

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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PER E.O. 13526

2015-0133-M (1.19)
5/17/2018 K8M

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Restricted Meeting with Hungarian President
Goncz (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Samuel Berger, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Peter Tufo, U.S. Ambassador to Hungary
Marc Grossman, Assistant Secretary of State
for European and Canadian Affairs
Stephen Flanagan, Special Assistant to the
President and Senior Director for Central
and Eastern European Affairs, NSC Staff,
Notetaker
Laszlo Szimonisz, Interpreter

Arpad Goncz, President
Janos Martonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Geza Jeszenszky, Ambassador to the United
States
Denes Tomaj, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Andras Gulyas, Foreign Policy Advisor to the
President
Nandor Papp, Interpreter

DATE, TIME June 8, 1999, 10:45 - 11:25 a.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

President Goncz: Thank you for the very warm reception. (U)

The President: I'm delighted to welcome you to the White House for Hungary's first State Visit. I have enjoyed our previous meetings and I know Hillary has greatly enjoyed her time with you. (U)

I have long admired your courage and integrity through the darkest days after 1956. Yet, even in prison, you devoted so much of your time to translating American authors. Millions of Hungarians know American literature because of you. (U)

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Classified by: Robert A. Bradtke
Reason: 1.5(d)
Declassify on: 9/27/09

Your life and tenure as President has set a direction for Hungary's future as a leading member of Europe's democracies and a positive influence on all your neighbors. (U)

I appreciate your personal support on Kosovo and Hungary's strong contribution to NATO efforts, including use of airspace and airfields. I also appreciate the way Hungary handled the Russian convoys and overflight requests. (C)

Speaking of the Russians, they were part of the peace implementation force in Bosnia. In Kosovo, it will be a bit more complicated. That cooperation in Bosnia began in 1995 before the economic collapse and the other internal political problems. We may have to spread out the deployment of Russian forces because of their cultural affinity with the Serbs. We can't agree to give them their own sector or to a division of command and control with NATO troops. We have to deal with both disgruntled Yugoslav army units and the KLA. We need an effective command arrangement that cannot be manipulated by ethnic politics. (C)

President Goncz: I fully agree about the need for a unified NATO command. The Russians are proposing to interject themselves between the two segments of the population. (C)

The President: We can't have it be that the Russians only deploy in areas that have been largely Serb. If the Russians went into all four sectors, they could work better with NATO troops. (C)

I've talked to lots of Albanians. There will be a strong desire to punish the Serbs. We need a strong military presence to prevent this kind of retribution. (C)

President Goncz: There are traditions of vendetta in Serbia. I agree there is a need for special protection. (C)

The President: Tell Sandy and the team what you would do with the KLA. (C)

President Goncz: After the 1956 uprising, we had peacekeepers come in. The peacekeeping forces came in and both rioters and police joined them in policing the streets to restore order. The same happened in Palestine. Haganah at the end of World War II became the core of the Israeli Army. We need to turn today's guerilla fighter into a peacekeeper. We need to oust the

criminal element from the KLA, because we don't want criminals to be peacekeepers. (X)

The political vacuum needs to be filled in Serbia. After Milosevic is ousted, we have to avoid chaos. The first government that comes into power after Milosevic won't last forever. It will need to maintain order and ensure supplies reach the population. It will probably take a couple of governments before real reforms can begin. (X)

Our policy rests on the primacy of non-interference. We have welcomed the U.S. presence in Hungary, which has helped prevent a spillover of violence into Hungary. We can't exclude that it might happen. So some kind of American military presence in Hungary will be desirable for some time. (X)

The President: Do you think that Milosevic will be deposed over Kosovo? (X)

President Goncz: I can't predict how this will go. However, one way or the other he will go. Groups overseas will play a role. Panic and Varady and others will have some influence. There are another 300-400 others who might stand as the core of transitional government. We have to be careful in our intervention there. (X)

However, now that the war is over, we would like to become an economic Tazsar for reconstruction in southeast Europe. Hungary has good infrastructure and telecommunications as well as proximity to the region. You can travel from Budapest to Belgrade by road in half a day. All of the major U.S. companies are based in Hungary. We could be the hub of these efforts and host an ongoing relief presence. It is a matter of necessity that some kind of bridgehead will have to be set up and it might as well be in Hungary. (X)

Perhaps the next phase of negotiations could take up some of the other issues in the former Yugoslavia, including the Sandzak, Montenegro and the Vojvodina. All these issues could be addressed in some kind of comprehensive talks in Budapest. The first step to avert problems would be to enhance subsidiarity in these regions to give more local control and ease a lot of bitterness and pain. (X)

I'm prepared to go to Serbia within 24 hours after the first democratic government comes to power and extend a helpful hand. I'm in a good position to do this. I am close to the Hungarian

minority in Vojvodina. The Prime Minister and I agreed that I should take a background role on the war to facilitate this post-war role for me. I fully supported NATO's actions, but we knew that someone would need to be in a position to begin a post-war dialogue. (C)

Ambassador Tufo: The President and the Prime Minister have reached an agreement on the division of labor here. President Goncz will play a leading role on reconstruction. (C)

The President: What about reconstruction? What can be done? There has been enormous damage done to the economies of Macedonia, Albania, and Bulgaria, and some to Romania. Hungary will be critical to this recovery. How can Hungary play a role in this? Can we do more in Montenegro with Djukanovic? (C)

President Goncz: Montenegro has always seen itself as separate. The greatest threat to Milosevic is to say no aid to Serbia so long as Milosevic is in power. We can't be sure where the money goes in that country now, in any event. (C)

If responsibility is taken by the EU on democratization and reconstruction, just as you have taken the lead on the war, this can work. (C)

The worry of the applicant countries is that all this effort for Southeastern reconstruction and EU enlargement can't be accommodated under the common budget. If there is further delay, accession of these countries will be too late. (C)

The President: Look at Romania, Bulgaria, and Macedonia. They can't sustain democracy there without some progress on growth and development. The United States and the EU have a separate planning processes that we need to integrate. If Hungary goes into the EU, this will be good for Romania and Bulgaria. (C)

President Goncz: I agree. (C)

The President: Should we talk to the EU about doing more to accelerate this integration process?

Foreign Minister Martonyi: Well, Romania and Bulgaria already have Europe (accession) agreements and the Commission wants to conclude "stabilization and association" agreements with Macedonia and Albania. (C)

The President: Should we accelerate NATO expansion to take in Slovenia? (X)

Foreign Minister Martonyi: Slovenia, yes. We have always favored Slovenia. (X)

President Goncz: Romania is the most important politically because of the strategic space it occupies between Russia and Serbia. The West must block that channel between Russia and Serbia. The current government has lowered the intensity of its efforts in NATO, but its intentions and orientation are clearly with the West. Accession of Romania to NATO and the EU would be highly desirable. (X)

The President: I am concerned that Romania is doing so poorly economically. That is why I did not favor its inclusion in the first round of NATO enlargement. I like President Constantinescu very much. But I think we have to see real improvement in the Romanian economy. (X)

President Goncz: Constantinescu is a first-class person. (X)

Foreign Minister Martonyi: You know that Slovakia is also on a democratic track because of the elections last September. (X)

The President: So Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania. There is a danger of Bulgaria being isolated. Stoyanov is quite good. (X)

President Goncz: I mentioned Romania with so much intensity because of the fear of political reversal next year. Also, we feel some special responsibility for the two million Hungarians living in Romania. (X)

Mr. Berger: I would like to go back to Serbia. I agree that Milosevic will survive if he makes it through the winter. One thing we will have to grapple with is humanitarian assistance. We need some general humanitarian exemption. (X)

President Goncz: We are sending in relief through the Red Cross and multilateral agencies. (U)

Foreign Minister Martonyi: We need to look carefully at how we encourage democratic forces in Serbia -- we sometimes only look at the optimistic scenario. Perisic and others coming to power. What if Seselj and others on the nationalist right emerge from the political power struggle? (X)

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Mr. Berger: The mere fact that bombing continued after the agreement was telling and did more to undermine confidence in Milosevic than all the previous five weeks of bombing. (C)

The President: I think we need to join the others. (U)

President Goncz: Thank you, Mr. President. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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