

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Slovak Leaders (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Shirley Temple Black, Ambassador to
Czechoslovakia
Robert Hutchings, Director for European
Political Affairs, NSC Staff
Lisa Valyiova, Interpreter

Vladimir Meciar, Prime Minister of the Slovak
Republic
Jiri Dienstbier, Foreign Minister
Frantisek Miklosko, President, Slovak
Parliament
Alexandra Brabcova, Interpreter

DATE, TIME November 17, 1990, 11:28 - 11:50 a.m.
AND PLACE: Hradcany Castle, Prague

Prime Minister Meciar: Mr. President, I am lucky to have visited the U.S. I noted so many nationalities able to harmonize their interests. This is what the future of Europe will depend on -- harmonizing national interests with those of states and those of Europe as a whole. I say that as a member of the Slovak National Council, with a special awareness of the situation of small states. (C)

The President: It was suggested very generously that we go to Bratislava, but we are on the craziest schedule you ever saw: one day here, then to Paris, and on to Saudi Arabia. Some day I want to go. I am very appreciative of what you said about my country. Once people take the oath of citizenship, they become American, though we have more Poles in Chicago than are in Warsaw. It is our great strength. I know there is a lively discussion here, like the debate we had in our country when the Constitution was adopted. We have worked out a good state of relations between the states and the central government. It is essential to the country. Our economic prowess would not be possible without it. On the other hand, in the Soviet Union our private investors don't know who they should make a deal with -- the center or the republics. I wish all of you well as you work out these new relationships here. I didn't mean to give a speech. (C)

Mr. Miklosko: We are trying to build a stable state, and ask for international understanding. If I may ask a general question, there is a story about waiting for the Americans to come. Is your visit an expression of increased U.S. interests in East Central Europe? (C)

The President: It is long overdue. I am the first American President to be here. The symbolism should be that we have an enormous problem in the Middle East that affects your lives because of the price of oil. And the principle involved is that one country cannot subjugate his neighbor. So I am spending a lot of time on the situation in the Gulf, but in doing that it is essential that the U.S. not send a signal of neglect to Eastern Europe. The excitement in the U.S. is still very high, partly because so many came from this part of the world to the U.S. So you put your finger on it with this visit. (C)

Mr. Miklosko: We are grateful to the U.S. for assuming global responsibility. The question of central Europe is very sensitive. It is possible to develop cooperation among Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and the U.S. could play a role in this. Individual assistance programs are being prepared, but it would be better if they were integrated. We offer Bratislava as a site. Between an economically strong Germany and a temporarily disrupted Soviet Union, there will be stability only if all countries have commercial interests in our country. That is why we gave preference to GM over Volkswagen. We think that so far the U.S. hasn't taken sufficient advantage of these opportunities. One final request: we have trained in our schools for a system that no longer exists. We would appreciate opportunities for our people to go for training in the U.S. Everyone who returns would be a help to our efforts. (C)

The President: That is not a problem. What we have in mind is expressed in our vision of a Europe whole and free, with market economies and democratic systems. Perhaps the most promising matrix for this is the CSCE, but we also want very strong bilateral relations. I would encourage you to make whatever changes are needed legislatively to facilitate investment. U.S. investors want stability, market access, and the knowledge that the law of the land doesn't work against him. I was encouraged with the feeling coming in from the airport. I was very moved, very touched. If my visit has any result, it is to show that we are interested and are committed. (C)

Prime Minister Meciar: I hope the American Consulate in Bratislava will open soon. (U)

The President: Yes. We will do all we can to move that along. (U)

-- End of Conversation --