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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Lech Walesa of Poland

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Charles Kupchan, NSC Staff, Notetaker

Lech Walesa, President of Poland
Krzysztor Skubiszewski, Minister of Foreign
Affairs
Janusz Ziolkowski, Minister of State, Office
of the President
Kasimierz Dziwanowski, Ambassador to the U.S.
Mieczyslaw Wachowski, Secretary of State,
Office of the President
Zbigniew Lewicki, Interpreter

DATE, TIME April 21, 1993 2:00 - 3:00 pm
AND PLACE: Oval Office

President Walesa: I was a leader of the revolution in Poland. But I had no idea of the eventual outcome: the overturning of Communism. Now we are faced with post-communism and the task of building structures to replace communist society. A key part of this process has to be increased reliance on regional cooperation. We need to make use of Visegrad and develop close ties with Ukraine and Belarus. After decades of Soviet domination, we are all afraid of Russia. It is important to remember that this is the first time in history that the Soviet army has withdrawn from territory peacefully. If Russia again adopts an aggressive foreign policy, that aggression will be directed toward Ukraine and Poland. The U.S. is needed to prevent this from happening. President Bush was correct in understanding the need for strong defenses. Poland cannot be left defenseless; we need to have the protection of U.S. muscle.
(c)

Poland wants freedom and peace in Europe and friendship with Russia. We can reign in Russia by gradually pushing reform from west to east. This process will require financial assistance. It will require continued privatization, the emergence of small enterprises, and the conversion of defense industry to industry that produces consumer goods. It will require increased trade with central Europe and more outside investment in the region. Most important, we need to put everything into practice. We need

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fishing equipment and technical know-how, not fish. The goal must be to create a Russia that is neither rich nor poor. A very poor Russia and a very rich Russia are dangerous outcomes. (e)

The President: I agree with your general outline of the situation. We want to provide assistance and develop trade with Poland and all former communist countries. The U.S. is the second largest investor in Poland, and we hope to encourage more U.S. investment. There are some outstanding trade disputes in the areas of unfair tariffs resulting from association agreements with the EC, intellectual property rights, and arms sales. But these are the types of disputes that normally arise in relations between states. The U.S. has the responsibility to support all countries that are standing up for freedom. In this respect, we support Russia. We do not believe that Russia is at present too strong. (e)

President Walesa: It is possible that the reform process in Russia will reverse. This would spoil the progress that has been made in building peace in Europe. The Russian army may become factionalized and fight among itself. It is also important to remove Russian troops from foreign territory. If you succeed in ensuring that Europe is not again faced with a threat from Russia, you will win a Nobel Prize. But firm actions are needed. Russian troops need housing so they can go home. Munitions stocks are unprotected. The Russian economy is failing. If the Polish economy fails, Russia's economy will as well. I am particularly scared about nuclear accidents. There is insufficient money for the necessary safeguards. Your responsibility in this area is large. We are also scared by the prospect of having a powerful Germany on one side and a powerful Russia on the other. (e)

The President: We have given money to help nuclear power plants become safer. We have also tried to pursue investments in Russia that enhance privatization and economic reform, strengthen the energy sector, and provide new housing. President Yeltsin wants to bring Russian troops home, but lacks houses for them. The army still controls nuclear weapons, so we have to be careful. In all respects, the U.S. must be on the side of democracy and reform. (e)

Minister Skubiczewski: President Walesa's comments are a point of reference. It is very important to build stability in the region and to foster good relations among Poland, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. We need arms control agreements. Poland supports the North Atlantic Alliance. NACC is useful in developing practical schemes of cooperation with NATO members. I would like to see Russia more involved in the international community. Russia will reemerge as a great power. Can we now take steps to affect Russian foreign policy in a way beneficial to us? We need a grand strategy of democratic transformation. There are some parallels with the Marshall Plan. We need a similarly ambitious program to help Russia. (e)

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The President: We have a three-prong strategy of assistance. First, we are trying to promote democracy in Russia and ensure that Russia pursues a peaceful foreign policy. Second, we have a strategy for promoting reform in all the republics -- whether they be nuclear or non-nuclear states. Third, we are building our relationships with countries in Central Europe so that they will serve as a source of stability throughout the region. Poles must understand that the U.S. and Poland share enduring interests. We must build on these shared interests. Your country's influence will grow in coming years. No matter what happens in Russia on Sunday, we all face important tasks and Poland has a large responsibility in the international community. (C)

President Walesa: I agree with you. But which direction will reforms in Russia come from? If Russia expands again, we are in great trouble. We must encourage them to privatize now and increase civilian production. Their whole economic and political system needs to be changed. I am afraid to turn on the radio because of what I might hear about developments in Russia. I think reform should move through Central Europe to Russia. Central European states are trying to enter Western Europe. We can use the ideas and concepts needed to achieve this goal to then help Russia. The problem is that Western Europe has not yet accepted us. The victory over communism was the biggest victory in history. But we are not capitalizing on it. (C)

The Vice President: Reform in Poland continues to be a difficult task. You have moved very quickly; you are the most advanced in the post-Communist world in terms of democracy and free markets. Poland is also a good friend of the United States. We have the opportunity to push this relationship forward and build a long-term partnership. Poland's most important contribution is in providing the ideas and concepts needed to make political and economic change happen. (C)

President Walesa: Ideas and concepts are not enough. We need to stop Russian hegemony. If the U.S. pours money into Russia, it is not enough. Russia needs an entirely new political and economic system. It therefore makes sense to concentrate on Central Europe and Ukraine. (C)

The President: You are saying we should start with the other republics and then later focus on Russia? (C)

President Walesa: Some countries in the NIS cannot benefit from assistance; they are too backward. The further west, the greater impact your aid will have. (C)

Minister Skubiczewski: Yes, we must take care of the other republics. Russia is important, but we need to support the independence and well-being of the others too. (C)

The President: We have asked all Russian troops to be withdrawn from the foreign soil. We must roll back the threat of imperialism and remnants of the communist system. I am worried

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short run the military might revolt and cause a setback in Russia. I hear your central message: Do not put all our eggs in one basket. As you know, my first appointment was to create an ambassador to oversee assistance to all republics of the NIS. We are trying to keep reform moving forward throughout the region. (C)

President Walesa: Ukraine is a large and rich country. We must focus on Ukraine too. Reform must spread from the West. We are at a cross-roads -- a very difficult and important point. (C)

-- End of Conversation --

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