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THE WHITE HOUSE
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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with German Chancellor Kohl on April 12, 1996

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Helmut Kohl

Notetakers: Carlos Pascual, Daniel Flessas and Elaine Florio

DATE, TIME April 12, 1996, 9:27 a.m. - 9:48 a.m. EDT,
AND PLACE: Residence

President Clinton: Hello? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Hello? (U)

President Clinton: Hello Helmut? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: How are you Bill? (U)

President Clinton: Fine. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Hope you are well. (U)

President Clinton: It has been a tough week with the loss of Ron Brown and his plane. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: It was a terrible thing. He was a friend of yours, too? (U)

President Clinton: Very close, yes. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I thought about you and thought he was absolutely a great man. Did he have children? (U)

President Clinton: Yes, he had two children who are grown and two grandchildren. But you know we lost a lot of bright young people, too. You know, as an adult I have had more than I deserve. It is very sad to lose the young people. (U)

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Chancellor Kohl: I thought about your loss and especially when I read about how close the two of you are. Things seem to be looking up with the elections. You know I don't bet, but so far I am betting my money on you. (S)

President Clinton: So far that's a good bet. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: You deserve it. Others win and don't deserve it, but you do. If I can discreetly do anything, let me know. (S)

President Clinton: I think your coming here May 23 is good. I hope you like the idea of going to Milwaukee together. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, we can do that. You work it out and we'll talk. (U)

President Clinton: I wanted to talk to you about two things -- about Lyons and Russia, and then a little about Bosnia, if that's okay. (S)

I want to discuss Russia's relationship with the G-7 because I think it will come up in some way when we are in Lyons. Boris pressed me on Tuesday on finalizing the G-8 in Lyons, and he seems to think that he has the green light from you and Jacques Chirac for this. Apparently he had not focused on the fact that when we are in Lyons it will be between the elections -- between the first and second elections. (S)

It is critical that we have a common view before going to Moscow next week. There appears to be no consensus now for G-8. The Japanese and the British are opposed. (S)

I would like to say what my concerns are. First of all, I want to do everything I can to support Russia through international institutions. But we will have a terrible problem if we go to G-8 and Zyuganov wins the election. It could make the mechanism unworkable. I don't want to send a political signal in Russia before the election. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, what you just said is key, really. Do you recall that the date Jacques Chirac came up with is not a good one? I have always said it was not good to have Lyons before the elections. To this day I do not understand why Paris scheduled it then. I told them time and again not to do that. (S)

When I saw Boris last, I told him precisely what you just told me. I said Boris, if you're not elected and this other guy is elected we will have a real problem. (S)

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Last week I had Bitterlich speak to the French. They met but I don't know the outcome of that meeting. I told him to have the French arrange something, but not correspond to the full G-8.

(C)

President Clinton: I think we need to find a way to expand Yeltsin's role, his prestige at home and show Russia more support from the West. We want to arrange to help him. We do not want to embarrass him or have a public rebuff on the G-8 that plays badly. We want to go into Lyons in a way that is positive for him. My people say he has a 50-50 chance for reelection. If we can achieve consensus before Moscow, we can pave the way and be sure there is no bad press from hostile sources. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: Lyons will be held between elections. I think absolutely your security advisor, Bitterlich and Chirac's security adviser should talk discreetly on Monday or Tuesday about what to do. And if necessary, we should individually, I mean you, me and Chirac, should talk to Yeltsin in Moscow. But individually, not in a group. We have to be frank. (C)

We're doing everything we can to ensure he wins the election. Of all the candidates, he is by far the best. People here attack the Communists, or rather attack me, for going to such lengths to support him. I don't care. If the other guy is elected, things would be very grim indeed. (C)

So we should let the three get together. I told the French to charm him. (C)

President Clinton: I agree with that. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: So I'll call my office and have Bitterlich talk to Lake. Your guy is Lake, right? (C)

President Clinton: Lake, yes. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: So I'll have Bitterlich get in touch with Lake if need be. We have to be discreet. (C)

President Clinton: We cannot afford to have Yeltsin embarrassed. That is why I want to resolve this earlier rather than later.

(C)

Let me say one other thing quickly. The summit communiqué is carefully crafted to recognize the important role of nuclear power but to keep emphasis on the safety first message. I think Primakov wants this. (C)

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I am concerned that Russia's Minister of Atomic Energy is lobbying Yeltsin to turn the summit into a pro-nuclear event. He goes around and tells people that Chernobyl is not dangerous and that there are plants in America that are more dangerous than Chernobyl. During his April 9 conversation with me, Yeltsin said Chernobyl is not a problem and argued against the communiqué language on Chernobyl, saying closure will harm Kuchma and Ukraine. (S)

We both know, of course, that the process outlined in the agreement is designed to make sure Ukraine is not harmed. Yeltsin's Atomic Energy Minister has fed him a completely incorrect line. Many in Russia's nuclear complex fear the Russian public will demand similar closure of 11 Chernobyl-type reactors still operating in Russia. (S)

I understand their concerns, but we can't afford to change the direction of the summit. If Yeltsin voices concerns during the Kuchma meeting, it will encourage Kuchma to turn the meeting into a pledging conference and to attempt to renegotiate the agreement he made with us. We need to turn Yeltsin around before meeting with Kuchma. (S)

Boris is not unreasonable, he just gets misinformed every now and then. I think we need to talk to him during the dinner or the morning P-8 meeting. We really need to work on that. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: This seems perfectly clear. I will not be in favor of changing letter one. We invested so much money there. Moreover, I think this thing must be closed. (S)

President Clinton: You've been a strong advocate on this position. I'm trying to alert you to what the Russians are doing. You can have great influence. I think we could turn the nuclear summit into a failure if there is a backout on Chernobyl. Otherwise, this will be a huge triumph. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Don't worry. Between us, we'll manage. Boris listens to us. (S)

President Clinton: Last time we talked, it was sort of back in the box. If it's a problem, we'll have to deal with it and keep it from getting out of hand. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: We'll do that in Moscow. We'll do it together. (S)

President Clinton: Well, it's great to talk with you. (U)

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Chancellor Kohl: To be sure, it is great talking with you. Take care of your cough. (U)

President Clinton: Thank you. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: My regards to your wife. (U)

President Clinton: And to Hannelore as well. See you in Moscow. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Good-bye. (U)

President Clinton: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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