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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
CHANCELLOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY AT 1900 HOURS
ON 21 SEPTEMBER 1983 AT THE FEDERAL GERMANY CHANCELLERY IN
BONN

Present:

Prime Minister	Chancellor Kohl
Mr Coles	Herr Starbreit
Interpreter	Interpreter

Chancellor Kohl said that he was glad that the Prime Minister had paid a visit to the British Forces in Germany whose role was so important. The Prime Minister said that she had spent two extremely rewarding days. The British Forces were very professional and were engaged in a heavy training programme. It was clear that the co-operation between them and their German colleagues was first class. Chancellor Kohl said that he had just received a visit from a senior NATO officer who was not given to compliments but who had warmly praised the British Forces.

Chancellor Kohl then said that if the Prime Minister visited the British Forces again next year, he would like to invite her to spend an extra day visiting the German soldiers. It would be a great honour for them and he would much like to make such an arrangement. The Prime Minister commented that this was a kind invitation.

Chancellor Kohl explained that he would be receiving the Italian Prime Minister in Bonn shortly. He would make it clear to Signor Craxi that Germany's position on INF deployment remained absolutely firm. But he had reports which suggested that the Italian position was less than firm. The Prime Minister said that she had not obtained this impression from her discussions with Signor Craxi in London the previous week. Indeed there

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seemed to be no important difference between his views and those of herself and Chancellor Kohl on INF deployment. Chancellor Kohl said that perhaps Signor Craxi had been misreported. A great amount of rumour-mongering was going on. He had sent a member of his staff, Herr Teltschik, to Washington because there were considerable problems between the White House, the State Department and others about deployment. The US were not very good at handling the psychological aspects of this problem.

There would continue to be domestic problems in this field. The SPD Party Conference at the end of November would probably register a 75 per cent majority against the dual track decision. The left-wing of the SPD were now advocating that Germany should leave NATO. Herr Brandt had recently stated that the Russians ought to leave East Germany and the "other countries" ought to leave West Germany. That would of course mean the end of NATO. The Prime Minister commented that she assumed that Herr Schmidt would speak against such propositions. Chancellor Kohl said that he might but the position was complex. The regional SPD Party Conference in the Stuttgart area had recently voted by 119 votes with 1 abstention and none against on a recommendation to the National Conference that there should be no deployment. Herr Brandt had spoken and said that he had never been in favour of the dual track position. Herr Vogel had been equivocal. Schmidt had taken the line that the party could not withhold support for the two track decision before the Geneva negotiations were over. But he had not said that he was in favour of deployment if Geneva did not produce a result. He implied that he would reserve his opinion until it was clear whether the United States had negotiated seriously. Schmidt no longer had a serious following but the position of the majority of the SPD was very alarming.

The Prime Minister recalled that Herr Kohl had told her before he became Chancellor that about 70 per cent of the German population favoured INF stationing. She believed that if the

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right question was put to them there would still be a big majority. She was constantly being asked by the media about the position in Germany and usually replied in this sense. Herr Kohl stated that if Germany conducted a referendum on membership of NATO 80 per cent of the people would favour such membership. The majority of the press were now on his side for the first time. But this was not true of radio or TV. Despite the difficulties, his Government would pursue its stand until the end. The situation in his own party was excellent,

The Prime Minister asked if opinion had been influenced by Andropov's letter to members of the Bundestag. Had he also sent another letter to the Chancellor? Chancellor Kohl replied that neither Andropov's letter to him nor his letter to the Bundestag had contained anything new. Andropov knew perfectly well that Germany would deploy if there was no result in Geneva. But once deployment had taken place the Russians would continue to talk. There would be no hot war, for the Soviet Union was very cautious - but there would be no cold war either. There would be massive propaganda but sooner or later the Russians would again try to make progress. He had reason to say this.

The Prime Minister said that she believed that the West should make it plain that they wished to continue negotiations and that any rupture would be the fault of the Soviet Union. She assumed that when the Chancellor referred to the possibility of there being no result at Geneva he was referring to a failure to reach agreement on the zero option. Chancellor Kohl confirmed this interpretation. There was a need for the Americans to take the psychological offensive and he was pressing them almost daily to do so. Following deployment there could be a situation in which Andropov would have every interest in meeting President Reagan. The Russians would be likely to try to obtain such a summit before the US Presidential elections.

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The Soviet Union was already making certain arrangements which suggested that they did not foresee a rupture of relations with the West if deployment took place. When he visited Moscow he had raised the question of acid rain with Andropov and Tikhonov. This had become a major issue in Central Europe. More than 30 per cent of the forests of Czechoslovakia had been destroyed in a few weeks. There was a dramatic increase in damage in Germany between March and September this year. Mitterrand had earlier been non-committal on the subject but now had a serious problem in the Vosges. The Russians had shown some interest in the problem. Recently, Andropov had written to him to say that he would gladly accept an invitation to send representatives to a conference to discuss the matter. The Prime Minister warned that this might be an attempt to gain respectability in the wake of the Korean airliner incident. Chancellor Kohl said that he did not think so. Andropov had sent him two letters, the first of which had been dated 12 August. There was no doubt that the Russians had an acid rain problem.

He thought that when the time came next year for negotiations to resume there would be suggestions that all the nuclear powers should get together at the negotiating table. This would have implications for the French and British deterrents. The Prime Minister said that she thought we should be extremely cautious about any such idea. The objective would be to draw into the negotiations French and British strategic deterrents which were a last resort, irreducible minimum. The need in the field of strategic weapons was for the United States and the Soviet Union to agree on substantial reductions. The Russians were employing endless diversionary tactics to keep attention away from the INF talks. They should be exposed.

Chancellor Kohl said that he and the Prime Minister had exactly the same position on the French and the British deterrents. Genscher had pointed out during the Moscow visit

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that when Schmidt was there two years earlier the issue had not even been raised. He had every confidence in the United States but no-one knew who would be the American President in the next 20 years and the Americans were 4,000 miles away. Paris and London were much closer. He did not need to be more explicit. Mitterrand insisted that he would not let the Soviet Union decide how many nuclear missiles France possessed - and he assumed that the British position was the same. The Prime Minister noted that she and Chancellor Kohl were in complete agreement on this matter. She thought we ought to move disarmament talks on to other ground. She had seen for herself earlier in the day that all our forces needed to have special anti-chemical weapon clothing. The West had no deterrent in the field of chemical weapons and should point out that it had disarmed in this field but that the Soviet Union had not. Chancellor Kohl said that Germany already used this argument.

The Prime Minister said that she thought it important that when President Reagan announced in his UNGA speech on 26 September the new US negotiating position there should be a concerted Allied effort to support him. Chancellor Kohl agreed.

The discussion ended at 2005 hours and was followed up by a working dinner.

A.J.C.

21 September 1983

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