

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Havel of Czechoslovakia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Vaclav Havel, President
Notetaker: Robert Hutchings
Interpreter: Radovan Pletka

DATE, TIME February 26, 1991, 7:20 - 7:26 a.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

President Havel initiated the call. (U)

The President: Mr. President, how are you, sir? (U)

President Havel: I would like to greet you most cordially. I don't have any news but would just like to say that I am glad we have established telephone contact. I would like to congratulate you for all you have done in the Gulf. It is a great success that Iraq is starting to leave Kuwait. I had an interesting meeting with the Presidents of Hungary and Poland in Visegrad. I will write you about it. (Ø)

The President: I will be very interested. Thank you, sir. (U)

President Havel: Along with the Polish and Hungarian Presidents, we agreed to cooperate together with the European Community and NATO. (Ø)

The President: Good. Were any specific actions taken? Do you have any specific requests for the EC or the U.S.? (Ø)

President Havel: We did not come to agreement regarding contacts with the West, but we did agree on cooperation among Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The first result is the abrogation of the military structure of the Warsaw Pact. (Ø)

The President: I noted that with interest and great satisfaction. It must have been very satisfying to you as well. It sent a strong signal of this change we all rejoiced in. (Ø)

President Havel: In two weeks I will be in Brussels to give a speech. I will be one of the first to speak at NATO. (Ø)

The President: Good. If you would be interested, I could give you a few thoughts about the Iraq war. (U)

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President Havel: Yes. I am very interested. (U)

The President: First, I was very sorry that one of your own people lost his life as a casualty of the war. We have studied Saddam Hussein's diatribe that came across early this morning. Our view is that he did not renounce claims to Kuwait, and the horror of the Scud missiles still goes on. He made no reference to any other UN resolution. I am particularly thinking of reparations, of compensation for damage. We have well over 20 thousand POWs, but there was no mention by him of U.S. or other coalition POWs. This is a matter of grave concern here in the U.S. (Ø)

I just this minute hung up from talking to General Powell, who confirmed massive movement out of Kuwait by Iraqi soldiers. Last night I said we will continue to fight, but we are insisting that if they want free passage they must lay down their weapons. The war is continuing, but the weather is the worst it has been in the last six months. His arrogance is higher than ever, and that concerns us, because he has shown no remorse for what he has done. Fortunately for the American people, combat casualties are much lower than feared, but as of this minute we are mourning the loss of some 22 killed in a reckless Scud attack. Arab forces are performing very well in coalition. The city of Kuwait will be liberated very soon, and we are anxious about what we will find there. (Ø)

The role of the Soviet Union -- a word on that. The Soviets tried before Saturday for a peaceful solution. We had long talks with Gorbachev and Bessmertnyhk, but my view now is that Gorbachev and the Soviet Union are interested in seeing Saddam Hussein remain in power. Though we have not stated the goal of Saddam Hussein's removal, it will be complicated if this arrogant man remains in power with this attitude. The last point: my military officers assure me that Saddam Hussein's ability to be an aggressive threat to his neighbors has been destroyed, and he has got a lot of reconstruction to do to his own infrastructure. So, we are rejoicing that his army seems to be folding, but my heart is not full of joy, because I don't see an entirely satisfactory end of the whole affair. So, that is my update, Mr. President. (Ø)

President Havel: I would like to thank you very heartily for that information. I can assure you that the whole of Czechoslovakia supports your policies and is looking forward to the day when Kuwait is free. (U)

The President: Thank you for your call. Let me assure you that despite the high costs of the Gulf operation, we have tried to increase our support for Central and Eastern Europe. I remember your telling me of the impact on Czechoslovakia of oil price increases. Thank God they have come down considerably. (U)

President Havel: Thank you again. I will write you a long letter soon, putting together the information I mentioned. (Ø)

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The President: Thank you. I appreciate your call very much and am delighted about the continued support in Czechoslovakia for the coalition. (U)

President Havel: Thank you very much. Please give Mrs. Bush my kind regards. (U)

The President: She just walked in. I will tell her. Let's be in touch again soon. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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