

Document No. 18: Record of Telephone Conversation between
Mikhail Gorbachev and Francois Mitterrand

November 14, 1989

[.....]

Gorbachev: I thank you, Mr. President, for this information. I am also glad to talk to you.

In general, the events in the GDR were not unexpected for us. I can only note that if such events--the change of leadership in the GDR--had taken place earlier, everything would have been much calmer. We would support the direction in which the situation is moving now, with the exception of one aspect. I have in mind all the excitement that has been raised in the FRG around the issue of German unification.

Mitterrand: I understand what you are saying.

Gorbachev: We have already discussed this problem with you. Therefore, I am not going to develop my position in detail here, especially because of the specific nature of a telephone conversation. I would like to stress, though, that as far as I understand it we have a mutual understanding on this really cardinal issue.

Mitterrand: ... I knew your point of view regarding the German issue. But I thought it was necessary to contact you again to hear a confirmation directly from you.

The French position is as follows: we would like to avoid any kind of disruption. We realize that it is necessary to take into account the real feelings that exist among people both in West and East Germany. At the same time, I do not think that the issue of changing borders can realistically be raised now--at least until a certain time.

Our two countries are friends of East Germany. I plan to visit the GDR in the near future. I am convinced that they should not undertake any hasty actions which could destabilize the situation. There is a certain equilibrium that exists in Europe, and we should not disturb it. We will also talk about this with the leaders of 12 members of the European Community in Paris.

I hope that we will have an opportunity to continue this conversation, but not over the telephone.

[.....]

I would like to reiterate: taking into account the recent acceleration of events, I think it would be necessary to organize some direct contact between us. This is, by the way, the reason for my call. I would like to find out your assessment of the evolution of the situation in Europe, and to tell you that for my part, I plan to keep my cool.

Our two countries are old countries. They have been in contact for a very long time, and it is important that they should understand each other in the future [...]

Gorbachev: But at the same time we should not allow any artificial stimulation and forcing of the events.

Mitterrand: As you know, I have warm, very cordial relations with Chancellor Helmut Kohl. I will discuss all these issues with him in a couple of days.

Gorbachev: I also spoke with him not so long ago. He assured me in particular that he was going to abide strictly by the existing agreements.

Mitterrand: Yes, he is a sober thinker.

Gorbachev: He promised to act in such a way that the situation would remain normal. I carefully noted his words that the Germans should live where they are living now. And if there is a possibility to improve relations between them, it would be a very positive process, of course.

Mitterrand: I understand such an approach.

Gorbachev: I like your idea about the possibility of meeting.

Mitterrand: I would think such a meeting would be good for Europe. I will try to inform [Foreign Minister] Roland Dumas about more specific thoughts regarding such a

meeting. Thank you for your willingness to talk to me on the phone.

[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1. Opis 1. On file at the National Security Archive. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya.]