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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

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

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Kohl

Interpreter: Gisela Marcuse
Notetaker: James Smith, Marianna
Papadimitriou, Jeff Rathke, Bob Ford, Peter
Huggins, Tony Campanella, Nancy McEldowney

DATE, TIME December 11, 1997, 9:28-9:57 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Miami, Florida

Chancellor Kohl: Hello? (U)

The President: Hello, Helmut. (U)

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

The President: Fine, thank you. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Well, do you have the same kind of crazy
schedule before Christmas that I have? This is a crazy kind of
development that happens every year the week before Christmas,
people heaping appointment after appointment on my desk. But
for some reason, at least we have spring weather outside.
Everything seems to be topsy-turvy now, but I hope we remain the
same people as we always have been. (U)

The President: Good. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: So, how are things: do you have a lot of
trouble at home right now? (U)

The President: No, things are going well here, but I am very
concerned about things in Asia. I'm also very concerned about

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the neo-isolationism in our Congress, where both parties are playing games with our international responsibilities, mostly over dues to the UN and expanding our trade initiatives. Otherwise things are going quite well here. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, I am trying to help you, believe me. I preach sermons and try to spread the good gospel to every Congressman and Senator I can take hold of over here. I am trying to influence them. (S)

The President: I'm making good progress in persuading them that we must stay in Bosnia. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: You know, before Christmas I plan to spend a day down in Bosnia with the German contingent, the soldiers deployed there, to demonstrate our commitment. And I think we will, the two of us, stay on course and abide by the policy line we agreed upon. (S)

The President: I think we have to, because slowly it is working. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes I hope so, I sincerely hope so, but obviously we have had a lot of disappointments, as well. (S)

The President: It's taking more time, but we have to stay with it. What do you think about the agreement in Kyoto? (S)

Chancellor Kohl: I think it is the lowest common denominator. Believe me, I am not very delighted or enchanted with the results, but under the circumstances, it is the maximum possible, and I suppose we will just have to live with it. It doesn't really make sense but we will just have to sell it to our publics in the best possible light. (S)

The President: That is what we will have to do. I think also if we take as many initiatives as quickly as possible to show we're serious, and keep working on the big developing countries, it will be shown as a very important first step. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Well, I think we will simply try to make the best of it, Bill. It doesn't make sense to be grumpy about it and try to change things in retrospect. And in hindsight it always looks different. (S)

The President: What do you know about Yeltsin's health? (S)

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Chancellor Kohl: I hear very different things about him. As yet, I don't have any source of reliable information. There are some people who say it's nothing serious but others say, yes, he has heart problems, cardiac troubles, but there is nothing substantive yet. As soon as I know, I'll call you. I saw him Sunday a week ago, and I must say, it was very cold, freezing outside. We were in the forest, as you probably know, and there was ice on the ground and it was very slippery. He was very cautious with everything, as he has been at virtually every meeting we have had recently. But he had all his wits about him; after all, we were there four hours -- our meeting lasted four hours, and what he said to us was to the point. He did have a cold: you could see and hear that. But I think we just have to wait until we have something substantiated. (X)

The President: I appreciate the fact that you raised the Iran missile issue with him. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, I did; I pressed him very hard on this point. I was as blunt as possible on this point and he firmly promised that he would in the next few days or weeks go public with a statement and a presidential decree where he would say that he did not like the idea at all and that he disapproved of it officially. (X)

The President: That is good news. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: But I should tell you, Bill, that I also told him I would look at the situation to see how it develops and come back to him in January to see if he actually fulfilled his promises. (X)

The President: I think that's very important. It could seriously disrupt our good relations and cause a lot of problems with Congress; it's important to follow up. (X)

Let me ask you one other thing. We had the U.S.-EU summit meeting here a few days ago and I was briefed on the EU plans for the summit on the 12th and 13th of December. I am very concerned about what you and I talked about the last time we had dinner at Filomena's -- in trying to keep Turkey tied to the West and to give them more incentives to address human rights and Cyprus and other Aegean issues. You explained to me what the difficulties were for you. (X)

As I understand it, the EU is making serious efforts to try to keep Turkey moving toward Europe while working through issues

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important to Greece and other countries. I just wanted to get your assessment. With all the instability in the Middle East, I think it is important to keep Turkey anchored to the West. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: Well, Bill, perhaps I should underline first of all, that we have been, by tradition, long-standing friends of Turkey, and we have, time and again, proved we are good friends of Turkey. I must say, during my term in office, we have had only one controversy, one quite severe fight with any U.S. administration. And that was with President Reagan's administration, with himself and his Secretary of State during the G-7 world economic meeting in Tokyo. At the time, the State Department opted for a very pro-Greece and anti-Turkey policy line, and this is why we seriously argued. At the time you could actually feel how strong the Greek lobby was in Congress. But that changed quite significantly in the Bush Administration, and I was gratified by that change. Obviously, that proved its worth later in the Gulf War when we could rely on them in fighting this monster in Iraq. (C)

Subsequently, I had a lot of arguments with, for example, Papandreou. He was blocking, in a sort of unfair, unbalanced way, the financial protocol which was meant to benefit Turkey at the time. I must say, I had great hopes that now that Yilmaz, the Prime Minister in Turkey, a very sensible man who studied for a time in Germany and Simitis, who also studied here and who used to be professor at a German university, that these two very sensible men would come to a sensible compromise. Unfortunately, so far, there has been no substantial progress on the road to an agreement. In Greece, you can feel the particularly terrible brand of chauvinism which is obviously related to Cyprus. On the other hand, there is a very intransigent military in Turkey: they don't want to move an inch. (C)

My position is very clear cut and incidentally, it is a position shared by many of our friends and partners in the EU. First of all, it is in our vital interest to get Turkey as close to the EU as possible. Obviously, we need to do everything to counter the rise of fundamentalism and to see that fundamentalism is not successful. That means, consequently, that we must avoid, at all costs, pushing the Turks into some kind of corner or onto the fringes. (C)

In the text which was adopted, which I supported, we very clearly stated we wanted to promote a policy designed to draw Turkey closer to the EU and to Europe. Secondly, this paper

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also states equally clearly that Turkey is a candidate for accession to the European Union. I am absolutely confident this will be adopted in Luxembourg, unless Turkey demands more than that. I have to be clear that right now, it is clearly not possible to get more. (X)

From the early days of the EU, there has been a very clear charter as to how such accession of new members should unfold. We call it the principle of Copenhagen, where it was adopted. Obviously, the agenda includes, first of all, human rights, rights of minorities, then democracy and the democratic status. Each and every candidate has to fulfill these criteria. It is a bit absurd, of course, that they now seem to confuse the line that one ought not to remind each other of those principals or demand that those principals be fulfilled. (X)

Now then, there is another problem that we in Germany have, and which the Turks overlook, and that is the question of freedom of movement. Because we foresee that once you have granted Turkey full freedom of movement, which membership entails, the number of Turks living here in Germany would rise from two to three million to five to six million. It is a staggering figure and simply unacceptable to us. Actually, Yilmaz himself assured us that any membership would only be an option in the long term, meaning in this sense, more than 10 years. Now, we feel that in the meantime it is absolutely possible to come up with sort of interim solutions to bridge that transition for Turkey and make it easier for them: I am absolutely for that. Other things come into play, they have something to do with the quarrel with Greece, the problem of the border disputes in the Aegean, and so on. Actually, the best thing would be if the Turks accept what Greece seems willing to accept, that all of these disputes be settled in an international court of arbitration. (X)

There is no question we can move forward. But quite frankly, Bill, my view from here is that Ankara seems to have a different kind of approach, a sort of thinking along other lines. They are quite openly counting on the American administration and the American President forcing the EU to accept the membership of Turkey; they are banking on it. Obviously, this is nonsense. I don't believe, and I haven't believed for a moment, that this is your opinion. So tomorrow and the day after at the EU summit meeting, I will try to do everything to come to some fair solution to this problem; obviously, I want to do everything to preserve what I would call the European vocation of Turkey, this wish of Turkey, as I perceive it, to belong to Europe. (X)

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The President: Well, I understand your position and I think the Turks have to understand there is no immediate prize on the horizon for them. I think it is important that they feel they are slowly going to tie themselves more tightly to the West as they work out their problems. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, if they think like that, we will be successful. (S)

The President: We will work to do our best. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Very good. I think we should stay in the closest possible contact on this. Bill, one other thing I would like to be perfectly frank about also. A few of my colleagues in Europe are, I believe, talking with a forked tongue. During our meetings, they will say, "Obviously, you are right, this is how we have to do it, there is no other way." But once they talk to President Demirel or to Prime Minister Yilmaz, they change their tactic and say what they wish to hear. I think it is a bit of a shame. But you know how it is in politics. I don't think there are any lessons we have to learn here; we've seen that. (S)

The President: I agree with you, there is no question that the feelings are more widely held -- it is not a German issue. The main thing is we have to keep reaching out to them. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: I absolutely agree. (S)

The President: Thank you, have a good day. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, all the best to you, and if we don't talk before then, Merry Christmas to you. (U)

The President: Merry Christmas, Helmut. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Good-bye. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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