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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Slovak President Kovac and Prime Minister Meciar

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State
Madeleine Albright, Ambassador to the U.N.
Frank Wisner, Under Secretary of Defense
Stephen Oxman, Assistant Secretary of State
for European and Canadian Affairs
Ted Russell, Ambassador to Slovakia
Charles Kupchan, NSC Notetaker

TBP

DATE, TIME Wednesday, January 12, 1994, 11:05-11:50 a.m.
AND PLACE: Prague, Residence of the U.S. Ambassador

President Kovac: Let me express my gratitude for this opportunity to meet with you. We are very much encouraged by your visit. Let me begin by offering some reassurance: with regard to the talks we had last April, my country is moving down the road to democracy. We also are continuing with economic transformation. Our aim is to build a well-functioning market system with private enterprise. Still ahead is the task of privatizing the big state enterprises. This process will be difficult. But we think we can do it while maintaining stability; it is important that we have maintained social peace thus far. Successful reform overall depends in large part on economic reform. (S)

I would like to clarify a misunderstanding. The political situation in Slovakia is sometimes said to be unstable. Yes, there is some stability, but strong political institutions are emerging. I want to assure you that the remaining problems do not cast doubt on our overall political and economic situation. Slovakia is governed by democratic institutions and the rights of minorities are protected. (S)

We very much appreciate U.S. attitudes toward this region. We very much welcomed the message of Ambassador Albright that the security of the region is of direct concern to the U.S. We see PFP as an important step; it is a shift in the quality of cooperation on military matters and paves the way for NATO membership. Slovakia sees this as a great opportunity. We are prepared to sign up and to participate actively. We welcome

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consultations on the process of participation and would like to move as quickly as possible. Slovakia is ready to be integrated into western structures. We realize we have hard work ahead of us. We appreciate the fact that the Partnership represents a process and provides for diversity; participation will vary from country to country. We recognize that the Partnership represents a new commitment and we are confident that Slovakia is ready to play a stabilizing role in the region. Our tensions with Hungary will not cause problems in this respect. We share common interests with Hungary and they overshadow our differences. We both have a desire to enter Western structures and NATO. Slovakia is capable of being a reliable partner. (S)

We fully support U.S. engagement in Europe -- including the military. From the U.S., we expect assistance in political, security and economic spheres. We would appreciate if Slovakia is not left out when Visegrad integration is discussed. On security matters, we hope for active assistance and are ready for participation in the Partnership. On economic matters, we want U.S. help on privatization and attracting capital investment. (S)

The President: Thank you for your statement. On the Partnership, I thank you for your support and willingness to participate. It sets in motion a process that can lead to full NATO membership. It is a real offer of security cooperation and training, planning and exercising with NATO forces. I have just removed a relic of the Cold War which prohibited the transfer of defense articles to Slovakia. We want this to result in a real partnership with your country. (S)

On the political issues you mentioned, some people, perhaps by accident, failed to mention Slovakia when referring to the Visegrad countries. I believe you are part of this group and will be especially sensitive to this issue. (S)

On economic issues, I just met in Brussels with representatives from many U.S. companies. I described the Partnership and what it will do to promote stability in this region. I said it would be prudent for U.S. companies to invest here. We will hold a special conference on trade and investment in Central and Eastern Europe. OPIC also will be expanded and become more active in the region. Yesterday, I met with representatives of the European Union. I pointed out that they have too many trade barriers to products from this region. Both Europe and the U.S. need to buy more from Central and Eastern Europe -- we will work on it. (S)

On the Partnership, I asked the NATO Secretary General to announce that he has asked General Joulwan to develop plans for implementing the Partnership. I expect you will hear from NATO in the next few weeks. If there is any problem, please let my staff know. (S)

Prime Minister Meciar: It is a great privilege to meet you. I never doubted you would win the election. I admire your attitude and program. The world needs a new order. You are the winner in

the battle between the superpowers. And you now have responsibilities. We welcome you here. Your visit is an indication of the new order in Europe. The Partnership is an excellent program. We support your desire to avoid drawing new dividing lines. And we welcome more bilateral military cooperation. The inviolability of borders should be a basic guideline. Yugoslavia is not just a conflict among ethnic groups. We must respect individual and human rights. (C)

Our party is very similar to your own -- we are your small sister in Europe. As far as economic policy is concerned, your declarations are very warmly welcomed. We need more U.S. business. Firms will make profits in our country. And this activity will help intensify relations. An important lesson of history is that those who are smaller look for a stronger brother. In 1938, we looked to Britain and France. But they betrayed us. Then the Germans came. Then the Russians came. So we think our proper partner is the U.S. That's why we offer our friendship and cooperation. You are greatly admired. Our program is close to yours. We welcome your visit as a new sign of cooperation. Next time please come to Slovakia. (C)

President Kovac: I have a pleasant mission. We have an album about U.S. military participation in the Slovak national uprising. Out of twenty officers, thirteen were killed. The album has many photographs. Please accept this as a sign of our respect. This year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary. I would like to repeat my invitation to you. I will invite the presidents of all the countries that participated. Please come or send an envoy. (C)

Secretary Christopher: Let me mention the sanctity of borders. All countries in the Partnership will make a commitment to respect existing borders. On democratic reforms, we admire the steps you have taken. We would like to help governmental and non-governmental problems. We are launching a new program called the Democracy Network, and we welcome your support. On economic issues, we recently signed a tax treaty and want to congratulate you on the agreement with the World Bank and IMF. These are important formal steps toward investment. We now need to take informal steps. We have great regard for the states of Eastern Europe -- as long as they pursue democratic and economic reforms. We play no favorites. Slovakia is as important as any in the region. We admire your commitment to regional cooperation. We appreciate your responsive reaction to our initiatives and we will do our part. (C)

The President: I come from a small state in the U.S. After the revolutions of 1848, Slovaks came and created Slovak. There are still some Slovaks in this small town. The political season in Arkansas begins there. It's obligatory for all politicians to start there. (C)