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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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PER E.O. 13526**

2015-0776-M (1.34)
7/31/2018 KBM

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Helmut Kohl

Interpreter: Gisela Marcuse
Notetakers: Katherine O'Loughlin, Karen
Dragone, Elaine Florio, Mary Ann
Peters and Steve Pifer

DATE, TIME September 10, 1996, 10:02-10:21 a.m.
AND PLACE: Air Force One

Chancellor Kohl: Hello, Bill? (U)

The President: Hello Helmut. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, I hope everything is all right with you.
Are you well? (U)

The President: Yes, I am fine. I am on a plane. I am flying to
Missouri. I am fine. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, I called to give you a brief,
concentrated version of what Boris and I talked about on
Saturday. (Ø)

The President: Yes, fine. You talk and I will listen. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I'd rather speak with the interpreter though!
Can you hear me? (U)

The President: Yes, fine. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I talked with Boris for more than four hours on
Saturday. He met me at the helicopter. We flew to his dacha.
You know his dacha is over 140 kilometers outside of Moscow. It
is in a vast forest area with a river delta. It is a beautiful

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area, vast natural abundance and lots of wildlife. He is very fond of hunting and fond of staying there. We talked first for one and a half hours. We only used the German interpreter, you know my interpreter. Do you understand the importance of that?
(S)

The President: Yes. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: We talked in an open and frank manner. He was very much there intellectually but he is marked by his trouble. He is aware of his troubles and speaks about them in an open manner. After one and a half hours of talking, he grew tired, but did not want to interrupt. He wanted to have lunch with me. Then we traveled on his boat. We went for a one hour boat ride and he was very lively; it was very beautiful. He is very open about his physical troubles and his reactions are normal considering the importance of his upcoming operation. He knows it will not be a cakewalk. I'm not a medical person, but he told me he will have two bypasses, one on each side of the heart to relieve the burden on the aorta. Our German doctors said the surgery is not so dangerous or risky, it is the question of whether he is physically well enough to undergo surgery. Of course, he wants to get through it. He is not resigned in any way. Surgery will take place at the end of the month. He appears to have carefully considered having the surgery done in Germany or the United States. He thought it would be too difficult to sell to the Russian public. (S)

I took the liberty of conveying your regards. He was happy to hear from you. I offered medical assistance on my and your behalf. He was happy to hear that. I also discussed who will stand in for him when he undergoes surgery. He said nothing is laid out in the constitution on this. My impression was that Yeltsin believes and trusts that Prime Minister Chernomyrdin will take care of everyday business; Chernomyrdin will have his full confidence and trust. He is aware of the succession issue and it is quite visible he has certain reservations about Mr. Lebed. He was equally clear that he supports Lebed's efforts in Chechnya. Many people in Moscow hold a different view. He was of the clear conviction that the war had to end, that Russia could not win that war; it would have been a shame to have let it continue. His firm intention is to put an end to the war. He understands the damage done to the standing of the army and the negative public opinion. (S)

Other issues we discussed included NATO enlargement. I told him he would have to trust in two things. That we and the Western world could not accept a veto from Russia, from whomever and that the matter has to be settled in 1997, no later. He accepted the latter point and said the longer the question remains an open,

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pending one, the greater the damage would be. It is very important for him to know that while he is in the hospital, during that time, that the West will not take any action that would isolate Yeltsin. He is casting a critical eye on the U.S. political elections, but that eye is not on you, but on your competitor. Concerning NATO, I think the chances are good for us to reach an agreement with him. It will not be easy but it is doable. As we agreed last week, we should, in the coming weeks, concentrate on adapting and changing the internal structure of NATO and then start direct talks with Yeltsin next year. He has a great interest in seeing these negotiations take place at the highest level, in a discreet manner, by those with personal mandates from us. I think if we stay together, you, me, Major and Chirac, and speak to him in an open and frank manner, then we stand a chance of achieving something worthwhile. It is only after the four of us get something substantial that we turn it over to the official bureaucracy. I think this is in complete line with his personal wishes. We have to start negotiations with candidates for membership and try to set a summer date for a summit meeting of NATO. Also, in trying to stay in line with what we said last week, we, by the end of the year, have to announce the NATO meeting for late spring or early summer of 1997. In a nutshell, we can get an agreement with Yeltsin. It will not be easy, but it is doable on the condition he recovers his strength. If not, it will be a difficult period ahead. That's it in a nutshell. (Ø)

The President: That's very good news. I'm encouraged by what you say regarding Boris' state of mind and what he said about NATO. I think it is important that all of us be supportive of him during his surgery and that we do not create an impression of taking advantage of him during his convalescence. He has been a very important supportive ally. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: I take it you agree to my idea of a timeframe and schedule? (Ø)

The President: Let's go over it again. We agree to announce in December a NATO meeting for the spring or summer of 1997. Is that right? (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Exactly. And then we go about discreetly preparing for it. (Ø)

The President: Yes. As soon as Yeltsin is well enough, we will work out an appropriate relationship between NATO and Russia. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. My suggestion is we proceed at the highest political level as possible and establish contacts and

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what the agreement should look like. Only then, once an agreement is reached, do we get bureaucracies involved. (S)

The President: Sounds good to me. I will call Boris before his surgery and reinforce what you said. I will hope and pray he comes out of it okay. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, I think we stand a good chance if we stand together. (S)

The President: I agree. It's a wonderful thing that you went there. I wish I could have been there myself. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you and regards to your wife. Continue to fight as best you can. (U)

The President: You bet. I have to make your bet good. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Auf Wiedersehn. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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