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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/17/17
TAGS: OVIP (ALBRIGHT, MADELEINE), FR
SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT
- JACQUES CHIRAC, FEBRUARY 17, 1997, PARIS

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY CDA DONALD K. BANDLER,
REASON 1.5 D.
2. (U) FOLLOWING IS DRAFT MEMCON OF SECRETARY
ALBRIGHT'S MEETING WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC

USDEL SECRETARY
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO NATO EU COLLECTIVE
ARAB-ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
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AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
AMEMBASSY YEREVAN

AMEMBASSY BAKU

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TAGS: OVIP (ALBRIGHT, MADELEINE), OSCE, IZ, AG, IR,
FR

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT
- JACQUES CHIRAC, FEBRUARY 17, 1997, PARIS

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY JOHN CAMPBELL, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, REASON 1.5 (D).
2. (U) THIS CABLE REPORTS SECRETARY'S DINNER MEETING WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC, FEBRUARY 17, 1997, ELYSEE PALACE, PARIS.
3. (U) U.S. PARTICIPANTS: THE SECRETARY, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES BANDLER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY KORNBLUM, NSC SENIOR DIRECTOR VERSHBOW. FRENCH PARTICIPANTS: PRESIDENT CHIRAC, FOREIGN MINISTER DE CHARETTE, DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR JEAN-DAVID LEVITTE, AMBASSADOR BUJON
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DE L'ESTANG.

4. (C) SUMMARY: CHIRAC AND THE SECRETARY PLEDGED TO TURN A NEW PAGE IN U.S.-FRENCH RELATIONS, AND TO MANAGE DIFFERENCES PRIVATELY. CHIRAC APPEARED TO SHOW A HINT OF FLEXIBILITY ON NATO ADAPTATION, AGREEING WITH THE SECRETARY THAT AFSOUTH NOT BE THE SOLE CRITERION FOR JUDGING ESDI; HE SUGGESTED IF "TECHNICAL CONDITIONS" FOR FRANCE'S MILITARY REINTEGRATION COULD NOT BE MET BY JULY, THE ISSUE OF REINTEGRATION BE REVISITED IN 3-5 YEARS.
5. (C) CHIRAC ARGUED FORCEFULLY FOR THE NEED TO OFFER YELSTIN SOMETHING ON THE NATO-RUSSIA CHARTER TO STAVE OFF HARDLINERS, INCLUDING CONSULTATIONS WHICH WOULD DEMONSTRATE THAT RUSSIA IS A "MEMBER OF THE CLUB" OF MAJOR POWERS. THE SECRETARY TOLD CHIRAC SHE WOULD DISCUSS THE CHARTER ISSUE IN DETAIL WITH PRIMAKOV, AND DECLINED FOR NOW TO GIVE AN ANSWER ON THE 5-POWER MEETING PROPOSAL. SHE URGED CHIRAC TO KEEP THE ALLIANCE FOCUSED ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CHARTER

PACKAGE, NOT THE PROCESS. CHIRAC ALSO PRESSED FOR ROMANIA TO BE INCLUDED IN THE FIRST TRANCHE OF INVITEES.

6. (C) CHIRAC EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN THAT ZAIRE WAS ON THE VERGE OF EXPLOSION THAT WOULD SPAWN INSTABILITY ACROSS AFRICA. HE ARGUED FOR WESTERN COOPERATION TO SUPPORT A GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE, ZAIRE'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, AND BEGINNING A DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. HE AGREED TO THE SECRETARY'S REQUEST THAT HE INTERCEDE WITH MANDELA TO TURN OFF ARMS SALES TO SYRIA, AND SAID
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FRANCE WOULD NOT SELL ARMS, EITHER. THE SECRETARY BRIEFED CHIRAC ON PM NETANYAHU'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON, AND URGED CHIRAC TO USE HIS INFLUENCE TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER ARAB NORMALIZATION WITH ISRAEL. CHIRAC WAS OWNBEAT ON THE MOOD IN THE MIDDLE EAST, TERMED THE SITUATION FRAGILE AND QUESTIONED WHETHER NETANYAHU UNDERSTOOD TIME WAS NOT ON HIS SIDE. HE ALSO PREDICTED ISRAEL WOULD FACE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT RELATIONS WITH EGYPT, AS WELL AS JORDAN, IN THE FACE OF RISING FUNDAMENTALISM AND PUBLIC HOSTILITY TO ISRAEL.

7. (C) IN RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY'S SUGGESTION THAT FRANCE RETHINK ITS IRAN POLICY, CHIRAC ARGUED THAT THE CRITICAL DIALOGUE WAS USEFUL, AND THAT, WHILE A POLICY OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE WAS DEFENSIBLE VIS-A-VIS IRAQ, IT WAS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE ON IRAN. IN THE DISCUSSION ON IRAQ, HOWEVER, HE ALSO DEPLORED THE EFFECT OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON THE IRAQI PEOPLE, AS WELL AS ON THE WEST'S

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IMAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE SECRETARY EMPHASIZED
THAT THESE EFFECTS WERE ONLY THE RESULT OF SADDAM
HUSSEIN'S ACTIONS, INCLUDING HIS FOOT-DRAGGING ON UNSCR
986. CHIRAC SAID IT WAS TIME FOR THE WEST TO BE MORE
"IMAGINATIVE" IN ITS DEALINGS WITH CHINA, AND TO DROP
THE ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION ON CHINA. THE
SECRETARY COUNTERED THAT WE WERE LOOKING CAREFULLY AT
THIS ISSUE, BUT THE HANDOVER OF HONG KONG MADE THIS A
BAD YEAR TO SHIFT POLICY. END SUMMARY.

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U.S.-FRENCH RELATIONS

8. (C) PRESIDENT CHIRAC OPENED THE MEETING BY TERMING U.S.-FRENCH RELATIONS GENERALLY MUCH BETTER THAN PORTRAYED IN THE PRESS. WHILE THERE NATURALLY WERE DIFFERENCES ON SPECIFIC ISSUES, HE DEPLORED THE "EXAGGERATION" OF SUCH DIFFERENCES. HE AGREED WITH SECRETARY ALBRIGHT'S SUGGESTION THEY "TURN A NEW PAGE" IN THE RELATIONSHIP, AS WELL AS HER PROPOSAL THAT THE U.S. AND FRANCE DEAL WITH THEIR POLICY DISPUTES IN PRIVATE CHANNELS AND NOT "SQUABBLE IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN." CHIRAC AGREED: "LET'S POUR THE OIL ON THE SALAD, NOT ON THE FIRE."

NATO ENLARGEMENT

9. (C) THE SECRETARY TERMED ADAPTATION OF NATO A TOP PRIORITY FOR THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION, TO "SEAL THE END OF THE COLD WAR," AND TO BRING TO CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE WHAT THE MARSHALL PLAN HAD BROUGHT TO WESTERN EUROPE. THE ALLIANCE STILL HAD ISSUES TO WORK OUT, BUT WAS "ON THE ROAD TO MADRID." THE U.S. RECOGNIZED AND WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES IN RUSSIA WITH WHICH YELTSIN MUST CONTEND. WE HAVE TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT ENLARGEMENT DOES NOT MEAN THE OLD NATO CONFRONTING RUSSIA, BUT A NEW NATO, IN RELATION TO WHICH RUSSIA WILL HAVE A VOICE BUT NOT A VETO. THE SECRETARY SAID SHE WOULD MEET WITH YELTSIN AND PM PRIMAKOV AND WOULD
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REVIEW IN DETAIL POINTS SOLANA HAD RAISED. WE WILL ALSO HAVE A MODIFIED CFE TREATY AS AN ANCHOR, TO ENSURE THAT RUSSIA DOES NOT HAVE TO TAKE ON ADDITIONAL ARMAMENT EXPENSES IT CANNOT SUPPORT.

10. (C) CHIRAC RESPONDED THAT ENLARGEMENT WILL BE A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR RUSSIA, WHERE MANY NOW BELIEVE WE ARE ABOUT TO SEE A SUCCESSOR TO YELTSIN. WHILE YELTSIN HAD APPEARED IN GOOD FORM WHEN CHIRAC SAW HIM RECENTLY, THE POLITICAL REALITY IN RUSSIA WAS THAT MANY DID NOT BELIEVE HE WOULD LAST LONG. THIS WAS FUELING HARDLINE STANCES ON ENLARGEMENT, WHICH RUSSIANS PORTRAY AS AGGRESSION BY NATO. THE PROBLEM COULD BE MANAGED IF NATO FOUND "OFFSETS" FOR YELTSIN SO THAT HE COULD AFFORD POLITICALLY TO ACCEPT ENLARGEMENT. CHIRAC TICKED OFF THE ELEMENTS THAT WOULD PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR MOVEMENT: COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND RUSSIAN

POSITIONS ON JOINT DECISION-MAKING; A NEW BALANCE AMONG CFE COUNTRIES; AGREEMENT ON WHETHER THE CHARTER WOULD BE LEGALLY BINDING. ON THE LATTER, CHIRAC SAID THAT IF A POLITICAL BINDING PACT WERE SIGNED BY HEADS OF STATE, YELTSIN COULD PRESENT IT DOMESTICALLY AS BINDING.

11. (C) IF WASHINGTON WERE SEEN TO ENGINEER A U.S.-RUSSIAN DEAL, CRITICS WOULD ATTACK IT AS "CAPITULATION" TO A U.S. DIKTAT. THE KEY WOULD BE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT RUSSIA IS A MEMBER OF THE CLUB OF MAJOR POWERS, HENCE THE IDEA OF A 5-POWER MEETING BEFORE MADRID. CHIRAC TERMED THIS A RUSSIAN IDEA, ALTHOUGH IT WAS SUPPORTED BY FRANCE, GERMANY AND THE UK. HE SAID PRESIDENT CLINTON HAD NOTED RESERVATIONS
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AMONG OTHER NATO ALLIES ON THE 5-POWER PROPOSAL. ONLY ITALY REALLY HAD PROBLEMS, HE CLAIMED. SPAIN AGREES, AND THE DUTCH AND OTHERS WILL GO ALONG WITH IT. "I UNDERSTAND ITALY'S PROBLEM WITH THE IDEA," HE SAID, "BUT THE STAKES ARE HIGH AND ROME NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND THIS."

12. (C) CHIRAC SAID HE ALSO UNDERSTOOD PRESIDENT CLINTON NEEDED TO HAVE HIS MEETING WITH YELTSIN BEFORE THE U.S. RENDERS A DECISION. HE PROPOSED THE "SHERPAS" (I.E., PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS, SUCH AS LEVITTE, PERHAPS WITH POLITICAL DIRECTORS) MEET SECRETLY AND INFORMALLY TO SKETCH OUT THE LINES OF AGREEMENT. "IF YOU THEN HAVE AGREEMENT IN HELSINKI, WE ARE HOME FREE." IF NOT, THE FIVE COULD MEET IN APRIL TO PUSH THE ISSUE FURTHER, WITH TWO MONTHS STILL REMAINING TO MADRID. YELSTIN IS WILLING TO FINALIZE THE CHARTER IN MADRID.

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13. (C) THE SECRETARY RESPONDED THAT WE SHOULD DECIDE ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PACKAGE FIRST AND LEAVE A DECISION ON PROCESS FOR LATER. IT IS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALLIED SENSITIVITIES, BUT TO AVOID SIGNING A DEAL OVER THE HEADS OF CENTRAL/EASTERN EUROPE WHICH WOULD EVOKE MEMORIES OF YALTA. SHE SAID SHE WOULD NOT TURN DOWN THE PROPOSAL OUT OF HAND, BUT WAS NOT READY TO DECIDE, AND ADDED SHE WOULD HAVE SERIOUS AND DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH FM PRIMAKOV ON THE MATTER. AS FOR OTHER CONSULTATIONS, WE COULD HAVE

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POLITICAL DIRECTOR BILATS AD SERIATIM.

14. (C) CHIRAC AGREED THE PACKAGE'S CONTENTS WERE OF OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE. HOWEVER, WE WILL HAVE TO PUT MORE CONCESSIONS INTO THE PACKAGE IF WE GIVE THE IMPRESSION TO YELTSIN WE ARE IMPOSING A DEAL, WHICH COULD APPEAR TO BE ANOTHER YALTA. WE NEED AN ACCORD WITH RUSSIA, HE SAID, OTHERWISE WE WILL ONLY HAVE MOVED THE YALTA LINE EASTWARD.

15. (C) THE SECRETARY AGREED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RUSSIA-NATO CHARTER, BUT SAID IT COULD NOT SLOW DOWN THE WHOLE PROCESS OF ENLARGEMENT, LEST WE GIVE THE IMPRESSION WE ARE CEDING A VETO TO RUSSIA OVER ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP. CHIRAC CAUTIONED THAT SAYING THAT TO RUSSIA WOULD CAUSE "AN EXPLOSION." RATHER, WE SHOULD SAY WE MUST AND WILL HAVE A CHARTER BEFORE MADRID. IF WE DO NOT GET A CHARTER, CHIRAC ADDED, FRANCE WOULD NOT VETO ENLARGEMENT, BUT IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO PROCEED BECAUSE IT WILL BE VIEWED IN RUSSIA AS AGGRESSION. ALBRIGHT CONCLUDED IT WOULD BE MOST DESIRABLE TO PROCEED ON THE BASIS OF A CHARTER WITH MOSCOW, BUT THAT THIS WAS A MATTER OF PRESENTATION.

16. (C) SAYING HE WAS A STRONG "DEMANDEUR" FOR INCLUDING ROMANIA IN THE FIRST TIER OF INVITEES, CHIRAC NOTED ROMANIA HAD MADE A STRONG AND "HISTORIC" EFFORT TO RESOLVE ITS ETHNIC PROBLEMS WITH HUNGARY. THE SECRETARY RESPONDED THAT NO DECISION HAD BEEN MADE ON THE NUMBER IN THE FIRST TIER; WE ALSO EMPHASIZE THAT THE FIRST IN WILL NOT BE THE LAST." SHE ALSO
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QUESTIONED WHETHER ROMANIA WAS UP TO THE LEVEL OF OTHER CANDIDATES FOR INCLUSION.

NATO ADAPTATION

17. (C) CHIRAC OFFERED THE SECRETARY A FAMILIAR ARGUMENT, SAYING FRANCE WAS NOT THE DEMANDEUR ON REINTEGRATION. IT ENTAILS DRAWBACKS FOR HIM OF A POLITICAL, NOT MILITARY, NATURE, AS HE FACES LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN A YEAR. A MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC OPPOSES MILITARY REINTEGRATION, HE CLAIMED. HE HIMSELF HAD FOUGHT FOR 20 YEARS FOR A EUROPEAN SECURITY

AND DEFENSE IDENTITY WITHIN NATO; THIS ASSUMES SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE ABILITY OF THE U.S. OR EUROPEAN ALLIES TO UNDERTAKE MILITARY ACTION. "I AM NOT SURE," HE SAID, "THE U.S. IS WILLING TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITIES WITH EUROPE." CHIRAC SAID HE HAD TOLD PRESIDENT CLINTON HE AGREED WITH THE U.S. THAT THIS SHOULD NOT BECOME AN ISSUE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND FRANCE. "IF WE DON'T COME IN NOW, WE CAN DISCUSS THIS AGAIN IN 3-5 YEARS TIME." HE WAS PLEASED THE U.S. AND FRANCE WERE DISCUSSING CINCSOUTH MORE REGULARLY, AND SUGGESTED WAITING TO SEE WHAT THE EXPERTS COME UP WITH. CHIRAC SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO DECIDE BY MAY EITHER: FRANCE HAS DECIDED TO REINTEGRATE MILITARILY; OR, DUE TO SOME "TECHNICAL CONDITIONS" NOT HAVING BEEN MET, FRANCE WILL NOT REINTEGRATE NOW BUT WILL REVIEW THE ISSUE IN 3-5 YEARS.

18. (C) THE SECRETARY MADE SEVERAL POINTS: THE
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ALLIANCE IS MUCH STRONGER WHEN THE U.S. AND FRANCE ACT IN CONCERT; THE U.S., LIKE FRANCE, WANTS A STRONGER ESDI; FRANCE SHOULD NOT FOCUS SO PREDOMINANTLY ON THE AFSOUTH COMMAND ISSUE. SHE POINTED OUT THERE ARE A HOST OF OTHER ESDI ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS. (NOTE: CHIRAC LEANED FORWARD AT THIS POINT AND GESTURED AND NODDED POSITIVELY.) THE SECRETARY URGED ADAPTATION NOT BECOME A ZERO-SUM GAME, OR BE ALLOWED TO DOMINATE THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. CHIRAC AGREED NOT TO FOCUS EVERYTHING ON AFSOUTH, BUT SAID THE ISSUE AT HAND WAS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE U.S. WAS READY AND WILLING TO SHARE POWER. HE COMMENTED: "IF THE RESPONSIBILITIES ARE WELL DISTRIBUTED, WE WILL ENTER."

19. (C) THE SECRETARY NOTED THE ENORMOUS STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE THE SOUTHERN AREA REPRESENTS FOR THE U.S. AND SAID THERE WERE OTHER POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS BY WHICH THE U.S. WOULD SHOW ITS RESPECT FOR FRANCE'S ROLE IN

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NATO. CHIRAC REJOINED THAT THE MEDITERRANEAN - "THE LAKE OF EUROPE" - WAS ESSENTIAL FOR FRANCE, AND FRANCE COULD NOT ACCEPT A SITUATION WHEREIN IT WAS NOT FREE OR ABLE TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY. THE SECRETARY RESPONDED THAT U.S. CONTROL OF AFSOUTH DID NOT UNDERCUT FRANCE'S ABILITY TO PURSUE ITS INTERESTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. SHE ALSO SEPARATELY MADE IT CLEAR SHE DID NOT ACCEPT THE FRENCH CONCEPTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AS EUROPE'S LAKE.

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GREAT LAKES/ZAIRE

20. (C) CHIRAC EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION IN ZAIRE, SAYING IT COULD ERUPT IN A "CATASTROPHIC CHAIN REACTION." IF NEIGHBORING STATES DID NOT RESPECT THE SANCTITY OF ZAIRE'S BORDER, WE RISKED SEEING ETHNIC EXPLOSIONS THROUGHOUT AFRICA, GIVEN THE STRADDLING OF ARTIFICIAL BORDERS BY ETHNIC GROUPS. CHIRAC TOLD THE SECRETARY THAT WHATEVER THE U.S. THOUGHT OF MOBUTU -- HE WAS ILL, DYING, ABSENT, HE HAD DECAPITATED THE COUNTRY POLITICALLY, THE ARMY WAS IN SHAMBLES -- THE CURRENT REVOLT HAD BEEN CREATED AND SUPPORTED BY RWANDA AND UGANDA, WHO WISHED TO SEE AN EXPLOSION. CHIRAC SAID HE HAD MET UGANDAN PRESIDENT MUSEVENI RECENTLY: "I WILL OFFER NO COMMENT ON HIM." HE URGED THAT THE U.S., FRANCE AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES WORK TOWARDS WITHDRAWAL OF RWANDAN AND UGANDAN FORCES AND NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN MOBUTU AND KABILA. IN AFRICA, HE NOTED WRYLY, PEOPLE SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS BY SITTING UNDER A BOABOB TREE AND PALAVERING, A METHOD WHICH HAS ITS VIRTUES. WE SHOULD ALSO WORK TOWARDS THE BEGINNING OF A DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, THROUGH ELECTIONS, AN EFFORT WHICH REQUIRES THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S SUPPORT AND COULD COST UPWARDS OF 240 MILLION USD. CHIRAC ALSO EVINCED A STRONG DISTASTE FOR SANCTIONS ON ZAIRE, ARGUING THEY ONLY HURT THE POOR.

21. (C) THE SECRETARY AGREED ZAIRE WAS KEY TO CENTRAL AFRICAN STABILITY, AND SAID THE U.S. SUPPORTED TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND ELECTIONS IN ZAIRE. IT WOULD
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BE IMPORTANT TO HAVE A WELL PREPARED GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE, BUT IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHERE THE MONEY WOULD COME FROM FOR ELECTIONS. IN RESPONSE TO HER COMMENT THAT MOBUTU WAS CLEARLY INVOLVED IN A POLITICAL AND PERSONAL END-GAME, CHIRAC SAID THERE SIMPLY WAS NO ALTERNATIVE TO HIM AT THE MOMENT, AND THAT HE WOULD EASILY GET 80 PERCENT IN ANY ELECTION.

CHINA

22. (C) CHIRAC TERMED CHINA A GREAT PROBLEM IN THE NEXT 50 YEARS, WHEN IT WOULD BECOME A LEADING POWER. SAYING IT WAS "TIME TO CHANGE OUR HABITS," HE REMARKED THAT THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION CHINA RESOLUTION WAS AN ANNUAL RITUAL WHICH INFURIATED THE CHINESE, WHO DO NOT FORGET OR FORGIVE. THIS WAS NOT A SMART MOVE ON THE WEST'S PART, AND WE NEEDED MORE IMAGINATION IN DEALING WITH THE CHINESE. HE HAD SPOKE ABOUT THE ISSUE WITH CHINESE FM JING, WHO HAD RECENTLY SENT HIM A LONG LETTER. CHIRAC SAID KOHL SHARED HIS VIEWS. THE SECRETARY NOTED WE COULD NOT HOLD THE WHOLE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA HOSTAGE TO ONE ISSUE, WHICH WAS WHY WE WERE LOOKING CAREFULLY AT THE ISSUE OF THE RESOLUTION. IT WAS POSSIBLE THE CHINESE MIGHT MEET SOME OF OUR REQUESTS FOR IMPROVEMENTS; CHIRAC NOTED THAT WOULD BE A GOOD FIRST STEP. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TURN-OVER OF HONG KONG MEANT THIS WAS NOT A GOOD YEAR TO SHIFT OUR POLICY, THE SECRETARY CAUTIONED. CHIRAC DISPUTED THIS, AND SAID IF THE CHINESE OFFERED SOMETHING, HE WOULD PROPOSE DROPPING THE RESOLUTION.

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THE UK COMPLAINS A LOT, HE SAID, ABOUT THE CHANGE FROM AN ELECTED TO APPOINTED ASSEMBLY, BUT THE ELECTIONS ONLY CAME INTO BEING THREE YEARS AGO, AND NOW THAT WE HAD COMPLAINED LOUDLY, THE CHINESE WERE MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO ENACT THE POLICY.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

23. (C) IN RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY'S BRIEFING ON PM NETANYAHU'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON, CHIRAC EVINced SOME PESSIMISM ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, TERMING IT "VERY FRAGILE." SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD HAD NOT UNDERSTOOD ISRAELI INTERNAL DYNAMICS, REGRETS NOT SIGNING AN AGREEMENT WITH FORMER PM PERES, AND IS READY TO START FROM SCRATCH IF ISRAEL WILL CLEARLY STATE ITS READINESS TO RETURN THE GOLAN. HE QUESTIONED WHETHER NETANYAHU UNDERSTOOD TIME WAS NOT ON HIS SIDE, OPINING

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THAT ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH EGYPT, AND EVEN JORDAN,
WERE LIKELY TO DEGRADE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS, AS
FUNDAMENTALISM AND ANTI-ISRAELI PUBLIC SENTIMENT GREW
IN THOSE COUNTRIES.

24. (C) THE SECRETARY EXPRESSED HERSELF MORE
OPTIMISTIC ON NETANYAHU'S CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND HIS
HISTORIC ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND SAID IT WAS
IMPORTANT ALL SIDES WORK TO GET SYRIA AND ISRAEL BACK
TO THE TABLE. SHE URGED CHIRAC TO USE HIS INFLUENCE TO

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ENCOURAGE ARAB STATES TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, TO BUILD ON THE MOMENTUM CREATED BY THE HEBRON ACCORD. THE U.S. ALSO HOPED, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, FRANCE WOULD NOT SELL ARMS TO SYRIA, TO WHICH CHIRAC RESPONDED CONCISELY, "NO, WE WON'T." HE ALSO AGREED TO THE SECRETARY'S REQUEST THAT HE INTERCEDE TO DISSUADE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT MANDELA (WHOM HE TERMED "ALL OVER THE MAP") FROM SELLING WEAPONS TO SYRIA.

NGORNO-KARABACH

25. (C) THE SECRETARY AND CHIRAC BRIEFLY REVIEWED NGORNO-KARABACH, AGREEING THE DECISION TO ESTABLISH A MINSK GROUP TRI-CHAIR WAS A GOOD ARRANGEMENT. CHIRAC SAID HE HAD SEEN AZERI PRESIDENT ALIYEV RECENTLY, AND HAD URGED HIM TO WORK FOR AN AGREEMENT ON NGORNO-KARABACH, SUGGESTING FULL AUTONOMY WITH INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TROOPS TO OFFER SECURITY. HE CONFIRMED TO THE SECRETARY THIS MEANT UN TROOPS. THE SECRETARY SAID SHE UNDERSTOOD ARMENIAN PRESIDENT TER-PETROZIAN WANTED A RUSSIAN TROOP PRESENCE, BUT THIS COULD BE POSSIBLE WITHIN AN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY GROUP. FM DE CHARETTE NOTED IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO HAVE TRANSPARENCY WITHIN THE MINSK TRI-CHAIR. THE SECRETARY RESPONDED THAT RESOLVING THE CORRIDOR ISSUE WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITY, BUT IT APPEARED A SOLUTION WAS POSSIBLE.

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26. (C) CHIRAC SAID TURKEY WAS "VERY EMOTIONAL" ABOUT GERMANY'S POSITION ON TERMS FOR ITS ENTRY INTO THE EU. HE HAD FAVORED EU MEMBERSHIP FOR TURKEY FOR YEARS, BUT THE REAL PROBLEM FOR EU MEMBERS IN LOOKING AT TURKEY

WAS THE FREE MOVEMENT OF LABOR ACROSS BORDERS; GIVEN GERMANY'S HISTORY WITH TURKISH LABOR, ITS POSITION WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. DURING FORMER PM OZAL'S TENURE, CHIRAC HAD TOLD OZAL HE SHOULD ACCEPT MEMBERSHIP TALKS LEADING TO COMPLETE INTEGRATION SHORT OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT FOR TURKISH NATIONALS. HE HAD SAID THE SAME THING TO FORMER PM CILLER, BUT NOT YET TO PM ERBEKAN.

IRAN

27. (C) THE SECRETARY TOLD CHIRAC THE U.S. BELIEVED THE EU CRITICAL DIALOGUE NEEDED MORE PRESSURE TO BE EFFECTIVE, BUT APPARENTLY FRANCE DID NOT AGREE. CHIRAC RESPONDED ADAMANTLY THAT FRANCE HAD NO SYMPATHY FOR IRAN, BUT BELIEVED ECONOMIC PRESSURE/BOYCOTTS WERE THE WRONG TOOLS, ALTHOUGH THEY MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE FOR IRAQ. THE WEST SHOULD NOT MAKE A "MARTYR" OF IRAN.

28. (C) PERHAPS, HE CONCEDED, THE DIALOGUE NEEDED TO BE "HARSH," BUT ARGUED THE U.S. SHOULD BE "REALISTIC." AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE UTILITY OF FRANCE'S CONTACTS WITH IRAN, HE NOTED THE DE CHARETTE-VELAYATI CONTACTS DURING THE APRIL 1996 GRAPES OF WRATH OPERATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. DE CHARETTE HAD MET VELAYATI TWICE IN DAMASCUS AND HAD TOLD HIM FRANCE WOULD DROP OUT OF THE
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CRITICAL DIALOGUE IF IRAN DID NOT REIGN IN HIZBALLAH. VELAYATI HAD RESPONDED "YOU'LL NEVER DO IT." HOWEVER, THE NEXT DAY, APPARENTLY CONCERNED THE THREAT WAS SINCERE, IRANIAN PRESIDENT RAFSANJANI HAD CALLED CHIRAC. CHIRAC SAID HE HAD REFUSED TO TAKE THE CALL, AS WELL AS A SECOND ONE THE DAY AFTER. "DON'T CORNER A WILD CAT," CHIRAC COUNSELED THE SECRETARY.

29. (C) IN RESPONSE, THE SECRETARY NOTED TEHRAN'S WORLDWIDE SUPPORT FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. WHILE THE U.S. DID NOT HAVE A PERFECT SOLUTION, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ASK ONESELF WHETHER THE DIALOGUE HAD PRODUCED RESULTS. CHIRAC REJOINED THAT ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS HAD NEVER BEEN SHOWN TO BE EFFECTIVE IN CHANGING BEHAVIOR. HE DISPUTED THE SECRETARY'S SUGGESTION THAT SOUTH AFRICA DISPROVED HIS CONTENTION. HE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, FRANCE WOULD STAND BY GERMANY IF IRAN REACTED BADLY TO THE MYKONOS TRIAL.

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SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT
- JACQUES CHIRAC, FEBRUARY 17, 1997, PARIS

IRAQ

30. (C) THE SECRETARY AND CHIRAC HAD A BRIEF EXCHANGE
ON IRAQ, WITH CHIRAC (CONTRADICTING HIS EARLIER

STATEMENT) QUESTIONING THE WISDOM OF RETAINING ECONOMIC
SANCTIONS INDEFINITELY ON IRAQ. THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ HAD
SUFFERED HORRENDOUSLY, WHICH DID "NOT MAKE ME PROUD TO
BE A WESTERNER." THE WEST'S IMAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST
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AD ALSO BEEN MUCH DAMAGED. THE SECRETARY COUNTERED
THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS SQUARELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
MISERY, AS WELL AS FOR THE DELAYS IN RELIEVING IT
THROUGH UNSCR 986. SHE SAID THERE WERE ONLY SO MANY
TOOLS AVAILABLE WITH WHICH TO DEAL WITH A RENEGADE LIKE
SADDAM: ECONOMIC, DIPLOMATIC, AND MILITARY. FM DE
CHARETTE CONCLUDED THE MEETING BY SUGGESTING: "LET'S
SET ASIDE THE WAR OPTION FOR NOW."

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