

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Helmut Kohl of
the Federal Republic of Germany (U)

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.
The President
Philip Zelikow, NSC Staff (notetaker)
Jackie Murphy, NSC Staff (stenographer)
Gisela Marcuse, State (interpreter)

FRG
Chancellor Helmut Kohl
Mrs. Weber (interpreter)

DATE, TIME May 5, 1989, 9:16 a.m. - 9:34 a.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

Chancellor Kohl began by commenting on his talk on May 3 with Ambassador Walters, expressing pleasure with the President's choice and noting his appreciation both for the Ambassador's personal qualities and for his closeness to the President. He hoped that the Ambassador enjoyed his service in Bonn, despite attacks from the left-wing media. (S)

His points today, the Chancellor said, were: first, that he will do his very best to achieve a reasonable compromise on the issue of the future of NATO's short-range nuclear forces before the Brussels Summit; and, second, that he will do his part in bringing such a successful conclusion about. The Chancellor thought the chances for success were good. (S)

Continuing, the Chancellor commented that he was aware of Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney's compromise proposal on the SNF issue, though he had not had time to study it. He expected that the President would soon be seeing Dutch Prime Minister Lubbers, who has also given thought to a possible compromise. The kind of ideas that were being discussed seemed very good to the Chancellor, but he felt these efforts proved the truth of an old German saying -- that too many cooks spoil the soup. (S)

So, the Chancellor wondered if the President could send one of his competent collaborators to Bonn for direct talks. The person need not be a Minister, but it should be someone with direct access to the President. (S)

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The President replied that he was confident he could send an emissary. As the Chancellor knew, the President had long supported the idea of such a dialogue between Washington and Bonn. He would send someone in whom he had full confidence. He would prefer that this not be a high visibility mission. He agreed that too many cooks can spoil the broth. (S)

The Chancellor agreed that the visit could be done discreetly. If someone just came to Bonn to visit with the U.S. Ambassador, the Chancellor would seize the opportunity and arrange a meeting with "two or three of us." That would be no problem. It would be important, however, for the Chancellor and the President to maintain direct contact. Then one could go a step further and put the matter into official channels. The Chancellor thought this approach would be helpful. (S)

The President agreed it would be helpful. The U.S. was being attacked as irresolute as it was trying to work out a solution to the SNF problem. The President was annoyed, because differences had become public differences and now he was being criticized by Congress. He had told critics that the U.S. position was clear but that the Administration was trying to work with the Chancellor to have a harmonious Summit. But the Chancellor knew that the President was coming under considerable fire from the American and European press. (S)

The President said the Chancellor's proposal suited him very well. He would let the Chancellor know soon who his representative would be. (S)

The Chancellor gave two reasons for his effort. First, he wanted the Summit to be successful. Second, he wanted the President to have a success. It would be the President's first trip to Europe as President. The President was a proven friend of Europeans and, in particular, of the Germans. The Chancellor had never forgotten this fact and never would forget it. (S)

The Chancellor added that he had told Ambassador Walters of his belief that in the summer, when the Summit was over, the U.S. and the FRG should engage in talks about the burdensharing issue. The Chancellor was ready on this subject to take a step in the President's direction, so that the U.S. Congress would be able to see that Bonn was working jointly with Washington, and that the Germans appreciated the sacrifices made by the United States. (S)

We are in a historic position, the Chancellor said. He understood that the President was going to Poland and Hungary. The President would observe an enormous evolution there. It was far from the Chancellor's mind to see Gorbachev as the new hero and he did not mistake words for deeds. Deeds must be considered. However, the Chancellor and the President were

witnessing events beyond their wildest dreams, the ideological breakdown of a political and economic system. This was the hour of our triumph. (S)

This triumph, the Chancellor added, was due not least to the efforts of the United States. That is why the Chancellor thought the President's role should be brought to the fore. This was linked to the cohesion of NATO, and with the success of the NATO Summit. (S)

Perhaps, the Chancellor remarked, it was best now to say that on Monday the President would pass a message to one of the Chancellor's collaborators; the best choice would be Horst Teltschik. Then the President and the Chancellor would call each other next week "when we know where we stand." The Chancellor wanted the President to know that he, the Chancellor, would be following this issue. (S)

The President asked what day would be best for his person to be in Bonn. (S)

The Chancellor said he would prefer to agree on that on Monday. Some of his people were "not here now." Maybe the President's and the Chancellor's collaborators could arrange this on Monday, through direct contact, especially if the President could tell the Chancellor then who the representative would be. (S)

The President said he would do that. Turning to Poland and Hungary, the President said his trips to those countries were not definitely settled, but the plans had been leaked -- something the Chancellor could understand. The governments involved had not yet signed off on the visits. However, as Gorbachev cruised around Western Europe, the President felt it was appropriate for him to show his support for the changes in Eastern Europe. (S)

Secretary Baker would be leaving soon for Moscow, the President noted. He would talk there with Shevardnadze about a number of subjects of interest to the Chancellor. (S)

The Chancellor said it was important, even necessary, for the President to go to Eastern Europe. It was important that the voice of America be heard in those countries. The Chancellor planned to go to Warsaw in the second half of July, after the President's visit. There were great expectations in those countries about these visits; we should make the best possible use of the opportunity. The Chancellor could not accept letting Gorbachev set himself up as the imitator of the voice of Europe. The Chancellor approved of progress, but not that. (S)

The President thought Secretary Baker's trip would display further engagement of the United States with the Soviet Union and would help with European public opinion. It would show that the

U.S. was not afraid to talk to Gorbachev, and the Secretary had a useful agenda for his meetings with Shevardnadze. (S)

The Chancellor said that on Monday the President and the Chancellor would hear from one another. Things would be done very discreetly. (S)

The President asked what the Chancellor planned to say about this call. (S)

Nothing, the Chancellor replied. (S)

The President asked what would be said about the fact of the call. He said he would release that a call had occurred but make no comment on the substance of the discussion or on the possibility of an emissary to Bonn. (S)

The Chancellor agreed that he would disclose that the President and the Chancellor had talked to each other, as they do regularly. There would not be one word about the call's contents. (S)

The President thought that would be good. He said he appreciated the spirit of the Chancellor's call. The Alliance needed to come out strong and it was essential for the Summit to succeed. He thanked his friend, the Chancellor, for his call. (S)