

February 18, 1991
Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telcon
with Chancellor Kohl of Germany, February 18,
1991, 12:04-12:32 p.m.

Citation:

"Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telcon with Chancellor Kohl of Germany, February 18, 1991, 12:04-12:32 p.m.", February 18, 1991, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Memcons and Telcons, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1991-02-18--Kohl.pdf>.
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Summary:

Kohl briefs Bush on a conversation he recently had with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati concerning the Gulf War. Bush and Kohl also discuss Soviet views on the conflict, as also recent exchanges between France and Germany on GATT negotiations.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Chancellor Kohl of Germany (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Helmut Kohl, Chancellor
Notetaker: Robert Hutchings, NSC Staff
Interpreter: Gisela Marcuse

DATE, TIME February 18, 1991, 12:04 - 12:32 p.m.
AND PLACE: Camp David

Chancellor Kohl initiated the call. (U)

The President: Helmut! How are you today? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Quite well. There is a lot of work, but things are going well. (U)

The President: You are nice to call. What is going on? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: There are three things I wanted to discuss. The first is a conversation I just had with the Iranian foreign minister, who was just here. What was quite interesting was that he reported that his side and yours started from the assumption that Iraq suffered substantial damage. He said that he had a conversation with the Iraqi foreign minister yesterday, before he went to Moscow. In the conversation, the Iraqi let the information seep through that there had been heavy damage. Obviously, the Iranian foreign minister has known his counterpart for a long time, and he said that this must have had the agreement of his government back home in Baghdad. Velayati is of the opinion that they are trying to find a face-saving option, a way out. I told him quite clearly that the declaration on Friday was clearly not in that direction, but he said that even in the face of what I told him he still believed they were trying for a face-saving option. He also told me they are pinning their hopes on the talks in Moscow. This morning I got a call from Gorbachev during a break in his conversation with the Iraqi foreign minister. This was because we had agreed on a date and hour before he knew of that meeting; we wanted to talk about the Two Plus Four in the Supreme Soviet. Incidentally, he assured me he wanted to push it through at all costs. He also said he would call tomorrow to report on the results of the Iraqi foreign minister's visit, and that he also intended to call you. So, I don't really know any specifics, but I have the impression that

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something is happening within Iraq. As to the outcome, we will have to wait and see. (Ø)

The President: That is interesting. We have to see that Iraq will comply. I don't know about face-saving for Saddam Hussein. That doesn't interest me. The important thing, as you know, is compliance with the UN resolutions. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: George, the Iranian foreign minister was very clear. He said they will have to comply with the UN resolutions demanding they withdraw. (Ø)

The President: Helmut, did he mention reparations and other conditions? (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: No. What he did was try to explain that the conditions were not really conditions. What he wanted to tell me, and he considered this the most important point, was that Saddam Hussein did not make reference to Kuwait as his 19th province. He thought that meant he was preparing for withdrawal. I am only reporting, not assessing. (Ø)

The President: I agree. It was the only thing that was new and encouraging. The rest of it was totally unacceptable. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Did Mikhail Gorbachev try to get in touch with you after his conversation? (Ø)

The President: No, but I think Bessmertnyhk will try to get in touch with Baker. On the other side, we cannot and will not permit Saddam Hussein to bring victory from the jaws of certain defeat. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: I am in complete agreement with you, but if I understand the message coming out of the Iranian foreign minister correctly, Saddam Hussein has quite a lot of difficulties maintaining his foothold. He said something very interesting, that Iraq is not Saddam Hussein and that Iran wants to help Iraq but not help a certain individual. I thought it unusual. (Ø)

The President: That is very interesting -- a very interesting statement, Helmut. I hadn't heard it before. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: As soon as I have anything new, I will get in touch with you. Another point: I had a long discussion with Francois Mitterrand on Friday concerning the GATT. Bearing in mind our many conversations, I tried to press on him the importance of the issue. I am not making promises, but only reporting my impressions from the conversation. He did agree that the GATT round must be successful. He also agreed that GATT must address not just agricultural policy but all other areas as well, and agreed that both sides must show a readiness to compromise. I told him that for the EC's part, our aim must be to assure that Congress will renew or prolong fast track authority for the President. I told him that there are three important points for the EC: first, market access; second,

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internal supports; and, third, export subsidies. That is the most difficult and delicate point from the French point of view. I told him we have to get to work. George, I have a bit of advice. I think it would be very helpful, in spite of the great burdens you have, to telephone Jacques Delors. Or I can tell him to call you, so that a conversational link is established. Delors knows how important this is. I think he is ready to move, but he is getting a lot of flak. Perhaps it would be helpful from a psychological point of view if I told him to call you.

(✓)

The President: I would be delighted to talk with him. I would like to wait until I get home so I can be updated by my negotiators and the Secretary of State, but I could talk to him from tomorrow afternoon on if you think it would be helpful. (✓)

Chancellor Kohl: It wouldn't be necessary for the next few hours. If you agree, I might call him in the next few days and tell him to call you in the second half of the week. (✓)

The President: Very good. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Excellent. Is there any news from the Gulf?
(U)

The President: Nothing new. The operation is going well. I just talked to Cheney. We are damaging his armor very greatly. Helmut, I am convinced that if there is a ground war -- one, it will not be long, and two, allied casualties will be far less than what we hear from the experts on TV. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I certainly hope so. (U)

The President: Can I ask a question about Velayati? Is he a good man? I have heard positive things about him. (✓)

Chancellor Kohl: He is a man of quality, and a real Iranian. I remember when I studied I had fellow students from Iran. That is why I venture such an opinion. Second, from a religious viewpoint, his convictions are very strong. That is something to bear in mind. It was quite interesting when I said that it was a disgrace to see what was happening at the cradle of the three large religions of mankind. He was very glad to take up the subject. He also knows a lot about the West. He studied medicine in the U.S., I believe. I also have the impression, from something which Mikhail Gorbachev told me, that he has the ear of his President. Another thing, which I can't prove: my impression from the conversation is that once everything moves, once the dust settles, they are interested in improved relations with the U.S. -- not right away, because there are still hostilities, but I do think there is a real possibility. He was addressing the future of the region, and who would play a role there. He said all relevant countries have to play a role, including the U.S. (✓)

The President: I think he is right. Given the pressures within

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Iran, this is not the time to restore full relations, but we keep hearing they want better relations. Yet here they are after an eight-year war with Iraq. I am very interested in what he said about the Iraqi people and not Saddam Hussein. My view is that if he got out we would all have a better time of it. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: But unfortunately he is still there. (S)

The President: Maybe not forever. Perhaps someday he will go. It has happened before. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Unfortunately it may take some time. You know we Germans have experience with that. (S)

The President: Look at Romania, how people were dancing in the street after Ceausescu went. Thank you very much for the call, for keeping me informed. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Please give my kindest greetings to Barbara. (U)

The President: She is right here and sends her love. Her leg is almost well. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: All the best. Good-bye. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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