

Document No. 3 Excerpts from the Soviet Transcript of the

Malta Summit

December 2-3, 1989

December 2.

Gorbachev. With regard to the "German Question." We have the impression that Mr. Kohl fusses and bustles around too much. He does not act seriously and responsibly. We are afraid that the topic of reunification may be exploited for electoral gain, that it will not be strategic factors but the mood of the moment that will take the upper hand. By the way, opinions in the FRG vary on this issue, both inside the governing coalition and between the coalition and the Social Democrats. It is important for both of us to convey to everyone that certain actions may cause damage to constructive processes. Moreover, they may put in question very important and serious issues, including trust in the government of the FRG.

So what would happen? Would a unified Germany be neutral, not a member of any military-political alliances, or would it be a member of NATO? I believe we should let everyone understand that it is still too early to discuss either of these options. Let the process take its course without artificial acceleration.

None of us is responsible for the division of Germany. History occurred this way. Let history continue to decide on this issue in the future. It seems to me we have developed an understanding in this regard.

Bush: I believe that in his actions Helmut Kohl was greatly influenced by an emotional reaction to events. The same concerns Genscher. True, the 10-point program does have a flavor of electoral political considerations. But we should not overlook the wave of emotions there. Kohl knows that some Western allies who pay lip service to reunification when the people of Germany support it are [actually] quite upset by the prospect.

Gorbachev: Yes, I know about that. And Kohl was informed about this viewpoint. But unlike you and your allies, I am speaking openly. There are two German states; this is the way history happened. Let history decide how the process will develop and what it will lead to in the context of a new Europe and a new world. Kohl declared repeatedly that he understands his responsibility and that he will abide by the understandings we reached in Bonn. In general, this is an issue where we should act with maximum consideration to avoid hurting the chances that have opened up.

Bush: I agree. We will not take any rash steps; we will not try to accelerate the outcome of the debate on reunification. When you speak to Kohl, you will find that he is in agreement with my approach. And if his public declarations often contradict this, one should take into account the specifics of the political equation and the emotional aspects, especially the latter. They speak about this topic with tears in their eyes.

Gorbachev: I would like to stress that we view positively the change that created these possibilities for normal contacts, broader cooperation and trade between the two German states.

Bush: As strange as it may seem, on this issue you are in the same boat with our NATO allies. Most of the conservative ones among them welcome your approach. At the same time they have to think beyond the time when notions of the FRG and the GDR are history. I would tread cautiously on this issue. If our Democrats criticize my timidity, let them do it. I do not intend to jump up onto the Wall because too much is at stake on this issue.

Gorbachev: Well, jumping on the Wall is not a good activity for a president (Laughter).

Bush: If Bush and Gorbachev can express satisfaction about the changes, it will be great. But I will not be

tempted to take actions that, while they might look attractive, could lead to dangerous consequences.

Gorbachev: Correct. The times we live in are not only promising, but also demanding.

December 3.

Gorbachev: So we will have them meet more often. Would you like to go first in discussing European issues?

Bush: You are closer to Europe, but I would like to preface our conversation with a few comments.

First of all, I admit that we were shocked by the swiftness of the changes that unfolded. We regard highly your personal reaction and the reaction of the Soviet Union as a whole to these dynamic, and at the same time fundamental, changes.

Although we did not go into details, during yesterday's conversation we discussed eye-to-eye the problem of the reunification of Germany. I hope that you understand that you cannot expect us not to approve of German reunification. At the same time, we realize the extent to which this is a delicate, sensitive issue. We are trying to act with a certain reserve. I will phrase this thought a little differently: there is no desire on my part, nor among the representatives of my administration,

to be in a position that would appear provocative. I emphasize that point.

[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1. Opis 1. Excerpts published in: M.S. Gorbachev, Gody Trudnykh Reshenii, 1985-1992 [Years of Difficult Decisions], (Moscow: Alfa-print, 1993), pp. 173-185. Translated by Vladislav Zubok.]