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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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PER E.O. 12958,  
AS AMENDED

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TR 8/21/09

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Zhelyu Zhelev, President of Bulgaria (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
Kenneth Hill, Ambassador to Bulgaria  
Robert L. Hutchings, Director for European  
Political Affairs, NSC Staff (Notetaker)  
Azalea Rosholt, Interpreter

Zhelyu Zhelev, President  
Ognian Pischev, Adviser to the President  
Ivan Trifonov, Chief of the President's Staff

DATE, TIME September 28, 1990, 10:05 - 10:15am  
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Thank you for your government's solidarity against Iraq. We are very appreciative. (U)

President Zhelev: Mr. President, I'm very grateful for the time you have spared to receive us, considering your busy schedule. It is a great support for our young democracy. (U)

The President: We're wishing that young democracy all the best. The American people are very excited about the changes. Are you pleased with the way things are going at home? (U)

President Zhelev: Generally, yes. Our country has embarked firmly upon the road of democracy. And for our nation this is a symbolic visit because the greatest democracy in the world is extending a helping hand to the youngest democracy in Europe. (U)

President Bush: We're very anxious to see democratic change solidified. We have great respect for what you're trying to do - a great respect for that. I just wanted to have a chance to wish you well, and to say in front of the press here in our country and around the world that the changes in Eastern Europe have really captured the imagination of the American people. (U)

Every place you go people are talking about it. I've been meeting the last couple of day in our Midwest with ethnic Americans from different heritage groups, and the excitement is still very high -- very high. (U)

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President Zhelev: The processes in Bulgaria are irreversible. Mr. President, this country is no longer a communist, a totalitarian state. We have a multiparty system, for instance, and we have independent trade unions, a free press, independent radio and television, a democratically-elected parliament, and a democratically-elected President. (U)

President Bush: It is this kind of exciting change that has the full support of the American people. I hope you feel that in your visit now. (U)

President Zhelev: We are at a critical stage, which coincides with an economic crisis. ~~(S)~~

The President: I hope we can be helpful through the international financial institutions and trade missions, but the best hope is in revitalizing the private sector as a magnet for foreign investment. ~~(S)~~

Have you given your speech yet at the UNGA? (U)

President Zhelev: Not yet, I will be addressing the UNGA the 2nd of October. (U)

The President: I hope you have a little different schedule from mine. I love these meetings, but it will be exhausting for you because so many will be interested in seeing you there. (U)

President Zhelev: I welcome the chance for such contacts, which will help build a new image for Bulgaria. (U)

The President: It will be a wonderful chance. I was Ambassador there for two years and learned more than I could have anywhere else. Is this your first visit to the UN in an official capacity? (U)

President Zhelev: Yes, on my last visit, I came as head of the Bulgarian opposition. My return as President is indicative of how fast things have moved. (U)

The President: We have our hands full with the Middle East and the budget, but I want to assure you we want to be helpful in any way we can. I am sure we can move forward in lots of ways. I look forward to working with you in the future. I am so glad this visit worked out. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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