

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Chancellor Kohl of Germany (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, Secretary of State
Helmut Kohl, Chancellor
Notetaker: Robert Hutchings, NSC Staff
Interpreter: Gisela Marcuse

DATE, TIME February 23, 1991, 1:28 - 1:41 p.m.
AND PLACE: Camp David

Secretary Baker: Chancellor, how are you? This is Jim Baker.
(U)

Chancellor Kohl: Good, Jim. How are you? (U)

Secretary Baker: The President is right here, talking to John Major. He will be through in just a moment but asked me to receive your call. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I talked with Gorbachev earlier. I got the latest press statement to the effect that Saddam Hussein has accepted the conditions. Is that correct? (S)

Secretary Baker: No. Gorbachev talked to President Bush two hours ago. The press statement was erroneous. There has been no acceptance by Iraq of the coalition's plan. We have made it clear that the Soviet plan does not include acceptance of all the UN resolutions. The President is off the phone now. (S)

The President: Helmut! Wie geht's? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Good, thanks. I am glad to hear your voice. Mikhail Gorbachev called earlier, after he had talked to you. He said he had a good talk with you, in a good atmosphere, but that you had no agreement. How do you assess the situation at this point? (S)

The President: He is right on his assessment of the call. My view is that the Soviets are not being tricky. They are trying to stop the war and play a constructive role. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: That is my view, too. (U)

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The President: But I told him that we could not delay. First, I don't trust Saddam Hussein. Second, with his scorched earth policy he is laying waste to Kuwait. Third, he is trying to delay; he didn't meet the ultimatum. So I told Gorbachev that makes it impossible to do anything other than make him leave Kuwait. We are going through with our military planning, and I will have an important statement on that subject tonight at 10:00. But I don't see any way to avert going forward. Gorbachev wanted us to go to the UN. Their people are being cooperative, not contentious. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: One of the important issues for me is if Saddam Hussein is being honest, why does he need 21 days to withdraw? (S)

The President: Right. Also, there are other UN conditions such as reparations, paying for damages. And he is not in a position to bargain, though maybe he thinks he is. There are terrible stories even today that they are brutalizing the citizens of Kuwait. So, anyway, maybe he will come to his senses and start moving out, but we seen no evidence of that. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: George, I feel it is very, very important that Gorbachev knows that you appreciate what he is doing. (S)

The President: I think he knows that. I have told him over and over again. Not only that: I have told him that he will have a place in the region after the conflict is over. He wants to consider his country as a great power with interests in the region, and he wants to be taken seriously. I have told him we feel the same way. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: I think it important that he continue to be regarded as an ally in this effort. (S)

The President: I agree. People here are coming at me from the right and the left saying that I am being too kind to Gorbachev, but I am going to continue treating him with respect. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: They don't know what they are talking about. Your course is absolutely correct and will pay off. (S)

The President: I think so. Our discussions have been very civilized. In the talks Jim Baker has had with Bessmertnykh, the tone also has been very good. Major said the same about his talks with Gorbachev -- that the tone and atmosphere were very good. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. He confirmed that explicitly when he talked to me just now. Leaving everything else aside, that is very important. (S)

The President: My view is that the ground war will not be long. I am absolutely convinced of that. I am deeply concerned about the loss of life. It weighs on me every single minute. But to fall short of our stated goals would destroy the international credibility of many, many countries. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: That's true. (U)

The President: So there we are, at a very difficult period in history. I hope that afterwards we can all work together for a peaceful Middle East and, as you said, for a constructive and cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. That's good. George, all the best, then. (U)

The President: Thanks very much, my friend, for your support and kind words. (U)

-- End of Conversation --