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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Goncz of Hungary

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Anthony Lake
Charles Kupchan, NSC Staff, Notetaker

President Arpad Goncz
Pal Tar, Ambassador to the U.S.
Bela Szombati, Presidential Advisor

DATE, TIME April 21, 1993, 4:35 - 4:55 pm
AND PLACE: Blue Room

President Goncz: Let me congratulate you on your election. Hungary is a front-line state and is therefore in a very dangerous situation. We must live with Serbia as a neighbor for a long time to come. The No-Fly Zone has changed the situation. AWACS over our territory and over the Adriatic are no longer doing only surveillance, but also guiding and targeting. We have a hot line to the Serbian Chief of Staff. We know what each other's forces are doing. We also have many Hungarians in Serbia. And there are 300,000 Serb refugees waiting to take the place of the Hungarians living in Vojvodina. We are prepared to take refugees if necessary. But we already have 750,000 unemployed. The sanctions make the situation doubly difficult; Hungary has lost about \$500 million. We do, however, have a moral obligation to accept refugees. The U.S. should be aware of these burdens. Another element is that in eastern Slavonia there are four Croatian brigades. If there is violence between Croatia and Serbia, it might spill over into Hungary. On the Serb side of the border, there are tanks dug in. The Croats may use Hungarian territory as a passageway into Serbia. The losing side will likely take refuge in Hungary. These events could threaten Hungary, which has thus far been an island of stability. (S)

I have been speaking with President Kucan of Slovenia. We are discussing a plan that would give rights to all ethnic groups and that could lead to a lasting solution. If you decide to use force, you should deliver one decisive blow. You should use force in a way that minimizes the number of victims. The Serbian economy is already in bad shape. The Serbs need 100,000 tons of fuel for agricultural works this summer. They also need to stockpile fuel for the army. Oil tanks are easy to find and target, and they are usually located away from populated areas. Fuel is critical to waging war. If artillery is destroyed, it can be replaced. But if fuel reserves are depleted and the Danube is sealed, the Serbs will be incapacitated. (S)

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The President: Do you think this the most effective method of stopping the Serbs? (C)

President Goncz: Yes, I do. If the Danube is sealed, the Serbs simply cannot get sufficient fuel by truck. Sealing the Danube is key. (C)

The President: I have limited time. Your comments interest me a great deal. We support Hungary. It is time to make a decision on how to deal with Bosnia. I will discuss your suggestions with my advisors and get back to you. (C)

President Goncz: I will be at your disposal. We think developments in Russia are key. Political change in Russia should be viewed as a process -- it is not linked to just one person. Ukraine is also very important. We are Ukraine's gateway to the West. Their stability is important to us. We must get integrated into the West within ten years. With modernization, technical assistance, investment, and markets, Hungary and Central Europe will no longer be buffer states, but extensions of the West. (C)

-- End of Conversation --

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