

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Helmut Kohl

Interpreter: Gisela Marcuse
Notetakers: Lyle Harrison, Natalie Johnson,
Peter Huggins, Alexander Vershbow, Mary Ann
Peters

DATE, TIME February 17, 1996, 0850-0915 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Air Force One

Chancellor Kohl: Hi, Bill. How are you? (U)

The President: Hello, fine. How are you? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I'm very well, glad you're fine. You're
campaigning aren't you? (U)

The President: Yes I am, but I'm stuck on an icy runway. We're
trying to fly out to New Hampshire. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Better you stay down and win the elections than
go up and lose. (C)

The President: I agree with that. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: How are things going? (U)

The President: They're fine. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: That's my impression too. (U)

The President: You're going to Moscow, I think. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, tomorrow night. (U)

The President: How do you think Yeltsin is doing? (C)

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Reason: 1.5(b)

Declassify On: 2/20/06

Chancellor Kohl: About the outcome of the elections, I think it's still too early to say. He has a chance if he fights, if he fights reasonably, if he continues to be in favor of step-by-step reforms. His first moves were both very clever. If he does as promised and pays the overdue salaries, he will be fine. In the next week I hope he will conclude the protocol with the IMF. Then we'll see what we can do to help him. It's relatively easy. Basically, you and I are the only ones to have a very clear course. If he wins, it will be good; anybody else who might succeed him will only make things worse. The only sensible course is to support him without being too obvious or too pushy. We should just make it clear he has our trust. Moreover, what your State Department said was very smart and corresponds with my course as well. There are know-it-alls in Germany and Europe who say that we don't know what will happen so we shouldn't do anything. I don't know what will happen either, but if we don't help him, things will go wrong. (X)

The President: Yes I agree with that. It's important that we do it in a way that doesn't hurt him. If we do too much, if we're too obvious about it, it could be used against him. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: Exactly, it must not be over-obvious, it must not be too pushy, but we must be aware that people look at us and what we do. I think our course is about right. I'm going to tell him he must make clear signals in the direction of pursuing reforms. I'll call you at the end of next week and tell you first-hand what happened. (X)

The President: Sorry, Helmut, we got cut off. I just wanted to say one or two things before we sign off. [Note: there was a 2-3 minute break in the conversation while the conversation was reestablished.] (X)

Chancellor Kohl: Please go ahead. (X)

The President: The first thing is that Yeltsin may pressure you on full G-8 membership. We need to discourage it now. Between the two rounds of the elections, we can figure out what to do. But we should be careful about getting committed, since we could end up with Zyuganov as president. Russia is in a weak position financially, and we would be committed to a G-8. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: Precisely, I'm also only in favor of G-8 membership if Yeltsin stays, but not without Yeltsin. (X)

The President: If we said it like that in public, it might be used against him. We must be careful about what we say. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: No, no, I just told that to you. Of course I can't say that in public. (C)

The President: Also, I know that Warren Christopher spoke with you about NATO enlargement. I believe we're on the same page. We don't want to do anything to make Yeltsin's life more difficult. But if we change our position, the furor will be overwhelming on both sides, both here and in the Central and East European countries. I'm already being attacked here by Central and East European ethnic groups for not having done it already. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, my position is completely clear. I told Yeltsin a couple of days ago that we cannot, as a matter of principle, permit him to have a veto. Of course, the Poles have the right to want to join NATO, but we have to go about it in a clever way. NATO must bear in mind Russia's need for security assurances. It wouldn't be good for it to become a campaign issue either in Russia or in the United States. (C)

The President: A couple other things. Just let me say thank you for your effort and that of the rest of the EU to solve the problem in Mostar. We've got to do everything we can to see that the Federation stays together. I know we still have lots of problems in Bosnia, but as a whole, I think we've got it together. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: I think so too. It's difficult but we can do it if we work together. (C)

The President: Thank you. Please call me when you get back from Russia. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I hope you have a nice day. Thanks. Good-bye. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --