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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Chancellor Helmut Kohl (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Helmut Kohl

Interpreter: Harry Obst
Notetaker: Wylma Robinson, Larry Wright,
Sean Rice, Mary Ann Peters, Katherine
O'Loughlin, John Schmidt

DATE, TIME March 5, 1997, 9:35 - 9:55 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello, Helmut? (U)

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

The President: I am fine, thank you. How are you? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I am very good, thank you. There is lots of work. I am right in the middle of my next battle. You know we have to launch a number of reforms here, but it seems to be going well. On Sunday, we had local elections in Hesse and, in fact, in spite of the very sort of profound reforms that we have launched, we did not receive a drubbing at the polls. We have really received a quite satisfactory result for my party so we will continue. And I must say I am very pleased we shall see each other before too long. I believe we will be meeting in The Hague during the celebration of the Marshall Plan. And you know that I will be in Washington for a day in order to say a word of gratitude on behalf of the German people for the Marshall Plan. And in my speech, I would also like to pay tribute to the particular services Secretary Marshall rendered to the Germans. And in June, I will see you in Denver. I look forward to that. And I believe in a few days' time, you will go to Helsinki for a very important meeting indeed and I wish you the best of luck.
(C)

The President: Thank you. I am looking forward to seeing you on all these occasions. I wanted to talk to you about Helsinki.

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First, thank you for the work you and Jacques and Solana have done. And I think there is a real chance for progress there on the NATO-Russia relationship. Moscow is now talking seriously with us, but there are still problems. They are still seeking to ban NATO infrastructure on territory of new members and to eliminate the possibility of any additional countries joining after the first group. Now, if at Helsinki, Boris can agree on the main elements of the NATO package, then I want to call you back and also talk to Jacques about how we should proceed between then and Madrid. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Very good. Thank you. (U)

The President: I don't have any intention or expectation that we can announce an agreement at Helsinki, but I hope we can make enough progress in private so we can have confidence that a final agreement can be reached. Then we can discuss how to orchestrate the period between March and May to build up Yeltsin without risk of a high-profile failure. I want to make sure the central role that you and Jacques have played comes through clearly. Now let me say about this proposed five-power meeting after Helsinki, I have not ruled it out, but only if the outcome is decided. I don't want it to be a negotiating session. We also have to take into account the strong opposition from the Italians, Canadians and others. Maybe if we can get a deal with the Russians, one idea would be to hold a NATO-Russia summit in Paris before the Madrid meeting. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Maybe that was a misunderstanding just now. You know we are not really talking about a semi-NATO meeting before Paris, a quasi-NATO meeting. Boris Yeltsin's idea was to have a meeting in a somewhat smaller circle, but not in order to take a decision at this time, but to discuss certain issues and to prepare the ground, if you like. And, Bill, as I have always understood it, this was supposed to be a tool or an instrument to help you and not something that replaces the other conferences or other efforts. If it is not necessary, one really doesn't need it. You see, in the sense that when we see that matters come to a standstill and Yeltsin submits this plan or idea, then this could be helpful to make progress in the direction that we all desire. And, for very good reasons, I do not speak about this publicly. (Ø)

The President: Well, let me say, let's discuss it after Helsinki and see where we are. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: That is exactly my opinion. I believe we should not in any way further complicate matters. (Ø)

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The President: I agree with that. Let me raise a couple of other issues. First of all, I want to talk a minute about the Denver summit. I think we can help Yeltsin by including Russia in a G-8 in the beginning and then getting his agreement that some of the finance and economic issues, perhaps even financing for Ukraine, would require the G-7, at least at finance ministers level, to meet separately. We should give Boris a broader role -- I think it is important for working out an overall arrangement for Europe. But if we have a G-8, we have to have some provision for a separate G-7 finance meeting, to resolve finance issues on which they have different interests. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: I agree, Bill. I think we should start right away with a G-8. Whether we then at the end meet as G-7 heads of state and heads of government, that is something that we will have to wait and see, and decide whether we are in a position to do that. But at the moment, I am not in a position to tell Boris that. (Ø)

The President: I agree. I think they understand that there are certain economic decisions we may have to take that they can't be a part of yet. The question is, can we have the finance ministers meet alone and then relay their findings back to us without having the leaders meet again. Those kinds of questions do not need to be decided yet, but we should start out with him there at G-8. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, I think we are in agreement. When you meet him in three weeks' time, it is very important for him that you convey the message that he is on par with you, a partner of equal rank. And I think it is absolutely sufficient, in order to be able to do that, that we offer him a G-8 format so he can participate right from the start. And if Ukraine is on the agenda, I think we will both agree this is not an issue they can contribute to anyway because, as you already said, he is not able to contribute finances or anything like that. (Ø)

The President: Well, I agree. There is another issue. Before we can formalize this, we have to get everyone to agree and right now the Japanese have concerns. I think it is my responsibility to try to persuade them to get on board. And I think Hashimoto will go along if we make it clear that finance issues will be discussed separately. (Ø)

Let me talk to you about one other thing very briefly, with regard to NATO integration with the French. I think it would be a shame if France doesn't reintegrate into NATO, but I still cannot agree to have the United States give up AFSOUTH right now. We have put an attractive package on the table to enhance France's role and I hope you will discuss with Jacques the

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alternative to a single-minded focus on command of AFSOUTH. We need them back in NATO, and we have offered an attractive package. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Well, today as you know your new Secretary of Defense was here and I must say I had a very good impression, we had an excellent conversation. And I assured him already of the fact that I would like to be helpful wherever I can. Now, obviously, it would be very helpful for me in working out a strategy to work with Jacques, if I may call it that, if you could perhaps discreetly send me a memo of all the points that you might think would be helpful. Let me stress that once again, I can only do something if it is done with the utmost discretion. I am more than ready to do so. (S)

The President: I understand and I will send it to you. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: It would be very good if you send it to me directly, not through diplomatic or official channels. (S)

The President: I will get it to you right way. Thank you. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you. I just want to assure you once again; I think we should do everything to clear the ground and get this out of the way. (S)

The President: Wonderful. Thank you. I will see you soon. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you very much. Good-bye. And my warmest greetings to your wife. (U)

The President: Good-bye. My greetings to Hannelore. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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