



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
WASHINGTON

March 5, 1974

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PLACE: EOB, Room 294  
TIME: 3:00 pm  
DATE: February 20, 1974

SUBJECT: Mr. Milan Svec, Third Secretary (Ambassador's Aide) Czechoslovakian Embassy

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Milan Svec  
Mr. John O. Marsh, Jr.  
Commander Howard Kerr

Mr. Svec first made contact with the Vice President's office on February 7th. His call was referred to this office for an appointment to arrange for Mr. Svec to meet with Mr. Marsh and Commander Kerr.

Following an exchange of pleasantries, Mr. Svec stated that his intention was to learn more about the United States and our government. He indicated that he had been a student of the United States for some time and that his duties in the Embassy were to provide analysis of U.S. foreign as well as domestic policy and to study and understand the interaction between the various branches of our government and executive agencies. Mr. Svec stated he welcomed this opportunity to meet with someone in the Vice President's office so that he could have a better grasp of the major issues in this country today and he hoped that this first meeting would lead to further discussions.



Mr. Svec then stated that he would like to ask some questions on matters relating to detente, U.S. defense policy, the Vice President, and current politics in the U.S. Mr. Svec asked five specific questions:

1. What effect will Watergate have on U.S. policy and detente?

Mr. Marsh responded that he did not believe that Watergate would have any effect on U.S. efforts to secure a meaningful detente with the Soviet Union. Mr. Marsh further opined that Watergate was essentially a domestic matter and, historically, domestic issues have not had a significant influence on U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. is in basic support of the President's initiatives in this area and the American people have shown in public opinion polls and in other support that the whole issue of Watergate has had very little impact on foreign policy and the President's ability to conduct it. A good example is the recent successful efforts of Secretary Kissinger in the Middle East.

2. Should Vice President Ford become President, would he change President Nixon's policy of detente? Mr. Marsh responded that the Vice President fully supports the President's foreign policy, his initiative toward China and the Soviet Union and believes that detente is a necessary foundation for a lasting structure of peace.

3. Does the U.S. really need to increase defense spending-- you may push the other side to increase their defense expenditures also. Mr. Marsh responded that the President and Secretary of Defense, as well as the Secretary of State, have all stated very emphatically and very clearly that we cannot have detente and we cannot move toward building the lasting structure of peace unless both of the super powers maintain a parity and essential equivalency of military force; otherwise, detente will have little chance of becoming a reality. It is the other side's respect for our strength, and that strength includes our military strength, that provided the basis for the President's initiatives for his successful efforts to date in the field of detente. We would hope that increases in our own defense expenditures, which to a great extent are a result of continued high defense expenditures by the other side, would not cause them to increase further their expenditures in the defense area, but that they would see our current efforts in the light of the requirement for parity and essential equivalency.

4. Will detente impede our relations with other countries? Will they not see detente as an effort on the part of the two super powers to negotiate bilaterally and ignore the interest of smaller nations? Mr. Marsh responded that it was certainly not the intent of the U.S. to ignore the interest of other countries in its bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union, but it must be recognized that the two super powers have certain interests that can only be negotiated in a bilateral forum. We believe that other countries recognize this and that they should not be suspicious of the U.S. It was pointed out that the U.S. is also participating in a number of multi-lateral negotiations, for example, MBFR, CSCE. It was also pointed out that the U.S., upon concluding previous bilateral agreements with the Soviet Union, has always made a serious and concerted effort to advise our allies of the results of these negotiations and to assure them that detente cannot be a viable policy if it is pushed forward at the expense of other countries. Following up on this question, Mr. Svec asked if we perceived any serious movement in this country toward what is referred to as neo-isolationism. Mr. Marsh indicated that there were some individuals and groups in America who would prefer a less international policy on the part of the U.S.; however, the majority of the American people understand the need for and support our current foreign policy positions.

5. What was the meaning of the recent election results in the Vice President's previous Congressional district? Mr. Marsh indicated that it would not be wise to draw any sweeping conclusions of the recent defeat of the Republican candidate in Michigan's 5th District. As in every congressional district there are local issues that play an important role in the outcome of elections. In this particular case the energy crisis and the impact on the economy were particularly relevant to the 5th District and he was not in a position to make any observations as to what impact Watergate might have had.

Prepared by: Howard Kerr  
Approved by: Jack Marsh

