



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

SECRET/SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: U.S.-Hosted Dinner Between General Secretary  
Gorbachev and Mrs. Nancy Reagan  
Date: November 20, 1985  
Time: 8:30 - 10:30 PM  
Place: Maison de Saussure, Geneva, Switzerland

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The conversation began by continuing a topic touched upon at last night's dinner about the fact that people are marrying and having children younger now in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev said that, on the other hand, youth is becoming less responsible, which is illustrated by a saying which the older generation now has; we must see our grandchildren through until they reach pension age.

Gorbachev again lovingly talked about his granddaughter. President Reagan told of a letter he received from a little girl who told him exactly what she wanted him to do and at the end said "Now go into the Oval Office and get to work."

Mrs. Gorbachev then told of a letter Gorbachev received which wished him success, expressed full agreement with his anti-alcohol campaign and said that the author kept Gorbachev's picture next to her icon. The author said she was 83 years old, prayed every day, and gave her telephone number. She then said to call only early in the morning; she was busy all other times. She lived in Kostroma. President Reagan asked whether Gorbachev called. The other replied that he would report as soon as he got back from Geneva.

Secretary Shultz asked about a revival of religion in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev replied that this question should be addressed to Mrs. Gorbachev, who taught a course on the topic; however, her course was on atheism rather than theology. Gorbachev said that many find the ritual, ceremonial part of religion attractive. However, true believers are dying out with the older generation. Still, one third of the population marry and baptize their children in the church. The Islamic religion, however, seems to have deeper roots. Shevardnadze confirmed that traditions survive in the Islamic religion. Gorbachev said that he was speaking of the Russian orthodox Church, which is preparing to celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of the Christianization of Russia. The church has even

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petitioned the government to return to a monastery for church use. Mrs. Gorbachev said there were also many sects in Russia, including the Baptists, Pentecostals and "Tresuny."

Secretary Shultz asked whether Khomeini had had an influence on the Islamic population of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev answered, "No." He also said that right after the revolution there were many slogans for renouncing all of the past, as if doing away with everything which took place before the revolution. This was wrong, he said. But such were the times. He remembered that at that time even wearing a tie would brand one as a member of the bourgeoisie.

As for Khomeini, President Reagan said, he felt that both countries -- the U.S. and the USSR -- born of revolution, ought to keep an eye on another revolution: an attempt to bring about a fundamentalist Islamic revolution, where the revolution would become the government, and which teaches that the way to heaven is to kill a non-believer.

Gorbachev said that as we end this summit, he felt that he and President Reagan had truly made a start. It would have been unrealistic to expect great progress right away. But the whole world was very concerned, and it was a good thing that they had made this start. Donald Regan said that the President had said the same thing to him.

At this point President Reagan said that in one of the U.S.'s oldest towns, Philadelphia, a toast to the living is always given sitting down. Only a toast for the dead is given standing up. So he wanted to continue in this tradition because what the two sides were dealing with here definitely concerned the living. This is a beginning, he said. No matter what it was we failed to agree on, the important thing was that the two of them would continue to meet. Each of them had accepted an invitation to come to the other's country and continue these meetings. Even though the two of them had not agreed on many things, they had not closed the door. They would continue to meet.

One of the early leaders of the American Revolution, Thomas Payne, in those dark days when they did not know whether the revolution would succeed, said, "We have it in our power to start the world over again." Something of that is present in what we are doing today, because the problems we are trying to solve have plagued mankind for a long time.

We have started something, President Reagan said, and he felt that these meetings expressed the will and desire of both sides to find answers that would benefit not only all the

people of the world now living, but also the yet unborn. His toast, therefore, and his devout prayer was that we could deliver something better than in the past. We will continue meeting, he said, and continue to work for those clauses which had brought the sides together here in Geneva.

Gorbachev answered, saying that he was confident tonight that the two of them had started something. After a very long interval between summit meetings, he shared the President's view that it would be wrong to give a false signal from Geneva. He said that Soviet side would very carefully assess the results of this meeting, fully cognizant of a mutual sense of responsibility. Every beginning is difficult. If now we have laid the first few bricks, he said, we have made a new start, a new phase has begun. This in itself is very important. The major differences are ahead, he said, but he wanted to invite the U.S. side to move ahead on the appointed road together with the Soviet side, with mutual understanding and a sense of responsibility. We will do our part on that road, he said. We will not change our positions, our values, or our thinking, but we expect that with patience and wisdom we will find ways toward solutions. We have had the opportunity to speak privately, he said, and he attributed great importance to those talks. Without them it would have been difficult to arrive at this result. Let us then move toward each other with an understanding of our responsibility before all the countries of the world. Gorbachev's toast was for better dialogue and cooperation, for which the Soviet Union was prepared and hoped for reciprocity from the United States.

Drafted by E. Arensburger