

**Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and  
Francois Mitterrand  
21 February 1991  
[excerpt]**

Mitterrand: I am glad to hear your voice.

Gorbachev: I am also very glad to hear you. [...] I want to tell you very good news: today at 3 a.m., we received a telegram from our ambassador in Baghdad. He reports that today Tariq Aziz is departing Baghdad for Moscow with a reply to our proposals. The telegram does not contain any information about the substance of the reply. Our position, just like yours, is firm. The main thing is for Iraq to give us an answer to the most important question. An immediate answer to one main question, without any frills and ultimatums.

Mitterrand: Yes, this is very important.

Gorbachev: Iraq must understand that in the next phase, when the Security Council will convene again, the USSR, France, and other countries will be involved, and [Iraq's] situation will be more difficult. But that will already be a different phase. But today Iraq must adopt an unambiguous decision. This is the main news that I wanted to share with you. Let's see what will come of it. I have already informed President Bush about it.

Mitterrand: Your role in this [crisis] is the decisive one at this current turning point, which will decide whether there will be peace or whether military operations will be expanded. Today the time factor is especially important, and also that there could be no new conditions on the part of Saddam Hussein. It is important that they understand in Baghdad that if by the same time tomorrow we do not have an absolutely unambiguous answer to the one and only question, then nothing, obviously, could prevent a large-scale offensive by ground forces. It is important that he understands the extreme urgency of answering this question, especially because there are some persons and some countries, which, even in the face of a positive reply from Saddam Hussein, would still strive to continue the conflict. One might even say that now the last, decisive, quarter of the hour has begun.

Gorbachev: I will do everything that depends on me.

Mitterrand: I know that you are doing everything that depends on you. Now everything depends only on one person.

Gorbachev: Your deep relationship with the United States could play a role here.

Mitterrand: I already sent a letter to President Bush, and spoke with him on the phone yesterday. It is very important that he be informed immediately if Saddam Hussein agrees to accept the condition presented to him.

Gorbachev: [...] President Bush must also understand that the development of frank contacts and participating in them are in his interests, too.

Mitterrand: Yes, you are absolutely right. We have a saying: you need two people to have a wedding. Iraq must be brought to understand: this evening, something still can be done, but then it will be too late. Especially if you take the time difference into account: when Aziz arrives in Moscow, it will be 9 p.m. your time, 7 p.m. in Paris and just 1 p.m. in Washington.

Gorbachev: As soon as Tariq Aziz arrives here, even if it is night already, I will meet with him immediately and then inform you about the results.

Mitterrand: I appreciate it.

Gorbachev: I even decided to send a plane for Aziz to Iraq in order to speed up his arrival.

Mitterrand: This is very smart, because connections with Iraq are extremely difficult now.

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.  
Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]*