

Archivist Note:

The following memorandum of telephone conversation lists the year as 1990. The phone call actually took place on February 16, 1991.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Call with President Francois Mitterrand
of France

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Francois Mitterrand
Adrian Basora, NSC Staff (Notetaker)
Eliza Burnham (Interpreter)

DATE, TIME February 16, 1990, 10:18 - 10:27 a.m.
PLACE: Kennebunkport, Maine

The President: Hello, Francois? (U)

President Mitterrand: Good morning, I am on the line. Is the
President there? (U)

The President: Yes, good morning. What's the latest? (S)

President Mitterrand: I'm sure you know the latest about the
Gulf just as well as I do. I tried to call you last night
regarding the Saddam Hussein proposal. From the French side,
there is no question of being fooled by what he is doing. I
wanted to say something to you about it last night, but today I
am simply confirming what we have already said in public. (S)

The President: I totally agree with that, and I thought your
statement yesterday was wonderful. (S)

President Mitterrand: We and the other allies have said the same
thing. How do you explain or interpret Saddam Hussein's move?
(S)

The President: I can't explain it unless it was instigated by
the Soviets, but I don't think so. Jim Baker talked to
Bessmertnyhk yesterday and he doesn't believe that the Soviets
are behind it. Perhaps it is because Saddam Hussein is hurting
militarily. (S)

President Mitterrand: I think there is a Soviet suggestion
behind this. I would not be surprised if this had been
instigated in Moscow. The Soviet Union could claim that this
represents a new element and they could thus present themselves
as mediators. (S)

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The President: You may be right. I think you are on to something there. (S)

President Mitterrand: We'll see when Tariq Aziz visits Gorbachev on Monday. I am not overly worried about Gorbachev's move. What do you think? He seems to be playing both sides, but I do not think he is in a position to move away from the other UN Security Council members on this issue. (S)

The President: I agree, but we also think that Gorbachev is in a lot of trouble at home. This worries me. He has made it clear to me that he wants a place in the negotiations or final arrangements after the war. This is fine. Bessmertnyhk was very reassuring to Baker as well as to the Kuwaitis. So I think that Gorbachev is with us and I don't think they will split off from the coalition. (S)

President Mitterrand: One last thing: we should not push him on the Baltics at present. It is not in our interest to get worked up on the Baltics. It would be advisable to wait for the referendum before reacting to Soviet policy there. A month from now, we can see what we should do. (S)

The President: I agree. I am trying to hold back anti-Soviet legislation and statements here in Washington. We should not give his enemies ammunition. I don't want to get too far out in front on the Baltics. We should cool it and not overreact. (S)

President Mitterrand: We should wait at least until March 24th, and then we will see more clearly both on the Baltics and on the Persian Gulf. (S)

The President: I agree, Francois. One more thing: the dates that Admiral Lanxade talked to Brent Scowcroft about are the same as ours. Lanxade's dates are right on. I'll be back in touch next week if there is any fine tuning on the dates. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes. (U)

The President: It is nice talking to you. Let's stay in touch. I really appreciate your call. (S)

President Mitterrand: I understand you are at Kennebunkport? (S)

The President: Yes, and it is 11 degrees. Its colder than hell outside, but cozy inside. (U)

President Mitterrand: I remember your house fondly. It is cozy indeed. (S)

The President: Thank you very much for the call. As to the coziness up here, we'll have to do it again soon. (S)

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President Mitterrand: On the French side, everything is fine.
Public opinion is staying firm so far. We'll be in touch soon.
(Z)

The President: Goodbye, Francois. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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