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October 12, 1985

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT C. MCFARLANE

FROM: JACK MATLOCK *JM*

SUBJECT: Conversation with Stanislav Menshkov: Private  
Contacts and Geneva Meeting

*Very interesting!*  
*J*

Menshikov came in at 11:00 and we had a conversation which went on for over four hours, with several interruptions. (The interruptions occurred because he had to cash some traveller's checks; I drove him out to the American Express office near Bethesda (the nearest one we could find open), and then took him to lunch at a Chinese Restaurant at H and 18th.) Our conversation was reasonably orderly, despite the interruptions, but neither of us took notes. I will group his observations by topic, even though the comments in some cases were interspersed in our conversation in a different order. Both of us made clear at the outset, and reiterated occasionally, that we were not speaking on the basis of instructions but were conveying informally our own personal views of the various topics that came up.

Private Channel:

Menshikov began the conversation by saying that he had no specific message, but that Gorbachev had taken note of the President's comment to Shevardnadze about the need for more direct and private communication. Gorbachev agreed, but wondered what we had in mind: specifically how did we want to arrange it and what did we want to talk about? Menshikov added that this was an important matter not only for the period leading up to the Geneva meeting, but could be useful during the meeting itself. He said that when Gorbachev was in Paris, there was an arrangement whereby just after each meeting, personal representatives of each met privately to discuss the preceding session, seek clarification of points not clear, and exchange views on what might be covered at the next session. (He did not name the persons involved, but I inferred that it was either Alexandrov or Zagladin on the Soviet side and possibly Verdrine on the French.)

He then said that he did not expect precise answers or specific proposals. However, if I had any comments that might guide their thinking, he would convey them to Zagladin orally on Monday, and that Zagladin would pass them on, also orally, to Gorbachev. He added that there would be a Central Committee plenum Tuesday,

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primarily to deal with issues related to the Party Congress, but also possibly for "organizational changes." This means that both Zagladin and Gorbachev will be tied up Tuesday, and Zagladin leaves for the SI meeting in Vienna on Wednesday. However, he thought he might have some sort of reaction next week.

I told him that I thought the President felt that private consultations could be useful across the board of the various issues facing us. Frankly, we are having some problem determining just what Gorbachev's aims are, and this makes it difficult to make sure that our own moves are given the connotations we intend. The President wants their meeting in Geneva to achieve as much as it can, yet it seems to us that the Soviet approach is still largely propagandistic. But we don't want to jump to negative conclusions. The President genuinely wants to start solving some problems, and if some private consultation will help, he is all for it. As for the idea of having representatives consult quietly between sessions in Geneva, I said that this was an interesting idea and that I would pass it on to you, but refrained from either encouraging or discouraging it. Menshikov said that he understood perfectly, and indeed was not making a concrete proposal, only floating an idea.

Menshikov then asked whether we could use Dobrynin as Kissinger had; this had worked in the past and they were not sure why we opposed it now. (He added that he was not arguing for this arrangement; he only wanted to be in a position to explain why we did not find it satisfactory.) I told him that I doubted that we could accept Dobrynin as the sole interlocutor. For us it was a matter of reciprocity and of insuring that the communication is as direct as possible. The principle of reciprocity would require us to insist that Hartman have the same access to Soviet decision makers as Dobrynin does with ours. But we also see utility in having persons who occupy roughly comparable positions in the decision-making process on each side talk directly. This could speed up communication and permit greater frankness, informality and confidentiality.

[NOTE: I did not at the time know of Gorbachev's letter -- which was delivered to Woessner after Menshikov had left. He did not refer to it directly, but I believe his question about Dobrynin stemmed from his knowledge that they were likely to make this proposal and also realized that it probably would not be acceptable to us.]

Menshikov asked who on our side might be in a position to conduct such a dialogue. I told him that this had not been decided; that we would try to find an appropriate counterpart if Gorbachev is interested and indicates whom he would like to use. I added that, in my personal view, there are several U.S. officials who might be used. Regarding arms control, Nitze is the obvious candidate. As for the other issues, persons like Ridgway, Palmer and myself are sufficiently close to the policy-making process

and sufficiently discreet to be used in the process if so designated. Menshikov commented that "for some reason" some Soviet officials were negatively disposed toward Palmer, but he didn't know why or whether the view was held strongly enough to make any difference. (I told him that any negative view of Palmer is quite mistaken; he is honest, discreet and genuinely committed to solving problems if we can.)

Menshikov also asked how such contacts could be arranged logistically, in order to minimize the number of persons who are witting. I suggested that, if the idea was approved on both sides, Geneva might be an appropriate locale since officials on both sides have good reasons to visit there periodically in advance of the meeting. He agreed that this seemed the most workable arrangement.

As we were discussing these matters, Menshikov apologized for the snafus in the past. Regarding the Scowcroft mission last year, he said that Zagladin thought he had it wired, but that when Gromyko was approached, he put the kabosh on it. Gromyko also turned down the proposal for special representatives on arms control. Chernenko, he said, was unwilling or unable to assert himself on these matters, but "things are different now." Gorbachev, he claimed, understands the utility of direct communication and is eager to do something. Gromyko is now out of the picture. Though Gorbachev works closely with Shevardnadze and will doubtless keep him in the loop personally, they both understand that these communications cannot work through the MFA bureaucracy.

Before we parted, Menshikov asked how we should communicate if Gorbachev decides to name someone for an authorized contact. I told him that, so far as I am concerned, it would be all right just to telephone me and suggest that someone meet a specified person at a specified time and place. I would then undertake to get a prompt reply as to whether it is possible and if so who would come. I gave him both my office and home telephone numbers. Regarding possible contacts during the Reagan-Gorbachev meeting, he suggested that we might consider using Dwayne Andreas' apartment there. I told him that we considered Andreas reliable and discreet and that I would pass on the idea.

### The Issues

Most of our conversation was devoted to a tour d'horizon of the various issues before us. In the interstices, Menshikov made several comments regarding Soviet actions and motivations for recent actions. I will describe these first, then summarize his

~~comments~~  
comments on the issues. (Mine followed our usual ~~talking points~~,  
except as noted.)

Current Soviet Assessment

I asked Menshikov early on what Gorbachev's aims are for the meeting. He said, without hesitation, "He wants to achieve something. Something significant. But we wonder what the President wants." I assured him that the President was dead serious about making as much progress as possible, but that we really felt we were getting conflicting signals from them.

Menshikov observed that "some may think" that, because Gorbachev is likely to be around for a long time, he is playing a waiting game, but we should understand that this is not the case. He knows a lot needs to be done and is not the sort to procrastinate; this is contrary to his entire nature. I replied that, as a matter of fact, Arbatov's people were putting out just such a rationale: that Gorbachev is in a position to outwait the President and deal with his successors. I cautioned that this would be a major and fundamental mistake on their part, since any American President who might be inclined to settle for less than President Reagan simply wouldn't be able to deliver. Menshikov said that he hoped we did not consider Georgy Arbatov as an authoritative spokesman. I said that, as a matter of fact, we thought of him more as a propagandist than a policy maker. Menshikov said, "Then you have an accurate picture. That is precisely his role."

Menshikov said that Shevardnadze had been pleased with his meeting with the President (not that he liked everything said), and had reported his favorable impression of the President to Gorbachev and the Politburo. Gorbachev's answers to Dan Rather's questions in Paris were designed to convey this to us, and they hoped we noticed. [I don't have a transcript at hand, but Menshikov said that Gorbachev said twice that the meeting left a good impression.]

In response to Secretary Shultz's private comments to Shevardnadze in Helsinki (about the need to improve the atmosphere and minimize the rhetoric) orders have gone out to the Soviet media not to criticize the President personally. (Menshikov added that this was very sensitive and that he should under no circumstances be quoted as saying it.) He added that if we see an exception or two it will be because not everyone got the word; if, however, attacks resume we will know that the orders have been changed.

Arms Control

Menshikov's approach to these issues, as to the others, was not in the spirit of debating, but of questioning as to whether this or that approach would work. His more significant comments were as follows:

SDI: Gorbachev knows that the President will not "give up" SDI, and this is not required. But he must have some assurance, other than verbal ones, that SDI will not be used to complement a US first strike capability. Defining the line between research and the rest might be one possibility, he suggested (to which I gave no encouragement), but there could be other approaches. The main thing is that Gorbachev has to persuade the Soviet military that SDI is not a threat. (Menshikov implied, but did not directly state, that Gorbachev is not really persuaded that it is a threat -- at least not for a decade or so. He accepted my comments about the Soviet program and the absurdity of their accusing us of breaking agreements when they were doing the same research without demur.)

START: The Soviets know that much of their present proposal will not be acceptable to us. It is a negotiating position, and a conscious effort was made to include elements which will accord with the President's position. These include cuts up to 50% -- a major change in the Soviet position -- as well as limits on warheads and the principle of sublimits. We should consider these as "building blocks" from which we can pick and choose and rearrange to our liking. The important thing is to use some of them.

The Soviets recognize that we are particularly concerned about the heavy ICBM's. These can be cut, and cut substantially, if we go about it in the right way. We have to start with agreeing on some elements: e.g., 50%, etc., and then work toward the others. If we start with focussing on the heavies, the Soviet military will freeze the process. They don't want to give up anything. We have to use the negotiations to ratchet the numbers into the proper relationship.

When I pointed out the retrograde elements in the Soviet proposal, particularly the inclusion of all types of nuclear weapons in the same category, our INF weapons but not theirs, counting carrier-based aircraft, etc., Menshikov said, in effect, that they had no expectation of reaching an agreement on this basis. It is simply a negotiating ploy. Obviously, he said, if we can reach a separate agreement on INF, this question will be removed from START. As for the rest, it is negotiable.

Menshikov observed that he really couldn't predict what the Soviets would agree to as a bottom line. The important thing is that Gorbachev is in a mood to negotiate, and if the U.S. wants to proceed, it will make another proposal, using some elements of the Soviet proposal, so Gorbachev can present this as acceptance of some elements of the Soviet position and thus keep things moving.

INF: Menshikov claimed that the offer to negotiate with the British and French was not designed to "split the Allies" as had been alleged. (He observed that they knew well what the British and French positions are.) Instead, it was designed as a

preliminary move to justify reaching a deal with us on INF. When I expressed some skepticism, he explained that Gorbachev could justify a deal with the U.S. if the offer to negotiate some time in the future with the British and French was on the table. That would provide a rationale for excluding British and French systems from START (he admitted that they are strategic systems, and that they are not dedicated to NATO defense). A deal with the US would be possible if some compensation for British and French systems is permitted. I told him that I personally thought this is a non-starter; I didn't see how we could allow any compensation. He said that this could be the ultimate sticking point, then. It was the major thing they had against the walk-in-the-woods formula. He then explained that they are prepared to wait for negotiations with the British and French until after we have achieved radical reductions, in the order of 50%, but that they feel they will have no negotiating leverage at that time unless there is some compensation now for the British and French systems.

However, he said repeatedly that a separate deal on INF is possible, and he wondered if we should not think about the possibility of coming up with a general formula that could be agreed to at the Geneva meeting. He implied that this could be the "major achievement" Gorbachev is looking for. He also stated that some formula that would produce a moratorium on further NATO deployments in return for a reduction of the SS-20's could be very attractive. [I listened, but gave no encouragement to this idea. It is in fact an element in an idea Glitman has been thinking about.]

#### Nuclear Testing:

Menshikov pressed hard on this issue, claiming that Gorbachev had overruled the Soviet military on the issue and therefore had a lot at stake. He said that the main object is to get a handle on unbridled "modernization" in the future. (I, of course, pointed out the one-sided impact at present.) He observed that the Soviet position on verification is not set in concrete; much more could be done here if we approach it in the framework of a goal of eliminating testing sometime in the future. Without that, they just don't see the point, and feel that any threshold is going to be harder to verify than a CTB. Also, he said, if the U.S. is willing to discuss ways to limit qualitative improvements from some point in the future (i.e., implicitly allowing for completion of current programs), this would be well received and could lead to some progress on the testing issue. [I gave him no encouragement that movement is possible in this area unless we tackle the verification issue first; his argument is that they just cannot agree to that without at least a commitment to try to negotiate something more. But he did ask several questions regarding our current proposal, which still seems not to be thoroughly understood.]

#### Terrorism

Menshikov raised the issue, asking whether the President would be interested in some agreement to cooperate in this area. I said I thought he would, depending of course on the nature of the proposal. He replied that he thought Gorbachev would be interested. [We did not pursue the matter further; the Soviets have been leery of this in the past, but it is possible that their attitude is changing. The kidnapping of their people in Lebanon may have had some impact on their thinking; I also note that they have made a remarkably favorable public statement regarding our interception of the Egyptian aircraft -- probably considered "payment" for our public statements when their people were kidnapped, but also possibly indicative of some change in policy.]

### Regional Issues

I pointed out to Menshikov that there are many issues other than arms control which are on the agenda, and gave the standard pitch regarding the importance of the regional ones. He asked which ones might be good candidates for some constructive discussion at the Geneva meeting. I said that, of course, Afghanistan would be high on our list, and asked what the Soviet aim is there. Menshikov said simply, "We want out. Are you willing to help?" I said that depended upon what "help" meant, but yes, we would do what we reasonably could to make it easy for them -- meaning that we would give whatever commitments they needed that we would not use Afghanistan to their detriment if they left. He asked if we could accept Babrak Karmal, and I said it wasn't up to us to accept or reject him; we wanted no role in choosing the Afghan government. That had to be done by the Afghans, and in a way that the refugees could return.

### Bilateral Issues

Menshikov said that they had noted the President's comments on expanding contacts. To my surprise, he said that this had made a favorable impression, and he thought Gorbachev would be attracted by such ideas as expanding student exchanges and the like. [We shall see.]

### Human Rights

I made clear to him the importance of this issue. He said that we could expect some movement, but it was still difficult for them. He noted their private negotiations with the Jewish leaders, and said that emigration would rise somewhat as the result of that, but not to expect to much right now. As for divided spouses, he was sure this could be solved if the President made a private appeal to Gorbachev. "Everyone has to admit you have a legitimate interest in these cases," he said. As for Shcharansky, he felt that a deal could be struck if the proper "trade" could be arranged. I made clear to him that, without movement in this area, a lot of other things were going to be hung up.

Trade

He asked if there could be any discussion of trade at the Geneva meeting. I said that we didn't exclude the possibility, but frankly what could be done would be heavily dependent on solution of the human rights problems. If they want to talk about this directly and privately, fine. We'll try to specify what we mean. If they don't want to talk about it, we'll try to respond appropriately to private moves on their part. He said he would check out the question and see if there is interest.

Future Summits

Menshikov asked if the President would like to establish a regular pattern of meetings in the future. I told him I had not heard the President discuss the matter and did not know how he felt about the question. He said that some officials were saying that regular meetings would be a good idea. I allowed that this is possible, but reiterated that I really did not know how the President regarded the question.

COMMENT:

I don't have time tonight to provide detailed commentary, but Menshikov is either engaged in a massive disinformation effort, or else the folks in the Central Committee Secretariat are really casting about for ways to "achieve something" at the meeting.

Just after we parted, I learned that TASS had accepted the interview. This is really unprecedented. Maybe the guy over there is more serious than we suspected.

We now have the letter proposing Dobrynin for a channel. I would suggest that we accept with the proviso that Hartman will deliver our messages and ask for an interlocutor to be designated. (I would suggest Ridgway or Armacost for Dobrynin.) Then, if Zagladin sends a message requesting a private meeting, we should respond on that track as well. Should keep everybody happy so long as the key players are kept informed.