

Document No. 2: Letter from Helmut Kohl to George H.W. Bush

November 28, 1989

Dear George,

Thank you for your telephone request for information on the German situation for your upcoming meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev in Malta.

I welcome this. This is a great sign of German-American friendship and partnership. At the same time, I would like to thank you for your friendly words in your Thanksgiving television address.

In order to take full advantage of your offer, I ask that you understand that your meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev will likely deal with themes that touch on the interests of the Federal Republic of Germany and all Germans.

1. Malta Philosophy

I am much obliged to you, George, for the clarity with which you have rejected every parallel between Yalta and Malta. I mention this point not from a German or European status perspective. My point is more that the historical reform process we are currently experiencing in East and Central Europe is not only proceeding in the direction of our Western values--free self-determination, democracy, private enterprise--but is also being carried out by the

people themselves. Lech Wałęsa impressively underscored this recently in talks with you and before the Congress of the United States.

That is why attempts to steer these reform developments from above or to channel or limit the movement of the people fail to meet the demands of this historic (Anya, is this one of the docs we don't have in the original?)] epoch. This is of course a consideration that applies to us and to our European neighbors.

In this sense, the talks in Malta should avoid any appearance of a status quo summit.

2. Stability of the Reform Process

The issue that General Secretary Gorbachev will in all likelihood address--warding off of all destabilization, increasing stability through reform--should be handled from this perspective.

Towards these goals, I would like to recommend full and complete agreement--in my name as well. The same goes for your assurance that America greets these reforms--and not as an opponent looking for an advantage, but rather as a people that offers support.

That is why it is important to establish with General Secretary Gorbachev the definition of both concepts:

--Contrary to what some Eastern propaganda still claims, destabilization does not come from Western influence or an invasion from the West. Its source is more from an awakening after many decades of violent, oppressive conflicts (for example ethnic conflict), or from the rejection of reforms and the subsequent reaction--or flight--of the people. The GDR and the ČSSR are the latest examples of this, and the fate of Romania is an occasion for much concern.

--Stability means stable development of reforms that guarantee the self-determination of the people--in the words of Gorbachev, "freedom of choice"--that allow citizens a democratic share in the political developments in their country and open to the people a tangible future outlook in their homeland. In short: as in 1776, it is about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness!

--Last but not least, stability means a positive foreign policy environment, especially dynamic progress in disarmament and arms control.

If these definitions are correct, then the result will be that the most important decisions over stability or destabilization will be made by the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The duty of the West, on the other hand, must be to support the ongoing reform process from

the outside. The concrete forms and conditions of this support could be a major topic of discussion in your meetings with Secretary Gorbachev.

3. Situation in the Soviet Union

Based on our analysis, you will face a General Secretary Gorbachev who wants to continue his policies resolutely, consistently and dynamically, but is meeting internal resistance and is dependent on external support.

The economic situation in the Soviet Union is, based on the judgment of our analysts, worse than when Gorbachev took office. The already difficult supply situation could worsen this winter due to an energy crisis.

Our analysts say that General Secretary Gorbachev's position currently is safe, and his acceptance as number one, even from government colleagues who are critical of the direction and tempo of perestroika, is unchanged. There is also no indication that his popularity among the people has decreased due to the absence of concrete results.

4. Disarmament and Arms Control

On top of that, together--with General Secretary Gorbachev--we can work on advances in foreign policy. The agenda that Secretary of State Baker and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze worked with in Wyomingⁱ has far-reaching meaning for American-Soviet relations.

I hope that your meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev will give strong stimulus to the arms control negotiations, even if no concrete agreement is concluded.

I would welcome it if the goals established in Wyoming for the START negotiations were further solidified. This could strengthen the hope that in the next year an agreement could be reached, or be very close to it, in this important area that also has significant meaning for us Europeans.

An outstanding interest of the Federal Republic is speedy, substantial results in the Vienna conference on conventional weapons in Europe. Here I am also in agreement with our NATO partners, especially with you. This deals with a key issue of European security.

Given the strength of Soviet armed forces in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, dynamic events in the Warsaw Pact states have given these negotiations extra meaning. I think it especially important that progress in the Vienna negotiations keep up with the general political changes in this region of Europe.

I would therefore welcome it if you could explain to GS Gorbachev the Western determination to come to a preliminary result in Vienna within the timeframe laid out by you at the NATO summit in May. I believe that the Soviet

Union is striving toward this goal as well. It should be reinforced in this interest, which after all was expressed in GS Gorbachev's proposal for a meeting of heads of state and government in the second half of 1990 for the purpose of signing an agreement on conventional weapons.

We welcome the agreements on chemical weapons reached by the USA and the Soviet Union because they give hope for the possibility of soon reaching a global, comprehensive and effectively verifiable ban on chemical weapons in Geneva.

I would welcome it if you could again commit General Secretary Gorbachev to this goal and could thereby move him, too, to campaign actively for comprehensive participation.

For the overall plan for arms control and disarmament, at the NATO summit we adopted a clear position with respect to the question of nuclear deterrence and land-based short-range nuclear systems. We wrote down a precisely defined negotiating perspective for this area. General Secretary Gorbachev should be constantly reminded that his unilateral dismantling of the large military superiority in the East should make later negotiations easier.

Let me be clear on this point: I heard with joy and satisfaction your renewed assurances in your Thanksgiving

television address that you will leave American forces in Europe as long as they are wanted and needed by your European friends. I assure you: as before, we view the presence of your forces as vital to European security.

5. Developments in other Warsaw Pact states

Regarding the reform process in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the ČSSR, and not least the GDR, we have General Secretary Gorbachev's policies to thank. His perestroika has let loose, made easier, or accelerated these reforms. He pushed governments unwilling to make reforms toward openness and toward acceptance of the people's wishes; and he accepted developments that in some instances far surpassed the Soviet Union's own standards.

General Secretary Gorbachev has more or less declared the Brezhnev Doctrine dead and instead has sanctioned the right of every state and people to "freedom of choice" in their political and social systems (in, among other things, the joint declaration he signed with me in June, as well as the last communiqué of the foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact).

Here it will depend on General Secretary Gorbachev committing to his own promises and in particular stressing that the ban on interference goes for everyone--for the

Soviet Union in particular where it has its own troops stationed.

With respect to the situation in Poland and Hungary, my visit to Warsaw and a last-minute talk with Németh have firmly convinced me that with winter coming both countries are facing considerable problems in providing for their people due to a reduction of Soviet energy supplies and the liquidity crisis. In both countries, "social eruptions" are not excluded, particularly as orthodox party circles could be interested in that.

In the face of this critical situation, I must emphasize that Western help is coming much too slowly. In particular, neither the International Monetary Fund nor, in the case of the Poland, the Paris Club discussions have been completed, nor is the Stability Fund in the amount of 1 billion dollars, which you suggested in the beginning of the October, secured. With the exception of the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany, no other Western country has promised contributions.

I am going to use our alliance meeting on December 4 to push for quick passage of a resolution by the international financial institutions and to plead for further contributions to the stabilization fund.

6. Situation in the GDR

What I said about the importance of respecting "freedom of choice" is especially relevant for the GDR.

Based on our information and, in particular after talks with the head of the Federal Chancellery in East Berlin, Minister Seiters, we have come to the assessment that the leadership situation is no longer stable, and the people are restless.

In spite of the opening of the border and the Wall, in spite of changes in the leadership and the prospect of proposed reforms, mass demonstrations continue and Germans are fleeing from the GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany in significant numbers.

The upcoming party Congress in the middle of December will answer key questions:

--Is the communist party prepared to renounce its monopoly on power and to change the corresponding constitution?

--Is the communist party prepared to allow for free elections in the near future, to allow new and non-socialist parties and unions, and to initiate urgent economic reforms?

Positive answers to these questions depend on whether the Federal Republic of Germany can fulfill its offer to help the GDR in new financial dimensions.

Should General Secretary Gorbachev criticize this view of the Federal Republic as interference, I would be indebted to you if you could clarify that for both us and the West it cannot be about stabilizing a discredited leadership and an intolerable situation; it must be about a process of far-reaching political, economic and social change supported from the outside--[while being] mindful of the wishes of the population.

7. German Reunification

Let me thank you in the name of all Germans for your clear statement that the USA welcomes German reunification and that it is an issue for the Germans, or rather both states, to decide.

General Secretary Gorbachev may address this question in the sense that we must continue to respect post-War realities, and that for that reason the reforms in the GDR could at any rate not go as far as altering the existing borders between East and West and reestablishing the unity of Germany in whatever form.

I ask you emphatically--in particular in the vein of my statement at the outset--not to agree to any commitments that could be interpreted as limitations (containment)ⁱⁱ on a policy "of working towards a state of peace in Europe, in

which the German people could regain their unity through free self determination."

This goal was renewed by the NATO heads of state in their declaration of May 30, 1989, and we already demonstrated this to the Soviet Union in the conclusion of the 1970 Moscow Treaty.

The crux of the matter is and remains the free self-determination of Germans in the GDR. The events of the past summer have proven that they do not feel or think as members of a separate nation. Since the opening of the Wall and the border, more than half of the citizens of the GDR-- as of today, more than 9 million people!--have visited the Federal Republic of Germany and were welcomed with warmth and solidarity. With the mass demonstrations in the GDR, calls for freedom, free elections and free unions were increasingly joined by the call for unity. This will continue to grow if the promised reforms fall apart.

Naturally, it is in the common interest of the West and East, and all Germans, that a "chaotic situation" does not arise, such as General Secretary Gorbachev feared in his message to you on the 10th of this month.

The Germans in the GDR really have shown considerable attention, reason, and level-headedness when face-to-face

with the repression that was still being carried out at the beginning of October.

The German government has in no way used the current situation in the GDR to single-handedly achieve its own goals. On the contrary, we have strengthened our unbreakable loyalty to the Alliance and our active cooperation with European integration. This has been acknowledged by you and by our European friends and allies, for which I at this point again thank you.

Even General Secretary Gorbachev in a telephone conversation with me spoke in favor of the German government's practice of clever restraint. I hope very much that he does not tell you anything different. I assured him that the German government stood firmly by the Moscow Treaty and the CSCE obligations, whereby self-determination must apply to everyone.

It is in accordance with the legitimate security interests of all Europeans and the entitled interests of the German people, in particular the people of the GDR, to harmonize a long-term perspective.

Before the German Parliament, I summarized in 10 points what the German government intends to do to move toward this goal:

First:

Immediate concrete help for the people of the GDR in the humanitarian and medical spheres and through financing their newly won freedom of travel.

Second:

Strengthened cooperation with the GDR in all areas that would be of immediate benefit to the people: economy, science and technology, culture, environment, communications.

Third:

An expansion of our help and cooperation in new areas if there are fundamental changes to the political and economic system.

Fourth:

Picking up the concept of President Modrow regarding a contractual association: the development of joint institutions, such as for business, traffic, environmental protection, technology, health, culture. The full incorporation of Berlin.

Fifth:

As soon as the other side is available as a democratic and legitimate partner, the development of confederate structures between the two states.

Sixth:

The embedding of the future structure of Germany within the pan-European process, for which the West has paved the way with its concept of a lasting and just European order of peace. Just as we described to the Soviet Union, the building blocks of this structure [are]: unrestricted observance of the integrity and security of every state, the right of every state to freely choose its own political and economic system, observance of the principles and norms of international law, in particular the right of self-determination of the people, and--not least--the realization of human rights.

Seventh:

Openness and flexibility on the part of the European Community with respect to all reformed countries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, naturally including the GDR: speedy conclusion of trade and cooperation agreements; in the long-term, the development of associations to assist with dismantling the economic and social differences of the continent.

Eighth:

Energetic progress in the CSCE process using the imminent forms.

Ninth:

Far-reaching and speedy steps in disarmament and arms control (compare with part 4 above)

Tenth:

Organic development toward a situation in which the German people through free self-determination regain their unity, whereby the interests of all involved are taken into account and peaceful coexistence in Europe is guaranteed.

Dear George,

I would be especially obliged to you if, when you meet with General Secretary Gorbachev, you could support the policies in these 10 Points and make clear to him that the best interests of his country do not lie in clinging to obsolete taboos, but rather in this forward-looking course. For this I thank you in advance.

With friendly greetings,

Yours,

Helmut Kohl

[Source: Deutsche Einheit: Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90. Eds. Hanns Jürgen Küsters and

Daniel Hofmann. R. Oldenbourg Verlag, Munich, 1998.

Translated by Catherine Nielsen.]

ⁱ The two foreign ministers met in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, on September 22-23, 1989. The day before the start of their meeting, Shevardnadze delivered a letter from Gorbachev to President Bush on arms control. This, along with discussion of a possible summit, soviet domestic developments, regional conflicts, and human rights constituted their agenda in Wyoming.

ⁱⁱ "Containment" appears in English in the German text.