

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Havel of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker III, Secretary of State
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Marlin Fitzwater, Counsellor to the President and Press Secretary
W. Henson Moore, Deputy Chief of Staff
Robert Zoellick, Under Secretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs
Thomas Niles, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Robert Hutchings, Director, European Affairs, NSC, Notetaker

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PER E.O. 13526

2009-0649-MR
SCS 1/6/11

Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic
Jozef Moravcik, Foreign Minister
Alexander Vondra, Foreign Policy Advisor to the President
Michael Zantovsky, Press Spokesman for the President
Jan Kubis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Alexandra Brabcova, Interpreter

DATE, TIME July 9, 1992, 4:30 - 4:50 pm
AND PLACE: Helsinki Fair Center, Helsinki, Finland

President Havel: Thank you very much for your recent letter.
(U)

The President: I want to express, as President of the United States, my full confidence in President Havel and my great respect for him. The American people identify with him as a man of freedom. (The press corps leaves). I wanted to get that statement out while the press was still here. I confess I don't understand what your legislature is doing with you and your great stature around the world. (2)

President Havel: Mr. President, let me again thank you for finding the time for this meeting. I will offer a brief explanation of our situation. After the recent parliamentary elections, developments accelerated in a way that makes it increasing likely that our State will divide. For my part, I exerted a great deal of effort to keep a common state of equal

federal units. But this seems to have been superseded by the dramatic flow of history. It looks like the division will take place. Links will remain, though, the two republics will develop contractual links. Let me make two other remarks. First, if the division takes place, both republics will have as their objective, moving in the same direction in foreign policy, market economy, democracy and joining Europe, so the basic orientation will remain the same. Second, this will take place in a constitutional, civilized way, we will not become a hot bed of instability. Our two peoples have never been enemies, so we see no reason for conflict, although the technical process will be difficult. (Ø)

The President: What is the process? What has to take place, technically. (Ø)

President Havel: The first act will be a declaration of sovereignty by the Slovak parliament. Followed by a Slovak constitution in August. By the end of September a decision will be taken as to how the constitutional structure of the state or states is to be determined. The constitution of the Czech republic is also being developed. My days are numbered, maybe I'm the last federal President of my country. Nevertheless, maybe the offices of Czech and Slovak Presidents will be created, and I offer my services to my fellow citizens. (Ø)

The President: The vote on your reelection, with your great standing in the world, what prompted this outcome? (Ø)

President Havel: The situation in our parliament is we have two chambers, a House of the Peoples and a House of the Nations. It is not possible for the larger people, the Czechs, to out-vote the smaller. I got enough votes in the Czech lands, but not enough in the Slovak part of the House of Nations. (Ø)

The President: Were they simply doing that to assert the first step to separation? (Ø)

President Havel: It has been interpreted that way, although MPs who voted against me deny it. I don't see it as opposition to myself as a person, although some may feel that way, but rather I have been linked to the concept of the Czech-Slovak Federal State. But perhaps our foreign minister, who was elected in these recent elections, would offer a different opinion. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Moravcik: No, I agree fully. (Ø)

The President: Let me ask you something, I'm sure the answer is no, but is there anything we can do to help? First, we respect the internal affairs of peoples and don't want to interfere. But if there's anything we can do to facilitate what you want -- clearly, if there are two separate countries, we want to work with both. But I would hate not to ask whether there's anything we can do to help preserve a federal state within the bounds of proper international behavior. (Ø)

President Havel: I think this is an historical movement. It does not make sense to try to stop it. We have not succeeded from inside, it would not make sense to try from outside. But what would make sense would be if the U.S. stressed the importance of adherence to correct constitutional procedures, and, given the geo-political importance, that the process be accomplished in a civil way. (Ø)

The President: We can certainly do that. And we will look for an opportunity to do so. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: I understood there would be another round of elections on July 16. Is it a foregone conclusion that your candidacy was voted down finally and conclusively? (Ø)

President Havel: The situation is as follows: on July 16th the next round of elections for the Presidency will be held, two votes will be taken. Those in the previous round are banned. But if no new President is elected in the third round, the unsuccessful candidates from the first round can run. This process can go on indefinitely. My impression is that I should not take part in this strange comedy. (Ø)

The President: Perhaps you can write a comedy about this. I'm afraid I have to go and give my speech. (U)

President Havel: May I call attention to the fact that Mr. Zantovsky, my press spokesman, will be the next Ambassador to the U.S. and I would be happy if the new U.S. Ambassador could come soon. (Ø)

The President: It is up to our Senate right now, but it should move quickly. Let's talk to Senator Biden and Senator Pell and say that President Havel has requested this. He has great influence with them and others in Congress. (Ø)

- End of Conversation -