

November 14, 1989

**Record of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail
Gorbachev and President of France Francois
Mitterrand**

Citation:

"Record of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and President of France Francois Mitterrand", November 14, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Notes of A.S. Chernyaev. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120825>

Summary:

Telephone conversation between Gorbachev and Mitterrand about France's position on German unification. Mitterrand expresses that he is against changing the borders at this time.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Record of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and President of France 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, we have a mutual understanding on this really crucial 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 be realistically raised now--at least up 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 leaders of twelve nations of countries--members of the European Communities in Paris.

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

...I would like to reiterate: taking into account the recent acceleration of the 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 about 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 of the events, pushing ahead.

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 talked to 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 stay normal. I carefully noted his words that the Germans should live where they live 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 a possibility of meeting.

Mitterrand. I would think such a meeting would be good for Europe. I will try to inform Roland Dumas about more specific thoughts regarding such a meeting. Thank you for your willingness to talk to me on the phone.

The conversation was translated and recorded by Second Secretary of the First European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR V. V. Nekrasov.