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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Aleksander Kwasniewski
of Poland (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State
Ambassador Nicholas Rey, Ambassador to Poland
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Samuel R. Berger, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Sylvia Mathews, Assistant to the President
and Deputy Chief of Staff
Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State
Frank Kramer, Assistant Secretary of Defense
for International Security Affairs
James Steinberg, Deputy Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Daniel Fried, Special Assistant to the
President and Senior Director for Central
and Eastern European Affairs, NSC Staff
(notetaker)
Val Chlebowski, interpreter

President Kwasniewski
Dariusz Rosati, Foreign Minister
Stanislaw Dobrzanski, Defense Minister
Marek Siwiec, Secretary of State in the
Presidency
Andrzej Majkowski, Undersecretary of State in
the Presidency
Jerzy Kozminski, Ambassador to the U.S.
Antoni Styracula, Spokesman of the President
Robert Mroziewicz, Deputy Minister of Foreign
Affairs
Maciej Kozlowski, MFA Director of the
Americas (notetaker)
Interpreter

DATE, TIME July 10, 1997 at 2:45-3:15 p.m.
AND PLACE: Radziwill Palace, Warsaw

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White House Guidelines, September 11, 2006
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President Kwasniewski: (In English) Let me welcome you again. As my duties include support of the Polish language, I will now speak in Polish -- the language created by ancestor of Ambassador Rey. (U)

(In Polish) I really am very glad you are here, just one day after the Madrid Summit and its historic decisions. I wish to thank you for your determined support for NATO enlargement; I admire the historic decision that NATO has taken. I recall your speech in Detroit last October when you stated that NATO would meet in 1997 to make the decision on enlargement. You said it would happen and it has. This decision has changed the history of Europe and the world as we enter the 21st century. NATO has made a decision and this is the crux of our reaction. (U)

The main matter now, in Poland's view, is that what has been decided should be fulfilled. Poland is prepared to do its part: first, we bring to this process a mature democratic stability. Our new Constitution -- passed by a national referendum on May 25 -- secures the foundations of Polish democracy and the legal system. This year's elections will doubtless change the balance of forces in the Parliament and possibly the government as well, but the country's overall direction and democratic character are beyond question. (U)

Second, Poland brings a strong economy. We recall your slogan from the 1992 campaign, "The economy first, stupid." We have had this slogan much in mind. Poland's economic growth has been at nearly six percent for each of the past several years, and two-thirds of our GDP is now private. This year, we have accelerated privatization in several important branches of the economy, including banking, telecommunications and copper. Privatization will continue regardless of the results of the election. Of course, we must have high growth for decades to really raise the standard of living to West European levels. But we have made a start. We are quite pleased by the strong U.S. presence in the Polish economy, in which you are a chief foreign investor. (U)

Third, Poland strongly supports European stability through regional cooperation. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are working closely together, as might be expected, but Poland is also working closely with the Baltic states and with Romania. We have been successful in building our contacts with Ukraine. As far as Russia is concerned, we welcome the NATO-Russia agreement as a good and wise step and I offer my congratulations. We do not want to develop security in Europe as something against Russia; I am against a concept of security against Russia; I do not favor turning our backs to Russia. For Poland, given Russian views, it might be best to develop our economic ties first, where

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contacts are already developing well, and hope that political contacts will follow now that Madrid is behind us. (C)

But to sum up, we simply are grateful. That's all. (U)

The President: Thank you for your kind words but the real credit for Madrid belongs to the Polish people. I have always believed that NATO enlargement should begin with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, but Poles proved that it should be done. You did this through your economic performance, your democratic practices and your international engagement in Bosnia, Haiti and the Gulf War. As we discussed during the welcoming ceremonies, in addition to democratic and economic reforms, your efforts to improve Polish-Jewish relations and your adherence to our 1995 agreement on arms sales to rogue states are also important. (C)

I want to make a brief comment on the political climate in Poland and the region. Poland and Europe now have the security to prevent the worst elements of the 20th century from reasserting themselves in a negative way in the 21st. And it is most important to make sure that the new possibilities of the 21st century are realized. No other member country in NATO, and no other future member in the years ahead can do what Poland can to create a new psychological climate in this part of Europe. You are in a key position to influence Ukraine positively. Ukraine wants to preserve its independence but they are having much more trouble than Poland in their economic reforms. Poland's example can give them courage. In Russia, many of its new leaders want to determine that nation's greatness through the greatness of its example and spirit, not through the domination of Russia's neighbors, but that group is still challenged by nationalists and extremists. There is an aspect of the debate over NATO enlargement that creates doubts in Russian minds about our intentions. So by preparing for the worst outcome in Russia but working for a better outcome you can help create conditions that change the psychological balance in Russia and throughout Europe. (C)

Lastly, Poland can have a positive impact among the countries that were not invited to NATO but want to join in the future. We did not want to present the Madrid decision as something "against" Romania, Bulgaria and the others. But we had to be careful: NATO, for the sake of immediate popularity, could have sacrificed its strength by bringing in countries before they were ready economically. If we did, the burden of membership could have created economic problem and undermined countries we were trying to help. Finally, Poland, after seven years of stresses, all its ups and downs, has passed through the most painful period of political and economic transition. We hope you will share your experience with others and be a good example to them. (C)

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We tried to write the NATO communiqué so the countries not invited would not feel defeated or rejected. But we did what we did because it was best for the alliance. Membership must mean something. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic will be in a unique position to point out to countries not invited the real benefits of reforms and the opportunities available through the Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and other forms of cooperation with the international community. When I landed today and met Polish soldiers at the airport, I saw that one group had served in Haiti and that others were wearing Partnership for Peace patches on their uniforms. Poland has already helped created a more stable and secure Europe and now you will have the ability to help even more. I hope you will use this opportunity to create the future we are all looking for.
(C)

President Kwasniewski: I completely agree. Poland is a country with a sense of responsibility and it is trying hard to play a helpful role. Our relations with our neighbors are good. Of course, we have problems with Belarus and it is unclear whether that country will even maintain its sovereignty or simply integrate fully with Russia. Ukraine is more important. We are trying to help them and appreciate your help as well. We must all support Ukraine over the next 18 months, otherwise that country could go the way of Belarus. This is not an official Polish position but just my personal feeling, but I do think the next 18 months or so will determine the future of Ukraine. Will they retain their sovereignty and independence or will they go the way of Belarus? It is important to work with the World Bank and the IMF to find additional funds to support Kuchma. (C)

We spoke earlier about Polish-Jewish relations and Poland's relations with the Diaspora. This is a priority for me and in the last months we have done a lot. I did a lot and that is my job. We must create conditions for the next generation of Poles and Jews to have normal ties, to move beyond beyond the problems of the past. (Presidential political advisor Marek) Siwiec, (Foreign Minister Dariusz) Rosati and (Ambassador to the U.S. Jerzy) Kozminski are deeply engaged in this and have achieved some concrete results. We have been working on the long-term preservation and museum development plan for Auschwitz, working closely with (U.S. Holocaust Memorial head) Miles Lerman. We have passed a law on restoration to the Jewish community of its communal property. Of course, private property is much more difficult. This is not just a matter of Jewish-owned private property, because ethnic-Poles, ethnic-Germans, and others living in Poland before WWII all lost private property. I do not see how to solve this question. But communal property is another

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matter; we have an obligation to resolve this and will do so.
(C)

I agree with what you said about Russia. I understand the psychological element. Our border cooperation and economic cooperation are good, but political relations are not. Russia's political relations with the West are better than its relations with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic; with us, Russia is simply not present. We want normal dialogue and normal interaction with the Russian leadership. When I last met Yeltsin last year, he argued against Poland joining NATO. I replied that Russia had good relations with all NATO members but not with Poland, so clearly the solution was that Poland should join NATO as soon as possible, which would create a new situation and a basis for more developed Polish-Russian relations. But seriously, we should keep all doors open to Russia, even as Poland joins NATO; we should try to make Russia our friend and to move on to a new chapter in relations. (C)

(In English) Now I think we can move to the balcony. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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