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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Kovac of the Slovak Republic

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Anthony Lake
Beth Sanner, NSC Staff, Notetaker

President Michal Kovac
Foreign Minister Jozef Moravcik
Presidential Advisor Pavol Demes

DATE, TIME April 21, 1993, 5:10 - 6:00 pm
AND PLACE: Blue Room

President Kovac: This is a great occasion for Slovakia. I am the first president of the Slovak Republic to have the opportunity to meet the President of the United States. (U)

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the American people for their incredible efforts to support the Slovak people in their fight for freedom and democracy, for their opposition to the fascism of Hitler, and for the substantial and critical contribution the United States made in the defeat of the communist system. (U)

There is a long history of Slovak-American ties. The Slovak nation hoped for a long time to be liberated by the American people. In fact, American-Slovaks attempted to liberate Slovakia even in the first republic of the Slovak nation. There also were American citizens who fought in the uprising and gave their lives. They are heroes in Slovakia. Every third Slovak family has family in the U.S. There is a long tradition of roots in the U.S. This is the basis for great understanding between our peoples. (U)

I want to thank you for your recognition of my inauguration. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the Slovak Republic is going toward democracy, going forward toward a market economy. And together with the Visegrad group, we are attempting to be in Western economic and political structures. We wish for the Visegrad group together with NATO to function as a mechanism for political cooperation. Slovakia does not want to be in a power vacuum. We want very much to be part of NATO. That is where we see our future in Europe. (U)

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The U.S. presence in Europe is important. We would like to support this through membership in the UN Security Council. The situation in Bosnia bothers us very much because it is close to our borders. We accept the UN resolutions and sanctions and hope they will speed the resolution of the conflict. (S)

In our economic transformation we are having some economic problems. We have the problem of people looking to the recent past and seeing that some things were better then. We have the problem of trying to tell people that the economic difficulties we face now are not a result of the transition to a market economy, but are a result of the problems of the communist system that we inherited. We hope to deal with these problems without assistance from the U.S. (S)

Nonetheless, we have problems with foreign investors. They are doubtful of investing in Slovakia. I can assure you that their doubts are not justified. There is no question of our decision to go toward a market economy and to go with a market structure. But the problems we are having shouldn't lead to doubts about our resolution to move in this direction. (S)

It would be helpful if we could hear from America that the U.S. supports Slovakia and the efforts we are taking to build democracy and a market economy. This will help convince investors to invest in Slovakia and quell their doubts. (S)

There is one more thing I would like to tell you. In the Slovak national uprising, American citizens participated. Next year is the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising and I would like to invite you to visit the Slovak Republic and to visit the other Central and East European states. Your visit would turn the attention of the world to the problems of Central and Eastern Europe. (U)

We strongly support your policy toward Russia. You can count on our participation in support of Russia. We also are very concerned about Ukraine. We have had close traditional ties with Ukraine and may be able to help. (S)

The President: Let me say first that I have been impressed by the way the Czechs and Slovaks peacefully separated. Both countries deserve approval from the world. (U)

I can assure you that we support your program of seeking closer ties to Europe and the U.S. and to work toward a common security institution. As long as you make progress toward democracy, we will support you. I know that there are great difficulties, but it is very important that you continue to make progress in democratization and market reforms. As long as you try to make progress, we will be very supportive. (S)

In my small state of Arkansas, there is a small town of farmers called "Slovak." All the people living there are from Slovakia. They are all great Catholic families. Every year I would go to this town and stand with the big farmers, they are all men of

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large stature like yourself. And I would serve oysters and talk with them. I would stay late into the night and hear stories about the old country. There are still many people in the United States with roots in Slovakia. They are wishing for your success. (U)

I want to be a partner with you as you work for success. If you support reform, I will support you. (U)

President Kovac: We want to be good partners in Eastern Europe. The separation of the Czechoslovak Republic was peaceful and constitutional. The adherence to the constitutional order proves that we will continue to approach and solve problems by peaceful and democratic means. (U)

The President: Thank you very much. (U)

President Kovac: Thank you for meeting with me. It was a great honor. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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