

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Chancellor Kohl of Germany (U)

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

DATE, TIME: March 7, 1991, 9:47 - 10:05 a.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

Chancellor Kohl initiated the call. (U)

The President: Helmut! How are you? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Good, thank you. Very well. How are things going? You have a lot of reasons to be very satisfied. (U)

The President: Well, Jim Baker is going on what we think a very important trip. We are going to start figuring out the role the U.S. can play in being a catalyst for peace on the Israel-Palestinian issue, Lebanon, and the Gulf. Overall, we are very pleased with the way things are working out, though we are worried about anarchy and revolution in Iraq. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: George, do you have any information on the present position of Saddam Hussein? (Ø)

The President: No. We do not. We have no reason to believe he is not in office. But I don't see how he can survive after his people learn the truth. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: But there is a problem: will he allow his people to know? (Ø)

The President: There have been so many prisoners and so much destruction that it is hard to see how he can avoid the truth coming out, though he is trying. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: I hope you are right. George, as I said, I hope the people will eventually learn the truth. I think it is crucial that people in the region know it was indeed a war against Saddam Hussein and not the Iraqi people, and not the U.S. versus the Arabs or the Islamic world. We have to convey this message, and the U.S. is in a good position to do so. Please, if there is anything we can do to be of help, you can always count on our support. (Ø)

~~SECRET~~

Declassify on: OADR

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 12958,
AS AMENDED
8/21/2009

I had quite a surprise the day before yesterday. The Iranian Ambassador came up and said he wanted me to talk to Rafsanjani and asked if I would take a call. I said yes, so Rafsanjani called. It was a fairly unusual conversation. His main subject was that he saw a risk of the West turning against the Islamic countries. I told him there was no basis for that; this was a preconceived image from an earlier day. I explained that this was no longer true, that things had changed. I mentioned your name and said that image was not your view. It was interesting that he then addressed the question that the two of us were friends. I said, yes, that was well known, and that Germany stood shoulder-to-shoulder with its American friends. I explained in no uncertain terms that Americans, too, understood that the war had not solved all the problems in the region but only the terror meted out by Saddam Hussein. What I gathered from his remarks was that something is moving there, too. (S)

The President: You know, Helmut, if you talk to him again, tell him, without reference to our conversation, that the best thing he could do would be to secure the release of American hostages. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: I will do that. (U)

The President: It would be very helpful. Incidentally, Helmut, I was very pleased to hear of your decision to send German minesweepers to the Gulf. This is an important step. Don't think there is any criticism from this Administration. We are very grateful for your support. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: I know that. I would like to thank you very sincerely for that. George, perhaps we should proceed in the following way. Rafsanjani said he would call again in the following week. I will call you afterwards and give you an update. How do you assess the present mood in the UN Security Council and the initiatives taken in view of Gorbachev? (S)

The President: The UN Security Council has been very cooperative. I am not sure what initiative you were referring to re Gorbachev. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: I was referring to the impression I have that he is pondering ways and means of how he can get into the picture. He wants to be a player. (S)

The President: Let me make a couple of comments. First, I did not have a problem with Gorbachev in the last days before the ground war, when he was trying to make peace. I didn't worry about that. He got a lot of criticism from some quarters in the U.S., but I told him -- and Jim Baker will tell him -- that we had no problem with his trying to make peace. Second, they have an historic interest in the region, and all of us have to understand that it is very important to them. I don't think they will emerge as the key negotiator, or the one country that solves all the problems in the Middle East. Lastly, I will stay in

touch with Gorbachev. I won't give up on him. We are very worried about what is going on in the Soviet Union, but he is President, and we will deal with him. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, it is very important. George, it would be very good if you make this clear to him from time to time, with a remark here and a gesture there, because from a psychological viewpoint it is very important that he is confirmed in this view. (S)

The President: That is a good point. I will accept your advice. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I think I can say that you have been very successful in dealing with him in the past. I consider it very remarkable what he has to say about you, using your first name. It doesn't solve all the problems we have, but its is very important. I do think we can safely say there has not been the kind of contact between heads of state of the U.S. and the Soviet Union that you have. I must also say that it is a very realistic relationship, not a matter of concessions by one side or the other. This is very important for all of us. I hope that people on the Hill understand. (S)

The President: I think so, but there is an odd coalition of the left-wing and the right-wing that has a different view. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: There are rather absurd things one hears. George, good luck. (U)

The President: I hope to see you before too long. I've got your old friend Margaret Thatcher here tonight. I will give her the Medal of Freedom. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Please give her my kindest regards. (U)

The President: Incidentally, Prime Minister Major is a good man to work with. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I can only confirm that. Give my love to Barbara. (U)

The President: Thank you. Love to Hannelore. Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --