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WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia on April 12, 1991

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Vaclav Havel
Interpreter: Ms. Heyda
Notetaker: Nicholas Burns, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME AND PLACE April 12, 1991, 9:13-9:40 a.m.
Oval Office

The President: Hello. How are you feeling? I hear you have the flu. (U)

President Havel: I have just a little flu. I am grateful you have taken the time to talk. (U)

The President: Please tell me what is on your mind. (U)

President Havel: I would like to mention two things and report on the situation in Czechoslovakia. (U)

The President: Please go ahead. (U)

President Havel: One of the small things is that my friend Foreign Minister Dienstbier is in the U.S. and I would be grateful if you could see him. (U)

The President: General Scowcroft will meet with him. But since you put it on a personal basis, I'll be glad to work it out. (U)

President Havel: First, thank you for being able to see Dienstbier. Second, I want to talk about funding for Radio Free Europe. I understand the Congress may cut funding for RFE. I hope it will be possible to give support to this institution. It is very important. (U)

The President: I am glad you raised this. No decision has been taken yet to close it but broadcasts have been reduced somewhat. Eventually, we do foresee an end to RFE broadcasts. I will ask your Foreign Minister to give me more information. Please tell him to level with us as to why you think RFE is important. Incidentally, most Poles and Hungarians agree with what you are telling me. (U)

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President Havel: The reason why they want RFE open is that, although our radio is free, our journalists are not experienced enough. RFE is an educational institution for us. We need to learn from it. I think we will need two years to get up to speed and to be proficient. (P)

The President: I will discuss this with your Foreign Minister as will General Scowcroft and the people at State. (U)

President Havel: Well, I want to thank you for your understanding on RFE. Next, we are sending help to the Kurds to assist your efforts. I would like to ask you about the international safety zone for the Kurds. (P)

The President: In the first place, I appreciate your interest and your help. We are mounting a major humanitarian relief effort which is going very well. The problem with the UN establishing an "enclave" in Iraq is that several members of the Security Council, including the USSR and China, would veto any resolution creating such an enclave. But we are treating the situation on the ground in Iraq as an enclave. We are going to insist that Saddam Hussein not use military force north of the 36th parallel. In essence, it will be a safe haven, a humanitarian zone without going back to the UN for more specific authority. I think we have the authority under UN resolution 688. (S)

It is a very tense situation and frankly I do not see an end until Saddam Hussein is out of that office. Even then, there would have to be a healing process because of the rivalries. As you know, the Shias in the south, the Baathists and Sunnis in the center and the Kurds in the north -- these are age-old rivalries. (S)

What is your view? You are a man who knows what suffering and oppression is. What is your view as to what we should be doing? (P)

President Havel: The idea of a safety zone produced by a UN resolution would be wonderful. But since there is no chance of that, your idea seems to be a very good one. (P)

The President: I think we will have a de facto safety zone. I have made clear to the Iraqis that they must not use force north of the 36th parallel. (P)

President Havel: I want to thank you for all your efforts and your thinking on this situation. Now, I would like to brief you on the situation in Czechoslovakia. (P)

We have problems now. Writing a new constitution and creating a new legislature is one. We had not thought enough about economic problems. There really are several problems. In Slovakia, there is a big concentration of military factories and installations. It was very big and supplied guns to the Warsaw Pact countries. Now our political orientation is totally different. The

factories are being closed down and there is unemployment. We need to convert these factories to civilian use. This big problem has created tension between the Federal government and Slovakia. This is a big issue. (Ø)

We would appreciate help from the West, especially from the U.S. to provide experts to convert these factories to civilian use. We would also like financial help. Political stability is precarious -- 150,000 are unemployed. We need help on this big problem. (Ø)

The President: We do want to help. I will immediately talk to the proper authorities here to get the expert advice. We will see what we can do to get financial help and technical advice. (Ø)

President Havel: I really, truly appreciate your help and advice and want to stress once more the problem of internal stability whose consequences could reach beyond Slovakia to all Central Europe. There is no other possibility of employment of the people in those factories in Slovakia. I actually have two concrete points. I would ask you to publicly mention this problem so our people would know it is being thought about. Also, if you could tell your experts that we need to have the factories converted into productive investments, that would be very helpful. (Ø)

The President: I would be glad to say something publicly. I discussed these problems with the EC -- with Delors and Santer-- yesterday. (Ø)

President Havel: It would also be helpful if you could think of ways to tie our factories into sales for the reconstruction of Kuwait. Our factories have no markets for their products due to the crash of the East European market. (Ø)

The President: Let me think about the connection there. We will try to be helpful on this major problem. (U)

President Havel: I want to thank you for your understanding. You should have no concern about democracy in Czechoslovakia. We will win. But there are obstacles, especially the economy. We are in close cooperation with Poland and Hungary. (U)

The President: I am delighted to have that appraisal and we are willing to help. (U)

President Havel: Thank you again for this talk and for taking the time to meet me on the phone. Please give my best to Barbara Bush. (U)

The President: Thank you and give my love to your family. Take care of yourself and we'll try to help. (U)

President Havel: (in English) Thank you very much. (U)

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The President: Take care of yourself. Get well, get well. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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