

December 5, 1989

**Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev
and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FRG H.D.
Genscher**

Citation:

"Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FRG H.D. Genscher", December 5, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Notes of A.S. Chernyaev. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.

<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/120827>

Summary:

Record of a conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and H.D. Genscher discussing Helmut Kohl's Ten Points. Genscher expresses interest in negotiating with FRG and passing reforms in the GDR.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Gorbachev. I have to tell you directly--I cannot understand Federal Chancellor Kohl who spoke about his famous Ten Points concerning the FRG's intentions regarding the GDR. It must be stated directly, that those are ultimatum demands that are imposed on the independent and sovereign German state. By the way, even though he only mentioned the GDR, what the Chancellor said, concerns us all.

First of all, these ten points appeared after we had a constructive and positive exchange of opinions, after we had reached agreements on several fundamental issues. You would think: that he should be presenting such a document only after relevant consultations with partners. Or does the Federal Chancellor think that he does not need them anymore? He, probably, already thinks that his music is playing, the march, and that he is already marching with it. I do not think that such steps would contribute to the strengthening of trust and mutual understanding, contribute to filling our agreements with life. What kind of "Europe building" one can talk about, if they act in such a way?

You know that we talked with Chancellor Kohl on the telephone. I was telling him that the GDR was a factor of not only European, but of world politics, and that both the East and the West would carefully follow everything that is happening there. Kohl agreed with that, he assured me that the FRG did not want destabilization of the situation in the GDR, and that they would act in a balanced way. However, his practical steps deviate from his assurances.

I told Kohl, that the GDR is an important partner and ally of the Soviet Union. We are also interested in developing our relations with the FRG. This is a triangle that plays a special role in the European and global development. Everything has to be carefully balanced in this triangle. And now he is issuing an ultimatum. He gives directions about what road the GDR should take, what structures they should create. The FRG leadership is simply bursting with a desire to command. And, let me assure you, everybody can feel that.

Maybe it is Bush who is heating the situation up? Still, you have to think through your moves two or three, or five, steps ahead, to foresee their consequences.

[...] Yesterday Chancellor Kohl, without much thought, stated that President Bush supported the idea of confederation. What is next? What does a confederation mean? Confederation presupposes common defense, and common foreign policy. Where will the FRG find itself then--in NATO or in the Warsaw Treaty? Or maybe it will become neutral? And what would NATO mean without the FRG? And after all, what will come next? Did you think about everything? What will happen with the existing agreements between us? Do you call this politics?

Shevardnadze. Today you apply this style to the GDR, tomorrow you might apply it to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and then-- to Austria.

Gorbachev. With all the responsibility, I can tell you that you have demonstrated not the best style of politics-- you do not separate your position from Kohl's. In any case, I cannot call him a responsible and predictable politician

Genscher. [...] On the eve of my trip to Moscow I spoke with Chancellor Kohl in Brussels. His statement often points does not represent a schedule of urgent measures, it defines the long-term perspective. The GDR will decide on its own, will respond to his proposal--yes, or no.

We are interested in the internal stability in the GDR. We believe that by his statement the Federal Chancellor contributed to the strengthening of that stability. There were no directives, or ultimatums, in that statement. We know that neither

Poland nor Hungary has such impressions. These ten points, and our policy, are supported by all parties represented in the Bundestag, including the SPD.

At the same time, we dissociate ourselves from the internal problems of the GDR, for which the FRG bears no responsibility.

Gorbachev. I could not even anticipate that you would assume the role of Federal Chancellor Kohl's defense attorney. Let us take the third point of his statement. He spoke for "comprehensive expansion of our assistance, and our cooperation, if the GDR makes the necessary basic changes in the political and economic system," and if the state leadership of the GDR reaches agreements with the "opposition groups," and if the GDR follows this course irreversibly. What do you call it except a crude interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state?

Shevardnadze. Even Hitler did not allow himself anything like that.

Gorbachev. More than that, Chancellor Kohl demands that the Socialist United Party of Germany gives up its monopoly on power. He speaks about the need to abolish the "bureaucratic planned economy". Economic improvement, according to him, can only be achieved when the GDR opens its doors for Western investment, creates conditions for market economy, and ensures opportunities for private enterprise.

I think that the GDR has to undertake fundamental reforms. However, this is their internal affair. Chancellor Kohl, meanwhile, is treating the citizens of the GDR, in essence, like his own subjects. This is simply blatant revanchism, which leaves nothing from his positive assurances, puts all the agreements we have achieved in question (...)

Genscher. I would like to draw your attention to point two, where it is said that the federal government of the FRG would like to expand cooperation with the GDR on the basis of equality in all spheres.

Gorbachev. Stop defending it, Mr. Genscher. Point Two is completely devalued by Point Three. In the Czarist Russia, when a political prisoner was released, he was told that he could live wherever he chooses, except the 18 counties, and there were only 18 counties in Russia. Where, do you think, would he live? It is the same with this statement.

Genscher. This is not so...

Gorbachev. The Chancellor's statement is a political miss. We cannot just let it go unnoticed. We are not inclined to play diplomacy with you. If you want to cooperate with us-- we are ready. If not, we are going to draw political conclusions. I am asking you to take what I have just said seriously.

Genscher. I am speaking seriously. There are no conditions in the Ten Points. These are just suggestions, and the GDR should decide whether they are suitable or not.

Gorbachev. Then it is even more of an ultimatum. Judging from all this, you have prepared a funeral for the European processes, and in such a form.

Genscher. This is not so. I am in favor of speaking openly. You should not interpret point two and point three in such a way. I would not want to be accused of a lack of good will. The FRG does not want to interfere in anybody's internal affairs.

[...]Gorbachev. We think that the changes in the GDR are good, but you should not interfere with all kinds of instructions and advice.

Genscher. We respect these changes.

Gorbachev. I am speaking about the FRG now. There is some confusion in minds there, a bustle. One can feel, that some people there are already bursting from what is going on. Some people are beginning to lose their minds, and they do not see anything around themselves. And politics without minds is no politics. This way you can spoil everything that we have created together. The Germans are emotional people, but you are also philosophers. You have to remember what mindless politics led to in the past.

Genscher. We are aware of our historic mistakes, and we are not going to repeat them again. The processes that are going on now in the GDR and in the FRG do not deserve such a harsh judgment. (...)

Gorbachev. In short, you want to say that you are acting correctly and responsibly. This is my conclusion. I would like to emphasize once more that we assign a special "importance to what is going on, and that we will monitor everything very carefully.

Genscher. Yes, the policy of the federal government is responsible and predictable, otherwise, I would have nothing to say.

Gorbachev. I am not speaking now about your overall policy, only about the Ten Points. You are forgetting the past. Everybody can see that Chancellor Kohl is rushing, that he is artificially stimulating the events, and by doing that, he is undermining the European process that is being developed with such difficulty. How can he think that we are unable to give an impassionate judgment about his behavior[?]

Genscher. I have already said that you should not dramatize the events. [...]

Gorbachev. [...]By the way, it seems to me, Mr. Genscher, that you only learned about his Ten Points from the speech in the Bundestag.

Genscher. Yes, it is true, but this is our internal affair. We will deal with it ourselves.

Gorbachev. You can see that your internal affair makes everybody concerned. But the main thing is that we understand each other.

It seems to me that you are satisfied with what we are going to tell the press. Today we are still speaking like this. However, keep in mind that if some in your country do not come to their senses, then tomorrow we will make another statement.

Genscher. Let me assure you that we will take the most responsible approach. Please do not think that I do not mean what I am saying.

Gorbachev. Do not take everything I said personally, Mr. Genscher. You know that we feel about you in a special way, not like we feel about others. We hope that you understood everything correctly. Thank you for the conversation.