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## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

**Memorandum of Conversation**

DATE: February 13, 1974

Time: 11:00 - 11:35 a.m.

Place: Vice President's Ceremonial  
Office, Senate ChambersSUBJECT: Vice President Ford's Meeting  
with German Opposition Leader  
Helmut KohlPARTICIPANTS: GermanDr. Helmut Kohl, CDU national Chairman  
Dr. Horst Telschik, Personal Aide to KohlAmericanThe Vice President  
Commander Howard J. Kerr (USN), Naval Aide to  
the Vice President  
William L. Swing, Office of Central European  
Affairs (Notetaker)  
Mrs. Gisela Marcuse, Department staff interpreter

At the outset there was a brief session with photographers during which Dr. Kohl presented the Vice President with a set of commemorative coins in honor of early promoters of European integration: Adenauer, Schumann, and De Gaspari. In thanking Dr. Kohl, the Vice President said he looked forward to coming to Europe soon, although he had not yet made definite plans.

The Vice President: I am pleased to see you and to have this opportunity to exchange views on matters of mutual concern.

Dr. Kohl: I am particularly pleased to be able to meet with you now, as Europe faces critical times. The Middle East war has brought problems within the Alliance to a head.

The Vice President: I fully agree. Did you come to Washington separately from the German delegation to the Energy Conference?

Dr. Kohl: Yes, but we are staying at the same hotel--the Watergate--and I had breakfast with our Foreign Minister this morning.

HUR/CE:WLSwing:sk  
2/14/74-Ext. 22310  
(Drafting Office and Officer)

FORM DS-1254  
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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
State Dept. Guidelines  
By WLSwing, NARA, Date 10/24/00

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- 2 -

I would like to pass on to you a compliment I heard yesterday. When I met with the Democratic National Committee Chairman, Mr. Strauss, he asked about my schedule of appointments, and I told him I would be seeing you. He said that was a very good thing and that frankly you represented at present the greatest threat to the Democrats' election prospects.

The Vice President: Mr. Strauss is a good friend of mine. He is probably trying to exaggerate my potential as a threat to his party. He's a very astute politician, you know.

Dr. Kohl: Yes, as he is such a good politician, his compliment is all the more meaningful.

The Vice President: Strauss has done a good job of bringing together the various groupings in the Democratic Party. They were so divided at the last national elections that many observers felt no one could unite them again. But Strauss has done so.

Dr. Kohl: You said at the beginning that you have the intention of coming to Europe. Could you say when this might be? Would you be coming this year?

The Vice President: As yet I have no definite plans, but hopefully the trip will take place later in the year.

Dr. Kohl: May I suggest in this connection that we resume an old CDU tradition of having the opposition party also participate in your visit. The CDU would like to give a reception in addition to whatever the Government does.

Your trip is a good idea for several reasons. Germans are very curious about you and are eager to become acquainted. Also, we have experienced a change of mood because of detente, disarmament negotiations and German Eastern policy. These developments have created a certain euphoria in Europe. At the same time, there has been great concern in Europe about Vietnam, and some circles have used the Vietnam war to stir anti-American feelings.

This mood is now having a backlash effect. For example, a public opinion poll at Christmas 1972 showed that 51 percent of those questioned favored a neutral Germany, and only 39 percent favored the Federal Republic retaining its ties with the Atlantic Alliance. Twelve months later, Christmas 1973, 55 percent of those

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- 3 -

asked favored the Alliance relationship, and only some 30 to 32 percent supported neutralism. Those are figures which approach those recorded in the FRG during Adenauer's Chancellorship. The change is very important, especially as it applies to German youth also. Recent developments in the Middle East are now being seen as a US foreign policy success.

The Vice President: This is encouraging. I believe there have also been some mood changes in the United States--some of them good, some of them bad. In the last stages of the Vietnam war there was a discernible and growing isolationist tendency in the US, mainly centered in the Northeastern part of the country. This was very disappointing because the Northeastern area had traditionally been the bedrock of domestic support for US international involvement. But then came the trouble in the Middle East in October, and many began to realize that perhaps we should not be so isolationist and should resume more of our previous leadership in the world.

Dr. Kohl: This is a very important point for us. Maintenance of a strong US military presence in Europe is an integral part of CDU policy. In my office as national CDU Chairman, you might say I am the great grandson of Adenauer. Much to my delight, I am now seeing that my approach is being shared by more and more people in the Federal Republic. The German state of Rhineland-Palatinate, of which I am Minister President, has the most NATO bases in the entire Alliance. There are 153,000 American citizens in the Rhineland-Palatinate, and it is perhaps here that you can see this change of mood most clearly.

The Vice President: Have relations improved between US forces stationed in the FRG and local populace?

Dr. Kohl: Most decisively. Three years ago, however, I could not have said this. There is a changed mood, and the Americans have also improved. The present American military commanders in the FRG are outstanding. We have never had as few problems with the American military as at present. Part of this has to do with the recovery of the dollar on the German money market. After the multi-lateral currency realignments through devaluation and floating, it was true that American troops were paid "miserably". There was a resulting bitterness, and the atmosphere was very bad. That has all changed now.

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- 4 -

The Vice President: What position do you take on MBFR?

Dr. Kohl: We favor the negotiations but remain skeptical. All disarmament issues are of great interest to Germans because we are on the front lines in Europe. The French were able to leave NATO in the firm knowledge that they had Germany as a buffer between them and the East. For Germans, the situation is different. It is only three tank hours from Mainz, my capital, to the first Russian tank division.

The Vice President: I don't approve of the French attitude. They are being difficult in their attitude toward the Alliance.

Dr. Kohl: I am of the opinion that we should avoid open conflict with the French. I grew up and live in the Rhineland-Palatinate which borders on France, and I am a Francophile. I would consider it a catastrophe for German policy to move toward an either France/or US policy. However, if forced to, we would decide for an Alliance with the US. About this there is no doubt at all in my party, and I believe the majority of Germans would support this view.

The Vice President: I hope, too, we can avoid the breakup of the Alliance. There is a need for strengthening rather than destroying the Alliance.

Dr. Kohl: The problem is that Europe is in a transitional stage. Internal political developments are very difficult. Both in France and in Germany there is an established ruling order; beneath that is an entirely different structure with different values and attitudes. German and French youth are very much alike in this regard.

The problem for the CDU was that after 20 years in power it had failed to keep pace with developments. The CDU did not understand until too late that it had to bring in more dynamic elements. The present Government knows how to do this skillfully.

The Vice President: When are the next elections in Germany?

Dr. Kohl: I was just coming to that. Chancellor Brandt has not managed to combine promises and achievements. Therein lies our hope. The latest opinion polls are most encouraging--almost too encouraging since many in the party will sit back and relax.

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- 5 -

This week Brandt has the lowest public opinion rating since he came to power, with only 25 percent favoring his policies. The latest polls show that if elections were held next week, the CDU would get 50 percent of the vote, the SPD 35 percent and FDP 13 percent. Additionally, there are big problems within the Brandt-Scheel coalition. Scheel's departure from the Government will be a big loss for the coalition, for policy is not made just by parties but by people.

The Vice President: When will the next election be?

Dr. Kohl: We have an unfortunate system. We are always having elections. The next election is in Hamburg in March, followed by Lower Saxony and Hesse.

The Vice President: Will these affect the ratio of seats in the Bundestag?

Dr. Kohl: No, but they could affect the division of seats in the Bundesrat. The next national election will take place in November 1976.

The Vice President: At the same time as ours.

Dr. Kohl: Yes. I will be thinking about you then.

The Vice President: How do you account for the drop-off in Brandt's popularity?

Dr. Kohl: The SPD is 125 years old, founded on Marxist principles, and until 1917 was in coalition with the communists. Since its inception, the SPD has been confronted with a constant battle between party ideologies and pragmatists. At the present time, we are experiencing movement within the SPD toward an ideological phase. Of course there are those like Defense Minister Leber who think much the same as do you or I. The present conflict within the SPD will not, however, lead to a split in the party.

The Vice President: But it will cause trouble in the implementation of the Government's policies, won't it?

Dr. Kohl: Yes.

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- 6 -

The Vice President: It has been a privilege to speak with you. I hope Mrs. Ford and I can come to Europe and if we do, I will certainly visit your country. Ideologically, we Republicans are much closer to you than to your opponents.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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2

February 15, 1974


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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. JOHN O. MARSH  
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation Between  
the Vice President and Dr. Helmut  
Kohl

Attached, for consideration by the Vice President, is a memorandum of the conversation he had on Wednesday, February 13, with Dr. Helmut Kohl, national Chairman of the opposition Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany.

We would appreciate being notified when the memorandum has been approved.

  
George S. Springsteen  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

Memorandum of Conversation



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GDS

wkm 10/24/00





## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 12, 1974

CONFIDENTIAL(WITH SECRET ATTACHMENT)MEMORANDUM FOR MR. JOHN O. MARSH  
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENTSUBJECT: German Opposition Leader's Appointment  
with the Vice President

The Vice President has agreed, on the Department's recommendation, to receive Dr. Helmut Kohl from 11:00 to 11:15 a.m. on Wednesday, February 13, at his ceremonial office at the Senate. Kohl is holding discussions this week with Washington policy makers on his first visit here since becoming national Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) last June. Accompanying Kohl to his meeting with the Vice President will be the German Ambassador to the United States, Berndt von Staden; William L. Swing of the Department's Office of Central European Affairs and -- as Kohl does not speak English -- a Department staff interpreter, Mrs. Gisela Marcuse. Biographical information on Dr. Kohl and Ambassador von Staden is attached.

His Political Background and Ambitions

Kohl would be in line to become Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany were Willy Brandt's Socialist-led coalition government to be unseated by Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Germany's opposition party since 1969, the CDU was in power under Chancellors Adenauer, Erhard and Kiesinger from 1949-1969. Kohl, a Catholic from the Rhineland, was brought into politics by Adenauer. A moderate conservative, Kohl has devoted himself to refurbishing the party's image along more liberal lines. Kohl himself has never been a member of the German Bundestag nor held federal office, though he is in the Bundesrat (Upper House).

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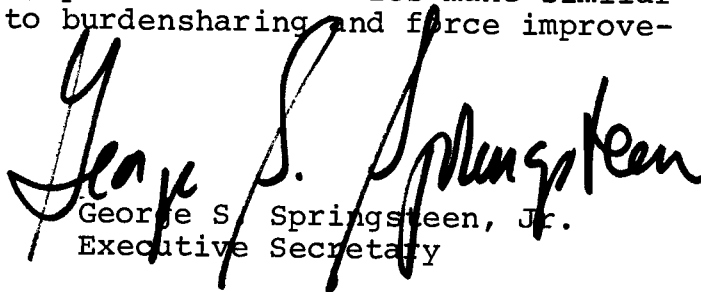
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Dr. Kohl, 43, is at present Minister President (Governor) of Rhineland-Palatinate, one of Germany's ten states, with its capital at Mainz. (In our terms, Kohl is trying to make a breakthrough from state to federal political prominence.) Kohl is aware of his limited foreign affairs experience, and probably feels that his call on the Vice President will help him generate the kind of publicity he needs to enhance his reputation within Germany. Kohl has met recently with French President Pompidou and Foreign Minister Jobert and plans trips to Moscow and Warsaw later this year.

Courtesy Points with Kohl

-- Kohl's call will afford the Vice President an opportunity to stress the continuing importance of close American-German relations and of the Atlantic Alliance.

-- It will also be useful for the Vice President to reassure Kohl (in whose state are located some 115,000 US troops and dependents and who is a staunch supporter of the US presence) that this Administration remains committed to the maintenance and improvement of US forces in Europe, provided our allies make similar efforts with respect to burdensharing and force improvements.

  
George S. Springsteen, Jr.  
Executive Secretary

Attachments:

Biographical Sketches: Kohl, von Staden

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FOLDER TITLE . . . . . February 13, 1974 - West German  
Opposition Leader Helmut Kohl  
  
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Opposition Leader Helmut Kohl

DATE WITHDRAWN . . . . . 11/18/2011

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

S/S 7402702

February 7, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. JOHN O. MARSH  
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Appointment Request: German Opposition  
Leader Helmut Kohl

Dr. Helmut Kohl, national Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) -- Germany's major opposition party, which was in power from 1949-1969 -- has asked to see the Vice President during his visit to Washington February 12-15.

Dr. Kohl, 43, is also Minister President (Governor) of Rhineland-Palatinate, one of Germany's ten Federal states. In a CDU-led Government, Kohl would be a leading contender to become Federal Chancellor. He is very friendly toward the United States, and recently has made helpful public statements on US troop presence in the Federal Republic. Attached is a biographical sketch of Kohl.

Kohl has tentative appointments in this period with Secretary Schlesinger and Congressional and party leaders, and we are attempting to arrange additional meetings with Secretaries Kissinger and Shultz, and other senior policy officials.

It is important that Dr. Kohl be received at a high level to emphasize the importance we attach to maintaining our long-standing close relations with the CDU and its top leadership. Such a meeting would also afford excellent opportunity to acquaint Kohl with current Administration thinking on a wide range of issues of mutual concern.

It is therefore recommended that the Vice President agree to an appointment in the period of Dr. Kohl's visit.

*George S. Springsteen*  
George S. Springsteen, Jr.  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:  
Biographical Sketch

*Only review  
12 Feb 1974*

