

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere of the German Democratic Republic (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
Nicholas Brady, Secretary of the Treasury
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert Gates, Assistant to the President and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Richard C. Barkley, Ambassador to the GDR
James Dobbins, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Robert Hutchings, Director for European Political Affairs, NSC Staff
Gisela Marcuse, Interpreter

Lothar de Maiziere, Prime Minister
Sylvia Schultz, Head of the Office of the Prime Minister
Fritz Holzwarth, Political Counselor to the Prime Minister
Thilo Steinbach, Director for Foreign Policy, Office of the Prime Minister
Matthias Gehler, Government Spokesman
Norbert Reemer, Minister Counselor of the Embassy of the GDR to the U.S.
Joachim Keitz, Interpreter

DATE, TIME June 11, 1990, 11:36 a.m. - 12:08 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Cabinet Room (U)

The President: Let me welcome you all to the White House. The Prime Minister was just saying that this meeting is an historic first. We feel the same way, and we couldn't be more pleased that you are here. Our plan is to meet here until noon and then have an informal luncheon. I want to say how much I respect the historic role you have played, Mr. Prime Minister, and how much I appreciate the close cooperation you have developed with the Federal Chancellor. I would also add that is important that you and I work together to achieve the goal of German unity in peace and freedom. (U)

Prime Minister de Maiziere: Mr. President, it is a great privilege to be here in the White House, where so many European personages in history have come. It is a great day for us. If we think back one year, no one would have dreamt of any of this. Only Herr Reemer has been here before. The rest of us are all newcomers, but we have been given a clearcut and unambiguous mission by our people -- as you said, German unification in peace and German unification in a unifying Europe. Those of us who have lived in Communism for 40 years should also take our brothers and sisters into the new Europe. This is particularly essential to achieving our goal. (U)

Let me express my profound gratitude to you for your letter, which I received one day after your meetings, briefing me on your meetings with President Gorbachev. It was very useful to me for our meetings in Moscow of the members of the Warsaw Pact. I am ready to brief you, if that would be useful. We made it crystal clear in Moscow that all six wanted change -- not revitalization of the military aspects but a strengthening of the political dimension. Developments in the Warsaw Pact could take us in the direction that the Pact won't survive very long. The Hungarian and Czechoslovak representatives especially said that following a transitional period, they don't want this alliance. Afterwards, it will be necessary to establish new structures, because singularization and marginalization of individual countries would make them become more attached once again to this "flagship," so to say. Therefore it is important for Western Europe to open to Eastern Europe at all levels -- economically, through the EC, and also building common security structures. All participants in the Moscow summit favored the CSCE process -- not in a way that CSCE should replace efforts at European unification made so far, but as a kind of umbrella. All made it clear that socialism as it has existed has failed and is now on the road to complete downfall. It has failed economically and as a method of administration, and its values have proved not bearable. This means defeat: all of see that very clearly. But there is a danger of portraying this as a defeat for the other side. (S)

The President: That's a good point. (U)

Prime Minister de Maiziere: 40 years of socialism has also changed the people. Defeat means a certain loss in life for many people. We need to recover our own souls and let them catch up. I believe the subtle and cautious policies pursued by the U.S. and especially by you, Mr. President, clearly led toward a new partnership. (S)

The President: Let me make a few comments on what you have said. We made very clear to President Gorbachev that singularization, singling our for special status, of a united Germany would be very bad. I believe he understands -- maybe you have insights into this -- that a united Germany has earned its place and that we shouldn't write the past into the present. I told Gorbachev that we were sensitive to their concerns but that a united Germany is no threat to them and that a united Germany in NATO would be stabilizing. He agrees, by the way, that the U.S. role

in Europe is stabilizing. So we don't want singularization. Second, we agree that new structures should be developed. We believe that NATO with a broader role would strengthen security and also help in other ways. I told President Mitterrand, for example, that it had a role to play in verification and stabilization measures. I don't know if Gorbachev agreed, but he sat where you are sitting, and I told him that a united Germany should be in NATO but that Germany should decide. I thought he agreed, but then he said a few words to his foreign minister and pulled back. We see utility for CSCE. It is unwieldy, but it provides a home for a lot of countries, including the U.S. (S)

Let me refer to one thing you said. I agree we shouldn't talk of winners and losers. Everyone has a level of pride; this applies to Gorbachev and the Soviet people. I tried to convince them of the reality that a united Germany in NATO would not be a threat to their security, that we could go forward from there. A lot of what he wants is economic. But we've got to keep working to convince him. (S)

I made a point to him that NATO is a defensive organization which has wide public support. I mentioned new challenges that it should take on. We will have a NATO Summit in early July, and we will be talking about steps to transform the Alliance. We have talked about a new political role and a changed threat. Out of that we want to develop a common position on CSCE. As we do, we hope it will be of some comfort to the other side, so they will not be suspicious of our intentions. I mentioned we believe the CSCE has a role to play in helping the countries of central and eastern Europe build free societies and giving the Soviets and the East Europeans a role in the new Europe. (S)

Let me, with your permission, mention the Two Plus Four process. We don't believe it should have a broader role, or try to solve everything connected with the "German Question." These are just some observations. I am fascinated with the meetings you had in Moscow, and I understand your point that we should not talk about victory and defeat, especially with a Soviet Union that is trying to reform. We will conduct ourselves accordingly. (S)

Prime Minister de Maiziere: Let me briefly comment. In the plenary at the Warsaw Pact Summit, Gorbachev said his assumption was that stability in Europe could come only with a U.S. presence. But he also said the stability and the balance of forces had to be defined, and that stability and balance were not only a matter of counting missiles. In addition to our public and plenary meetings, I had a private talk with Gorbachev. I felt he still assumes that the Soviet nationalities and peoples will have trouble accepting full German membership in NATO unless certain elements are added. For example, he has talked about a treaty for the continuing presence of Soviet troops in the GDR. (S)

Secretary Baker: Did he have in mind a treaty between the two pacts or between Germany and the Soviet Union? (S)

Prime Minister de Maiziere: He appeared to prefer a treaty between the two pacts, but his suggestions were a bit vague. But if a solution were hammered out, I would propose a treaty, because the unification of Germany should be accompanied by the end of allied rights. We should have a new legal basis, rather than one as a result of the Second World War. So this would strengthen our position and help the Soviet Union retain its position as a big power, a great power. He said he would leave it to German imagination to work out. (S)

The President: Let me return to this to be sure I understand. I understand there was a GDR paper. Our view is that the Two Plus Four should terminate these Four Power rights. The Two Plus Four ought not to decide alliances or other security relations, which have a bearing on other states, including the NATO allies. A settlement shouldn't address these issues, because of the danger of singularization. I don't know whether you agree. (S)

Prime Minister de Maiziere: I consider the situation in a very similar way as you, Mr. President, but I can see a problem. If German unification is of importance to other countries, we should be able to play a certain bridge function. NATO has a kind of enemy stereotype, not only for politicians but also for publics. A change in NATO, as you said in your nine-point proposal, which we read with the greatest interest.... If NATO remained as it is now but changed its name, that would not be a serious proposal. Anxiety has been signalled to us by the Poles, Czechs, etc. So a gesture should be made by NATO to address those deeply rooted fears and anxieties. I also feel, like you, that Two Plus Four should result in the abrogation of Four Power rights and that alliance relations should be decided by European states on the basis of sovereignty. That is not the view of President Gorbachev. He would like a move-for-move deal. I don't have a model in my mind. (S)

The President: I believe we can allay some Soviet fears by stressing Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty and the political side. The idea of a name change is not ridiculous at all. We had a discussion about that just recently. I believe we can do our best to reassure the Soviet Union and others in the Warsaw Pact to show that we are not a great threat, no threat at all, to democratic Poland, Hungary, and so on. (S)

Secretary Baker: I want to ask what Gorbachev meant by "move-for-move." Was he referring to levels of forces in central Europe or something more? (S)

Prime Minister de Maiziere: He was talking about troop strength, but first of all, he is looking for a recipe to bring a message to his own people and his own military. If he abandons rights, he would like to assure them he is getting something in return as regards the Soviet place in Europe. For all the Soviet Union's economic problems, economic assistance alone will not be sufficient to pacify his population. (S)

-- End of Conversation --