

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Foreign Minister of Germany

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
James Baker, III, Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Raymond Seitz, Assistant Secretary for European and Canadian Affairs, Department State
David Gompert, NSC Staff/Notetaker

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher
Ambassador Jergen Ruhfus
Frank Elbe, Assistant to Foreign Minister
Claus Wunderlich, Counsellor

DATE, TIME March 1, 1991 (10:37 - 11:00 a.m.) ?
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: I'm not totally relaxed about the situation in Baghdad yet. Saddam Hussein is still there. He is like a cancer. I hope that the Iraqi army or the Iraqi people just take matters into their own hands and put him out. Otherwise, how can we negotiate with Iraq as long as he is there? With all of the atrocities and the damage he has done to the environment, it will be impossible for us to do anything constructive with Iraq as long as he is there. It is interesting that they came back immediately after we suggested that we meet with their military at the border. We made some very tough demands. This causes us to wonder whether Saddam Hussein is still calling the shots. (S)

Secretary Baker: There is an unconfirmed news report that Algeria has offered Saddam Hussein asylum and that he is considering it but we have nothing further on this. (S)

Foreign Minister Genscher: We cannot permit Iraq to keep any weapons of mass destruction or any missiles with or without Saddam Hussein. We should reach an agreement on that. We should lift the embargo step by step and be careful not to open the

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doors for Iraq to rearm with or without Saddam Hussein. We should not underestimate their ability to build up again very quickly. We should also now discuss the peace order for the region. I think the Egyptians have some ideas that are quite good, which the U.S. and the Europeans should support. Also we should give the Soviets the impression that we would rather have them in the boat than not in the Middle East. Based on my recent trip, I must tell you that there is now a feeling in the region that the time has come to resolve the basic issue and that we should seize this opportunity. Israel now has an excellent international standing and reputation because of the restraint it showed. It is therefore in a very strong position from which to negotiate. The PLO in contrast has been totally discredited. This also helps the Israelis. Finally, my impression is that there are new Arab attitudes about Israel, even Syria. Assad no longer wants to be an outcast. Maybe we can win him over. So let's not waste time Mr. President. (S)

President: I agree with your assessment. Of course, we are worried that Shamir will say that now we don't need to move. But I agree that we have to seize this opportunity. (S)

Secretary Baker: Hans-Dietrich please explain to the President your CSCE analogy. (S)

Foreign Minister Genscher: We currently have a danger with regard to the question of an international conference on the Middle East. Israel will say no, the Arabs will say yes and the EC will tend to say yes. We should bear in mind that in 1975 we had the Helsinki CSCE conference, but it did not come overnight. It happened only after many years, in fact four years of bilateral negotiations and agreements including U.S.-Soviet, German-Soviet, German-Polish and so on. Then and only then did we have a conference. Before then, it would not have worked. We had first to create a basis. So we should say yes to a Middle East conference but insist that it be preceded by bilateral negotiations, bilateral agreements, conference building measures and so on. (S)

The President: We will be happy to work with you on all of this. (S)

Foreign Minister Genscher: One finally word Mr. President. With regards to Eastern Europe, this is critically important too. They badly need our economic help and we are prepared to work with you. We know now from our work with East Germany how enormous the task of transforming these economies is. East Germany has West Germany, but Poland does not have West Poland. They are on their own so we must give them all the help we can. Also there is a security vacuum now in Eastern Europe. We need to give these countries an answer to the question they are asking. It must make them feel more secure but it also must be in our own interest and it must not be provocative to the Soviets. We need to give them this answer very soon. (S)

The President: Because of this war we've had to divert our

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attention somewhat from Eastern Europe but I agree with you on the need to get on with our support.

-- End of Conversation --

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