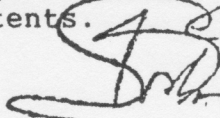
Tony emphasized the need to couch all our arguments whether they were in defense of agreement with the Russians or in explanation of disagreements -- in terms of U.S. national interest.

As we were breaking, the President came back to the problem I'd mentioned over the West European Allies not backing us up on NATO. He said we should concentrate particularly on closing ranks with Kohl, who of course will be going to Moscow and who has a lot of influence on Yeltsin.

His parting words, as some very distraught schedulers finally succeeded in shooing us out of the Oval, was an instruction to "bust your ass" for a PFP/NATO-Russia deal if at all possible along the lines of what I'd laid out.

Sandy, Bill Perry, Chip Blacker, and I huddled in Tony's office afterward. We agreed that while the regular interagency process would deal with all other aspects of Summit planning, we'd set up a small, off-line, State/NSC/OSD/JCS group to handle the NATO-Russia issue, with Sandy, Joe Nye, Bill Owens and myself in the lead. It will meet as soon as we get the Yeltsin letter. The latest word on that, from a Collins conversation with the Russian charge, is that the letter is still on Yeltsin's desk (or wherever) in Sochi. Hmmm.

I apologize for the length of this report, but I believe this was an important enough conversation that you would be interested in the full contents.



Strobe

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