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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Private Meeting with Bruno Straub, President of Hungary (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Robert D. Blackwill, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Notetaker)

Bruno Straub, President  
Laszlo Kovacs (Notetaker)

DATE, TIME July 11, 1989, 8:20 a.m. - 8:35 a.m.  
AND PLACE: Nandorfehervar Room, Parliament Building

President Straub thanked the President for his visit to Hungary and for his remarks. He noted that the visit of an American President, the first such visit, is valued highly by the Hungarian government. This is especially true since history is moving ahead rapidly. He said that the United States has helped a great deal, including setting up the highly successful management institute. (S)

The President said that he had come to Hungary to demonstrate the interest of the U.S. in the unfolding events in Hungary not to put the government on the spot. The President said further that he did not wish to complicate things for Gorbachev and did not view the trip as a part of a personality contest between the two of them. Rather, he intends to treat Hungary with sensitivity that recognizes how remarkable the country is. The President said that he wanted all Hungarians to understand how excited Americans are about the developments and how anxious the American people are to help Hungary move along the course of reform. He added that this was a policy that he was personally committed to as was Secretary Baker. The President said that Hungary's leaders should know that he is aware of the great differences among East European countries. (S)

President Straub said that Hungary is proud of its reformist heritage and believes that it is at the forefront of change. (S)

The President agreed and said that he hoped to share his experiences with his colleagues at the Paris Economic Summit and

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to share Hungarian perspectives with them. In U.S.-Soviet relations the U.S. is pushing forward with both START and CFE. He mentioned that Chairman Jaruzelski had been positive about arms control and that he had assured him that the U.S. intended to make progress. (S)

The President remarked that not all in the world was positive and commented that he was "sick" about China. (S)

President Straub said that he had been to China many times, in fact only two years ago and that he had been impressed with how individualistic the Chinese were. (S)

The President said that the great danger now was that everything, even science and education, would slip back. It is important not to cut off contact with China. He noted that there are 40,000 Chinese students in the U.S. and that this represents a breakthrough. At the same time, it is important to condemn the brutal actions of the government. (S)

President Straub said that he regretted events in China but was glad that things were moving favorably in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. (S)

The President told President Straub that he had asked a Pole to identify Gorbachev's greatest problem and he had said ethnic conflict. (S)

President Straub agreed saying that it had always been there beneath the surface. Now that ethnic groups can speak out that is what they are doing. (S)

The President commented that the times were delicate and remarked that talks in Poland had been interesting and open, even about who would be the next President. (S)

President Straub said that Hungary was learning from Poland's changes. (S)

The President talked of the agonizing times through which Solidarity is passing because labor unions and potential governors cannot act in the same way. (S)

President Straub commented that Hungary would likely face the same situation since the communists control the cadres working in government while the opposition has ideas and no experience. (S)

The President thanked President Straub and said that he learned a great deal. Expressing his desire for continued conversation, he said that he believed in talking to people in order to work on real world problems. (S)