

November 11, 1989

**Record of Telephone Conversation between M. S.
Gorbachev and Chancellor of the FRG Helmut Kohl.
Moscow-Bonn.**

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Summary:

Gorbachev and Kohl discuss reforms in the GDR to stabilize the situation and to decrease the number of people crossing the border.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

The conversation occurred on Helmut Kohl's request

Kohl. I am glad to hear you, Mr. General Secretary. I would like to express my appreciation in regards to your address yesterday. It is a very good step. ...

We want the people in the GDR to stay home, and we do not strive for all the GDR population to move to the FRG. And not at all because, as some are claiming, we would not be able to resolve the problems that would result from that--for example, 230,000 people moved from the GDR to the FRG during this year, and all of them were accommodated. But a mass migration to the FRG would be an absurd development--we want the Germans to be able to build their future at home.

I would also like to inform you, even though the information is still preliminary, that today by 12 noon hundreds of thousands of people have crossed the GDR border. However, there is an impression that the majority of them are just visitors, and have no intention to stay in the FRG. The number of people who actually want to move to the FRG for permanent residency is much lower than we would be concerned about.

I recently told you that we did not want destabilization of the situation in the GDR. I am still of the same position. I do not know on what scale Egon Krenz really plans to carry out the reforms. However, in the situation such as they have now, the GDR leadership should act in a more dynamic way.

I would like to repeat, that I appreciate your contacting me in connection with these events. Next week, immediately after I return from Poland, I would like to give you a call again, if you do not have any objections, to discuss the new developments with you.

Gorbachev. That would be good. I recall how we discussed the relations between our two peoples, the general developments in Europe in the philosophical sense. As you can see, Mr. Chancellor, those discussions were not simple exercises in rhetoric. Deep changes are underway in the world. It also concerns the East European countries. One more example of that is the beginning of the reform process in Bulgaria. And the changes happen even faster than we could have even imagined recently.

Of course, the changes could take different forms in different countries, be more or less deep. However, it is important that the stability is preserved that all the sides act in a responsible way.

All in all, I think that the basis for mutual understanding is improving. We are getting closer to each other. And this is very important.

[...] In particular, I recommended to Egon Krenz that the leadership of the republic should prepare the reforms while carefully taking into the account the mood in the society, and on the basis of an open dialogue with public forces, public movements in the country.

I understand that all Europeans, and not only Europeans, closely follow the developments in the GDR. It is a very important point in world politics. But it is also a fact that you and me--the FRG, and the Soviet Union--have even more interest in these developments both because of the history, and because of the character of our relations today.

In general, I can say that there is a certain kind of triangle forming now, in which everything has to be thought-out and balanced. I think that our relations today allow

us to do everything the way it should be [done].

Of course, any kind of change means some kind of instability. That is why, when I speak about preserving stability, what I mean is, that we, on all sides, should make carefully thought-out steps in relation to each other.

I think, Mr. Chancellor, we are experiencing a historic turn to new relations, to a new world. And we should not allow ourselves to harm this turn by our awkward actions. Or, moreover, to push the developments toward an unpredictable course, toward chaos, by forcing the events. It would be undesirable in all respects.

That is why I take your words, that you have said in our conversation today, very seriously. And I hope, that you will use your authority, your political weight, and influence in order to keep others within the limits adequate for the time being, and for the requirements of our time.

Kohl. I think that it is fortunate that the relations between the USSR and the FRG have reached such a high level of development that they have now. And I especially appreciate the good personal contacts that have developed between us. In my opinion, our relations are beyond simply official contacts, that they have a personal character. I believe that they could continue to develop like this in the future. I am ready for that. I understand that a personal relationship does not change the essence of the problems, but it can make their solutions earlier.

Coming back to the assessment of the situation in the GDR, I would like to mention that the problem now lies in the sphere of psychology. Honecker's course, who rejected any reforms up until the end, put the new leadership of the GDR in a very difficult situation. Krenz's "team" now has to operate under a horrible time pressure, and this is where I see the main problem. You are right, they need time for drafting and implementing the reforms. But how would you explain it to the population of the GDR?