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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

12/28/66

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: December 21, 1966
TIME: 4:30 P.M.
PLACE: Secretary's Office

SUBJECT: Secretary's Meeting with Ambassador Duda

PARTICIPANTS: The Secretary
Dr. Karel Duda, Ambassador of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
Jaromir Pribyl, Second Secretary, Czechoslovak Embassy
Irving I. Schiffman, EUR/EE

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLJ 97-157
By is, NARA Date 10-30-98

After the preliminary pleasantries, the Secretary said that he was disappointed to find on his return from the world tour he had just completed that the Kazan case is not yet settled. Just as the Secretary was about to make his representations on the matter to Ambassador Duda, the Ambassador interjected and said that he himself had planned to see the Secretary in this regard and referred to the informal conversation he had had with the Secretary some time ago during a social occasion. The Ambassador said that he had reported the earlier conversation to the MFA, received a reply and wished to read it to the Secretary.

In response to the Secretary's question whether he could leave a copy, the Ambassador said that it was "incomplete and in rough form". He would read it slowly.

As you know, Duda said, Kazan is being charged with crimes which are punishable in all countries and on the basis of a court order issued in 1963. We are not going to suspend the application of Czech laws simply because Kazan is a US citizen. He will be brought to trial. To the Secretary's question whether the Ambassador knew when the trial will be held Duda replied: "No". Duda then said, we have proceeded in full conformity with international procedures and we have granted consular access. We are prepared to issue visas to Mrs. Kazan and to the father-in-law, Duda continued, and I presume that a request to see Kazan will receive favorable consideration. We have protested the exaggerated handling of the matter by the State Department and the US public, which is out of proportion to the importance of the issue. We cannot agree with the anti-Czechoslovak

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measures which have been taken, such as the withholding of visas and the unofficial but practical discouragement of travel. The Kazan case is of a consular nature and will be handled as such and on its merits. Publicity, pressures, and retaliatory measures will only complicate a solution to the problem. We have no intention to permit this case to undermine our relations, but it is necessary that the court proceedings be permitted to take their course.

In the past, Duda continued, we have received no cooperation from the US to our just requests involving questions affecting our bilateral relations. These have been seriously affected by the discrepancy between words and deeds. US statements that we are interested in normalizing relations are contradicted by the precipitous actions such as have been taken in this case. These are bound to affect relations adversely. US pronouncements are impaired by our unwillingness to sign the concluded financial/claims agreement and the yardstick of our sincerity is our unwillingness to return the Nazi-looted gold. In this context, the US image is not a good one and we are not going to prevent the public from learning the full facts of this matter. The Ambassador hoped that his statement clarified the Czech position in this matter.

Referring to Duda's remark regarding a solution of the case, the Secretary asked what he meant by this. Duda replied that he had no authority to elaborate and added that he preferred to let the statement stand. He then said that the atmosphere engendered by a campaign in the press and by measures intended to exert pressure cannot but complicate the general atmosphere.

The Secretary replied that there is a distinction between the general atmosphere and the fate of an individual. We know well the circumstances under which Kazan's detention took place, the Secretary said, and he proceeded to recount the details of the flight which was diverted from its normal northern route to make the unscheduled landing at Prague. The Secretary said this was a clear case of kidnapping by security agents. If Kazan had gone to Czechoslovakia voluntarily, the case would have been difficult enough, but under the circumstances this is a very special case. We cannot overlook this in terms of our general relations. Under our constitutional system the fate of an individual is of greatest concern. The Secretary then asked what would happen to the members of the family if we issued them passports to go to Czechoslovakia? Duda replied that he had no doubt they would be safe. The Secretary responded there was a major doubt about Kazan's safety, although he had had no intention of visiting Czechoslovakia. Duda replied that he had nothing to add to the Soviet statements on the landing of the plane "which are known to you". As to the safety of Americans and of the Kazan family there is no doubt, especially on the background of 30,000 to 40,000 American tourists a year who have visited Czechoslovakia without any major incidents. Duda repeated that the Kazan case has been magnified out of all proportion

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and to the point where it has overshadowed relations, whose improvement both sides strived to achieve. Duda then asked whether the Kazan incident is being used by some people here as a pretext to obstruct progress in US-Czech relations.

The Secretary replied that this surely is not true of the President, himself, and the Executive in general. He said that we relied and will rely again on the assurances the Czechs have given us regarding the safety of American travelers, but this case presents us with a very special situation. The Secretary added that on his recent trip he had encountered many Senators and Congressmen, all of whom had questioned him and commented on the Kazan case. The Secretary also mentioned his luncheon with seven Congressmen earlier in the day who brought up the case.

The Secretary then said to Duda: "I wish you would ask Foreign Minister David how he envisages a solution in the interest of better relations on both sides." The Secretary expressed the hope that David could reply to his question personally. He said he would withhold further comment until he received an answer from David, adding that he deliberately refrained from talking about the case at his press conference that afternoon. Duda promised to convey the Secretary's request to David, but added that he wished to stress again that any publicity and pressure will only tend to complicate developments.

The meeting was concluded with the Secretary saying that he hoped to see Duda again when he had a reply from Minister David.

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