

January 18, 1994

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telcon with Chancellor Kohl of Germany on January 18, 1994

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Summary:

Clinton and Kohl discuss the political and economic situation in Russia, negotiations with Ukraine over dismantling its nuclear stockpile, and other international issues.

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon With Chancellor Kohl of Germany on
January 18, 1994

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Kohl
Interpreters: Giesle Marcuse and German
interpreter

Notetaker: Anne Davis Alexander and
Neil Bleicken

DATE, TIME January 18, 1994; 4:08pm-4:30pm, EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello Helmut.

Chancellor Kohl: Hello.

The President: How are you?

Chancellor Kohl: And how are you? I hope you survived the trip
alright.

The President: I survived the trip alright. Today I had my
annual physical. It was harder than the trip.

Chancellor Kohl: I'm glad to hear you passed your physical.
Before I talk about issues I want to discuss, I would like to
express, on behalf of the Federal Government, our sympathy on
behalf of the victims of the earthquake. I hope you can cope
with the consequences.

The President: Thank you. I'm going out there in a day or two.
I think they are making some progress. You know, California used
to be the golden place but they've had all those fires and now
this earthquake.

Chancellor Kohl: You do very well after this strenuous trip?
And let me say that I congratulate you because I think this trip
was very successful and from what I read in the press you should
be satisfied. What impressions did you have from Moscow?

The President: Well, I had mixed impressions of the situation in
Moscow. Mostly good, but mixed. Let me summarize for you.
First, on the question of Yeltsin's government's commitment to
reform, I think they want to keep going and Gaidar's resignation
is not necessarily bad for that. That is, if he keeps a good
team in place he can work for reform and Gaidar can be a strong

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voice in parliament. He can look out for the Russian people and make it work for him.

Chancellor Kohl: Very good. I hear similar things on the situation there.

The President: On the question of foreign policy, I had a good visit with Kozyrev as well as Yeltsin and I am convinced that they will try to stay with the same line on their borders and such and will hope the nationalists will be satisfied with *****. Let me give you a positive example. I urged Yeltsin to continue the withdrawal from the Baltics and the only hold-up is the Skrunda issue. I believe you are familiar with it. The Latvians want the Russians to stay three years and withdraw within one. The Russians want to stay five years and withdraw over two years. I got Yeltsin to agree to split the difference. If you could encourage the Russians and the Latvians to go with this, I think withdrawal is good for the Baltics.

Chancellor Kohl: I will do so.

The President: The third issue is obviously the trilaterals with Ukraine over the nuclear issue. We need to work with the Russians and convince the Ukrainians it's good for them. It clearly is good.

Chancellor Kohl: What sort of impressions did you get from Kravchuk and what kind of reaction did you get from him on the election issue.

The President: Kravchuk was quite energetic and self-confident and utterly without doubt that he would prevail with the Rata. He seemed quite upbeat about it all. The other positive about the trip was that Yeltsin seemed in very good shape physically and mentally and up to the challenges ahead. There are some troubling things I want to discuss with you. The average person in Russia doesn't feel connected to the government or understand how it will come out for them. Even some of the better educated Russians feel uninvolved and disconnected. They believe Yeltsin is on the right side of history but don't feel connected to it.

Chancellor Kohl: I told him this during our last meeting and he had this air to him too. One gets the feeling he is disconnected, not that he wants that, not that it is part of his character, but there is this huge apparatus, this huge machinery around him that cuts him out.

The President: Well, I based these feelings based on conversations with other political leaders I met at the reception at the embassy, with the people I met on the street, and in the town meeting, across the spectrum.

Chancellor Kohl: I understand.

The President: I talked to him a little about what he could do to make it better. There is another thing that bothered me.

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They seem to have a general idea of what they want to do but don't have a specific strategy. I think this is why some blame it on the west, that it is imposed upon them. They haven't articulated a strategy. I hope **** we can speed up all the aid we agreed to at the G-7. This will help them form a strategy. I just think they haven't thought it through the whole way. Anyway, when we meet at the G-7 in July we should discuss how they have done it in the last year and how we have done with them and what we can do to open the markets for them and Eastern Europe.

Chancellor Kohl: Very good. Bill, I intend to call Boris in a few days and then when we'll meet in Washington toward the end of the month I'll be able to get you more of his impressions. Then, after that, we should make good use of our time before the G-7 in July and before we meet to plan a strategy together.

The President: I agree with that. I think he believes you and I know him best and are his biggest supporters in the outside world. I would appreciate it if you would call him and get his views on the trip.

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, as we've already agreed. We have to support him as much as we can. Any possible alternative will be much worse. I see a lot of people in the west who are know-it-alls and who always know better, but who don't do anything.

The President: That's what I think. Everyone is criticizing. I get criticized for supporting him but no one has a better idea.

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, obviously. That's the same case anywhere. From here, that looks like a very good job and you don't have to worry about it any more than that.

The President: I know you have to go back to your campaigning, but I have one more thing I want you to be thinking about. I made good progress in convincing the Visegrad four and Russia about the Partnership For Peace. If Germany could host something that we could all participate in, in Germany, that might convince them that there is something for us to work for here.

Chancellor Kohl: I'll be thinking about that. Are any of the members of your staff apprised of the background of your ideas of the strategy you have in mind there.

The President: Yes...

Chancellor Kohl: In that case, it might be a good idea if one of our people got in touch with your staff...

The President: Absolutely, OK.

Chancellor Kohl: I have a better idea. My senior advisor, Mr. Bitterlich, will be in the White House tomorrow, and why doesn't he talk to your staff about this?

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The President: Good. He'll see Tony Lake, right?

Chancellor Kohl: Yes.

The President: We'll talk to him then.

Chancellor Kohl: Very good. I wish you the best of times. Don't worry about anything. You are a very young man and a young President and you should take the "devil may care" attitude.

The President: Go make some votes.

Chancellor Kohl: Goodbye.

The President: Bye, bye. Auf Wiedersehen.

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