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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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2016-0423-M (1.01)  
7/30/2019 KBH

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Lech Walesa of Poland

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
The Vice President  
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State  
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
Charles Kupchan, NSC Staff, Notetaker

Lech Walesa, President of Poland  
Krzysztor Skubiszewski, Minister of Foreign  
Affairs  
Janusz Ziolkowski, Minister of State, Office  
of the President  
Kasimier Dziewanowski, Ambassador to the U.S.  
Mieczyslaw Wachowski, Secretary of State,  
Office of the President  
Zbigniew Lewicki, Interpreter

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 21, 1993 2:00 - 3:00 pm  
Oval Office

President Walesa: I was a leader of the revolution in Poland. But I had no idea of the eventual outcome: the overturning of Communism. Now we are faced with post-communism and the task of building structures to replace communist society. A key part of this process has to be increased reliance on regional cooperation. We need to make use of Visegrad and develop close ties with Ukraine and Belarus. After decades of Soviet domination, we are all afraid of Russia. It is important to remember that this is the first time in history that the Soviet army has withdrawn from territory peacefully. If Russia again adopts an aggressive foreign policy, that aggression will be directed toward Ukraine and Poland. The U.S. is needed to prevent this from happening. President Bush was correct in understanding the need for strong defenses. Poland cannot be left defenseless; we need to have the protection of U.S. muscle.  
(e)

Poland wants freedom and peace in Europe and friendship with Russia. We can reign in Russia by gradually pushing reform from west to east. This process will require financial assistance. It will require continued privatization, the emergence of small enterprises, and the conversion of defense industry to industry that produces consumer goods. It will require increased trade with central Europe and more outside investment in the region. Most important, we need to put everything into practice. We need

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fishing equipment and technical know-how, not fish. The goal must be to create a Russia that is neither rich nor poor. A very poor Russia and a very rich Russia are dangerous outcomes. (e)

The President: I agree with your general outline of the situation. We want to provide assistance and develop trade with Poland and all former communist countries. The U.S. is the second largest investor in Poland, and we hope to encourage more U.S. investment. There are some outstanding trade disputes in the areas of unfair tariffs resulting from association agreements with the EC, intellectual property rights, and arms sales. But these are the types of disputes that normally arise in relations between states. The U.S. has the responsibility to support all countries that are standing up for freedom. In this respect, we support Russia. We do not believe that Russia is at present too strong. (e)

President Walesa: It is possible that the reform process in Russia will reverse. This would spoil the progress that has been made in building peace in Europe. The Russian army may become factionalized and fight among itself. It is also important to remove Russian troops from foreign territory. If you succeed in ensuring that Europe is not again faced with a threat from Russia, you will win a Nobel Prize. But firm actions are needed. Russian troops need housing so they can go home. Munitions stocks are unprotected. The Russian economy is failing. If the Polish economy fails, Russia's economy will as well. I am particularly scared about nuclear accidents. There is insufficient money for the necessary safeguards. Your responsibility in this area is large. We are also scared by the prospect of having a powerful Germany on one side and a powerful Russia on the other. (e)

The President: We have given money to help nuclear power plants become safer. We have also tried to pursue investments in Russia that enhance privatization and economic reform, strengthen the energy sector, and provide new housing. President Yeltsin wants to bring Russian troops home, but lacks houses for them. The army still controls nuclear weapons, so we have to be careful. In all respects, the U.S. must be on the side of democracy and reform. (e)

Minister Skubiczewski: President Walesa's comments are a point of reference. It is very important to build stability in the region and to foster good relations among Poland, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. We need arms control agreements. Poland supports the North Atlantic Alliance. NACC is useful in developing practical schemes of cooperation with NATO members. I would like to see Russia more involved in the international community. Russia will reemerge as a great power. Can we now take steps to affect Russian foreign policy in a way beneficial to us? We need a grand strategy of democratic transformation. There are some parallels with the Marshall Plan. We need a similarly ambitious program to help Russia. (e)

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The President: We have a three-prong strategy of assistance. First, we are trying to promote democracy in Russia and ensure that Russia pursues a peaceful foreign policy. Second, we have a strategy for promoting reform in all the republics -- whether they be nuclear or non-nuclear states. Third, we are building our relationships with countries in Central Europe so that they will serve as a source of stability throughout the region. Poles must understand that the U.S. and Poland share enduring interests. We must build on these shared interests. Your country's influence will grow in coming years. No matter what happens in Russia on Sunday, we all face important tasks and Poland has a large responsibility in the international community. (S)

President Walesa: I agree with you. But which direction will reforms in Russia come from? If Russia expands again, we are in great trouble. We must encourage them to privatize now and increase civilian production. Their whole economic and political system needs to be changed. I am afraid to turn on the radio because of what I might hear about developments in Russia. I think reform should move through Central Europe to Russia. Central European states are trying to enter Western Europe. We can use the ideas and concepts needed to achieve this goal to then help Russia. The problem is that Western Europe has not yet accepted us. The victory over communism was the biggest victory in history. But we are not capitalizing on it. (S)

The Vice President: Reform in Poland continues to be a difficult task. You have moved very quickly; you are the most advanced in the post-Communist world in terms of democracy and free markets. Poland is also a good friend of the United States. We have the opportunity to push this relationship forward and build a long-term partnership. Poland's most important contribution is in providing the ideas and concepts needed to make political and economic change happen. (S)

President Walesa: Ideas and concepts are not enough. We need to stop Russian hegemony. If the U.S. pours money into Russia, it is not enough. Russia needs an entirely new political and economic system. It therefore makes sense to concentrate on Central Europe and Ukraine. (S)

The President: You are saying we should start with the other republics and then later focus on Russia? (S)

President Walesa: Some countries in the NIS cannot benefit from assistance; they are too backward. The further west, the greater impact your aid will have. (S)

Minister Skubiczewski: Yes, we must take care of the other republics. Russia is important, but we need to support the independence and well-being of the others too. (S)

The President: We have asked all Russian troops to be withdrawn from the foreign soil. We must roll back the threat of imperialism and remnants of the communist system. I am worried

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short run the military might revolt and cause a setback in Russia. I hear your central message: Do not put all our eggs in one basket. As you know, my first appointment was to create an ambassador to oversee assistance to all republics of the NIS. We are trying to keep reform moving forward throughout the region. (S)

President Walesa: Ukraine is a large and rich country. We must focus on Ukraine too. Reform must spread from the West. We are at a cross-roads -- a very difficult and important point. (S)

-- End of Conversation --

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED  
PER E.O. 13526

2016-0423-M (1.02)  
KRM 7/30/2019

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Vaclav Havel of the  
Czech Republic

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State  
Madeleine Albright, Ambassador to the UN  
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
Charles Kupchan, NSC Staff, Notetaker

President Vaclav Havel  
Alexandr Vondra, Deputy Foreign Minister  
Michael Zantovsky, Ambassador to the U.S.  
Ladislav Spacek, Assistant to the President  
Alexandra Brabcova, Interpreter

DATE, TIME April 20, 1993 5:00 - 6:00 pm  
AND PLACE: Oval Office

President Havel: Thank you for taking the time to see me. I am here to talk about all issues. I would like to tell you about events in the Czech Republic and discuss broader European issues, U.S.-Czech relations, and other international issues. (U)

Our federation split in a peaceful fashion -- something very unusual in history. And I think this split will enhance, not erode, stability in Europe. The Czech Republic desires to build on the foundation laid by Czechoslovakia; there will be continuity between the behavior of Czechoslovakia and the behavior of the Czech Republic. I am still the president. I desire to deepen already good relations with the United States. These good relations started before World War I and it is now time to continue them. (U)

Czechs believe that a continued U.S. presence in Europe is needed. We welcome more contact with the U.S. U.S. investments are already substantial. Many American students are coming to study in the Czech Republic. The basis for our new relationship is that we now share democratic values. (U)

I would not like to dwell too long on my country; other topics deserve more attention. Just let me say that we are now working on a large-scale privatization program; we are transforming our legal and political system; and we have had two free elections. We now want to focus on entering NATO and the EC because we see ourselves as Europeans who embrace European values. The Czech

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Republic wants to help implant these values in the center of Europe. We had that role before World II -- before we were overrun by Nazism and Soviet domination. (S)

Enough on my country. Let me extend to you a cordial invitation to visit Prague. Your wife is invited too. My wife is also interested in health care. And Prague is beautiful. (U)

The President: As you know, I visited Prague in 1970. I remember it well. I remember the snow on the bridges. (U)

I am very impressed with the peaceful split of Czechoslovakia. The progress you have made in democratic reform is remarkable. I hope that your country will continue to be a force for stability, peace, and democracy in Europe. We support your domestic reform efforts and your international role. I would like to hear your thoughts on relations between our two countries and on other European issues on which I have to make decisions. (U)

I am particularly concerned about the situation in Bosnia. There are now voices in this country and in Europe saying that we should do more. We are tightening the sanctions, but it is unclear that they will have their intended effect. It seems clear that the Serbs will not participate in peace negotiations as long as they keep winning. They continue to have an enormous arms advantage because of the embargo. What should the international community do? Should we end the embargo and give Muslims the ability to defend themselves? Should we seek UN authorization to use air power against artillery? What can we do to promote peace, stop ethnic cleansing, and prevent sending the wrong message to potential aggressors elsewhere? (S)

President Havel: The situation in Bosnia is very worrisome and very dangerous. We must do what we can; we have shared responsibility. The challenge is not just to stop the killing, but also to stop it from growing. The key is Russia. Will they agree to more forceful intervention? If Yeltsin's falls, we could return to a divided Europe. Any action must therefore have the support of the whole international community. G-7 assistance for Russia is helping the situation there. But there are still dangers. We should consider linking assistance to Russia to Russian cooperation in dealing with the former Yugoslavia. (S)

The President: We will have to await the outcome of Sunday's referendum. I think Yeltsin would like to be more supportive; he did not block the tightening of sanctions. If he enjoys a big victory on Sunday, he may go along with further steps. Yeltsin has less influence over the Serbs than I thought. He has tried to stop the Serbs. Part of the problem is that the supporters of Serbs in Russia are his opponents. They limit his room for maneuver. (S)

President Havel: Probably nobody has much influence over the Serbs. But the Russian vote is important in getting Russia to cooperate in the Security Council. I think the outcome is hard

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to predict. I believe Yeltsin represents the only reasonable alternative. He will probably stay in power, and the in-fighting will continue. (S)

The President: I agree. We are doing what we can through G-7 aid and through bilateral aid packages. We will ask Congress and our G-7 partners to help with privatization, nuclear safety and environmental clean-up, and housing for soldiers. Yeltsin's long-term stability depends on having the support of the military. We must therefore help to create better conditions for the military. (S)

President Havel: During my visit to the U.S. three years ago -- during my first presidency -- I spoke to Congress. Then I said that the best way to help us is to help Russia. Russian stability is the key determinant of global peace. Such assistance should be carefully considered and crafted to existing conditions. (S)

Secretary Christopher: I met President Havel three years ago. Now, as then, he is a heroic figure. What countries in central Europe represent the largest potential for ethnic tensions? Where do we need to engage in preventive diplomacy? (U)

President Havel: I don't see any ethnic conflicts in the region that have the immediate potential to turn violent. There are some in the former Soviet Union, but in Central Europe, there are no cases that look like Yugoslavia. Our main problem is that we feel as if we are living in a vacuum. That is why we want to join NATO. In addition, in our values and spirit, we are part of Western Europe. It is impossible to build a pan-European security system without the participation of Central Europe: We are now discussing in my country this question of joining Western institutions. We need association, followed by full membership. And the issue is not that we are faced with imminent threats. Rather, we are in the process of undergoing an image transformation -- a reshaping of our identity. At the same time, membership in NATO will help promote peace in the Balkans and NIS because it will serve as an example, luring these countries into the Western community. If, on the other hand, the Czech Republic fails to enter the West and reform falters, a bad example will be set. In sum, entry into NATO and the EC is central to expanding democracy not just to Central Europe, but also to the NIS. Central Europe provides a pathway for reform to spread eastward. I apologize for talking too long. (S)

The President: I agree that you should be a critical part of Europe, economically, politically, and strategically -- and a close friend of the United States. (S)

President Havel: What is needed is openness and cooperation in both the security and economic spheres. For now, we need compatible command structures and open trade. We can formalize these relationships later, maybe with treaties. To move in this direction, we are undertaking privatization and legal reform. We have a relatively open economy -- our barriers are the smallest

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in the region. Unfortunately, we are still on a USTR list of protectionist states. We resent this. U.S. imports have grown by 215%. Let me make a suggestion to promote our economic relations. We have a huge nuclear power station under construction. As with all power plants based on the Soviet model, we need Western help in developing safety mechanisms. We have contracted with Westinghouse to provide these mechanisms, but I ask that EXIM bank guarantee Westinghouse's investment. Similar contracts might then emerge for other power plants in the area. This proposal would benefit both the environment and our economic relations. (S)

Let me raise one final issue. The Czech Republic as a new country wishes to be seen as a nation that cares for more than its own narrow interests. We want to assume a broader responsibility. To achieve this, we would like to secure Eastern Europe's non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. I feel duty-bound to mention this. We would like to work with Madeleine Albright there. (S)

The President: If the nomination of the regional group goes to the Czech Republic, we would be very pleased. (S)

President Havel: We have already won the support of some in the region; we need the support of others. (S)

The President: Tomorrow you and others leaders are coming to the White House. I hope it does not rain. (U)

President Havel: I will deliver a lecture at George Washington University tomorrow. I would like to give you the text. I will also present you with a copy of one of my books. I hope it becomes part of your library. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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