

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMCON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: The President's Telephone Call to Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Helmut Kohl, Chancellor
Robert Hutchings, NSC Staff (Notetaker)
Gisela Marcuse (Interpreter)

DATE, TIME: March 20, 1990, 8:31 - 8:59 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President initiated the call at 8:31 a.m. (U)

The President: Helmut, how are you? I called to congratulate you. You're a hell of a campaigner! (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you for the congratulations. It was a hard, tough time, but it was worth it. You have to bear in mind that these people [in the GDR] are in a very difficult time. The last free elections were 50 years ago. Since 1961, when the Wall went up, there have been virtually no communications with the world outside. The parties lack everything -- staff, experience, everything. They have to start from scratch. And there is even more work ahead. The most difficult problem is the lack of an experienced staff. That means twice the work for me. But I am very happy with the results. (U)

George, the most important thing for you in Washington is that before the elections everyone predicted that everyone would vote on the Left, but the results proved them wrong. The workers voted for us. If we act reasonably, in five years or so the country will have a good economy. The results are very important for the NATO question as well. I will now find totally different support than if the Left had won. So I am happy. Thank you very, very sincerely for all your help. I remember with deep gratitude the letter you sent before my trip to Moscow, and also Secretary Baker's help in Moscow. (Ø)

The President: We're very proud of you. Some press reports here say the Socialists in the GDR are adopting the position that this is all because of Helmut Kohl and are trying to take away the victory from the people. Let me just make a couple of comments about the border and the upcoming visit by Mazowiecki. (Ø)

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01 51799 09-0893-F

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~~E.O. 12958, SEC 3.4 (B) September 11, 2006~~

~~By SA NARA, Date 5/11/99~~

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, I would like to hear them. When is he coming? (Ø)

The President: He'll be here tomorrow. There will be a big state dinner. There will be great interest here. I want to be sure we are on the same wavelength. He may well ask for a larger Polish role in the Two Plus Four process. That is why I wanted to talk with you. On the border issue, I will repeat what I said in our joint press conference: "The U.S. respects the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act regarding the inviolability of current borders in Europe. And the U.S. formally recognizes the current German-Polish border." I feel compelled to repeat that with this man here. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: George, that is fine. I completely agree. (U)

The President: I will remind him of your initiative, which will lead to a treaty, fixing the current border, between a future all-German government and Poland. I will tell him that you have repeatedly assured me -- and that I believe you -- that the current GDR-Polish border should be the permanent German-Polish border. (Ø)

On Two Plus Four, I will tell him that I am pleased at the March 14 decision to invite Poland to its deliberations when the issue of Polish borders is discussed. I will remind him that we see the Two Plus Four as a process to deal with Four Power rights and responsibilities in Berlin and Germany as a whole -- not as a forum to decide the future of European security or to debate Germany's membership in NATO. If he asks, I will say that we will not support Warsaw as a site for any Two Plus Four talks, reminding him that members of the Two Plus Four agreed March 14 that talks would be held alternately in the FRG and the GDR. I will offer him intensified bilateral discussions as Two Plus Four proceeds, but I will not agree to any expanding of the Polish role in the Two Plus Four process, on the grounds that while Two Plus Four may discuss other security issues -- discuss them -- decisions will be made in other forums. I'm thinking of CFE, where Poland will have a voice. (Ø)

I know I can assure him we are sensitive to Polish concerns, but I will do so in such a way that your position is not undermined. I want to stop here. I have a few other points I'd like to make, but I want to be sure that what I have said is compatible with your position. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: George, the first thing: I'm very grateful for the spirit of friendship in all that you have said. Everything you have said is absolutely okay with me. I agree with everything you have said concerning Two Plus Four. (Ø)

The President: Let me add a couple of remarks on Two Plus Four. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Just a few remarks: if you think it useful, if you want to reassure Mazowiecki, you can report to him that we have discussed the issue extensively on the phone and at Camp David. Please tell him I want to help him be successful, but I also have to be sure I am successful with my policies in my own country. I don't usually say that publicly, but the election results also have a bearing on these questions. I am firmly determined to accept the Oder-Neisse border. I am not hiding anything from here; there is no secrecy. (Ø)

It is true this is a bitter burden of history, but now is the time to settle the issue definitely for the future. An all-German government and parliament must, under international law, make the final settlement. I understand the Poles. They want to know what will occur from now until then, because I don't know how long it will take -- perhaps one year, perhaps two years. This was the idea, which has become easier now after the elections. The GDR parliament and ours will have the same majority. (Ø)

The President: Now that the GDR elections are over, how soon do you see a new GDR parliament and government able to adopt with you a common declaration on the Polish border? (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: At the latest, May or June, our parliament and theirs could take steps. (Ø)

The President: That would be very reassuring. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: This is the earliest I could enter into a commitment. If you like, I could explain the timetable. They will need until mid-April to set up parliament. There is a legal time frame. Then the government can take office, and there are also the Easter holidays. Very quickly the government will have to take a number of priority decisions. They will need to take them if they want to be into the Deutsche Mark system by mid-year. They also have to take basic decisions regarding the social market economy; that will be mid-May. So I see that government in a position to act by the last two weeks of May, or perhaps the last week of May. (Ø)

My idea is to pass declarations at the same time in the GDR and the FRG. Then the governments of the GDR and the FRG would both write letters to Mazowiecki. For example, I could write to Mazowiecki and would convey the decision and confirm once again that I recognize him as Prime Minister. Let me make a further remark, which I am not making publicly: I am ready and willing to agree on an eventual text with Mazowiecki. That is something I am not able to make public, but it may be useful to you. So until June, he can have all these assurances. (Ø)

The President: I would only say that the sooner there can be some of these assurances, the better. The Soviets seem to be trying to stir up trouble on this border issue. Once the two parliaments have acted and the results are conveyed to the Poles, it will reduce the pressures on this issue enormously. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: George, just to make clear: what I said is a promise I can keep. (Ø)

The President: But you cannot communicate that to Poland -- the idea of a text? (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, yes. That's possible. I wanted to wait until you had seen Mazowiecki before doing anything on that. (Ø)

The President: Should I mention this to Mazowiecki or not? I want to do whatever you want on this. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: If you think it would be useful, and if he does not make it public -- and reassures you that he will not -- then tell him I would like to proceed in that direction. (Ø)

The President: Good. Helmut, I heard you were magnificent at NATO in Brussels -- a command performance. I also appreciate your Government's willingness to join us in briefing NATO after the Two Plus Four meeting. Above all, your firm stand on a united Germany remaining a full member of NATO is great. The idea is even gaining acceptance among the East Europeans. I noticed the positive comments by Havel, for example. You mentioned last time that NATO membership would be an important issue in the FRG. We need to continue holding firm. This is vitally important for European security and stability and for the U.S. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: This, after all, is the main issue with the Poles. I want to get along well with them. The Polish Foreign Minister, whom I consider a very intelligent and able man, recently said he, too, wanted Germany to remain a member of NATO. This will also be of benefit to his country. But it is necessary, all the more necessary, that we all come to a mutually satisfactory settlement. It would be very beneficial if Mazowiecki could help me. I would like to help him, too. (Ø)

The President: We will do our best, and then debrief after the meetings. Then I'll be meeting with Thatcher and Mitterrand and will want to stay in close touch with you. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you very much. I think together we will make it successful. (Ø)

-- End of Conversation --