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United States Department of State

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Washington, D.C. 20520

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

President Reagan and Ambassador Dubinin

Date: June 23, 1986  
Place: White House Oval Office  
Time: 4:55 - 5:35pm

US Participants:

Soviet Participants:

President Reagan  
Chief of Staff Regan  
VADM Poindexter  
Ambassador Matlock  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Simons  
D. Zarechnak, Interpreter

Ambassador Dubinin

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After initial greetings, Ambassador Dubinin began to read prepared notes. He said that when he was in Moscow he spoke with General Secretary Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders, and Gorbachev asked him to convey his greetings and best wishes to the President.

The President thanked the Ambassador, and asked him to transmit his greetings and best wishes in return.

Dubinin indicated that Gorbachev, speaking to him as Ambassador of the USSR, had given him his evaluation of the state of Soviet-American relations and the prospect for their improvement. He had also noted the positive elements in Reagan's Glassboro speech, and its tone. Of course, the most decisive thing was practical policy and actions. The sooner the United States stops thinking that it can put the Soviet Union in a difficult situation with respect to arms, technology, economics, etc., the sooner there will be fruitful results and improvement of relations between the two countries. Such an approach is no basis for a bilateral relationship. A good basis for this relationship is to act in accordance with the long-term interests of both countries.

Dubinin continued that Gorbachev said that the Soviet Union is not trying to defeat the United States, but it will also not permit itself to be defeated. Its approach is that relations with the U.S. must be based on equality and equal security. The Soviet Union wishes to improve relations with the United States. It would be dangerous to put these relations to the test.

Dubinin indicated that Gorbachev had asked him to tell the President that he was ready to look at regional issues, but that such discussions must be based on realism. The Soviet Union

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considers that each country has the right to chart its own course and to decide whether its economic system should be a market system or a socialist system. He is prepared to discuss regional issues on a realistic basis. The Soviet Union is for democratization of international relations.

Dubinina said that Gorbachev noted the constructive approach of the Soviet leadership with respect to dialogue with the U.S., including dialogue at the highest level, but stressed the great significance of a possible summit. The possibility of such a meeting has attracted so much attention in the world that preparations for it and its successful conclusion are more important than they were for the Geneva summit.

Dubinina indicated that Gorbachev had asked him to transmit a letter which he signed on June 19. The main idea of the letter was that the Soviet Union approaches things constructively and is seeking to find solutions to problems between us. Gorbachev was impressed by the idea the President conveyed to Dobrynin in May, namely that practical possible agreements lay between the optimum requirements of one side or the other. Therefore, this search was something which both sides had in common. In light of this common understanding, Gorbachev proposed that concrete areas be found for practical agreements in time for the summit.

Dubinina continued that the Soviet Union has moved, and is ready for a reduction in arms. In the area of space the Soviets had taken some steps and are ready for practical work. His purpose was not to identify specific elements at this time, but areas where we should concentrate our efforts. Gorbachev positively noted the President's assessment of the latest Soviet proposal on strategic offensive nuclear arms, which was conveyed through Secretary Shultz and Dubinina. The Soviet delegation in Geneva is awaiting a concrete reply and a discussion of the Soviet proposal with the U.S. delegation .

Dubinina indicated that with regard to medium-range missiles, Gorbachev was ready to consider a partial solution. The Soviet side may have some specific thoughts on this score, and if the U.S. side has some as well, the Soviet side is ready for serious work on this. Gorbachev is convinced that a mutually satisfactory solution can be found.

Dubinina then touched upon the issue of nuclear testing. Gorbachev understood the reasons behind the fact that President Reagan was not ready to cease nuclear tests. He, therefore, had weighed carefully what the President had conveyed through Ambassador Dobrynin. In his letter, Gorbachev states that he, too, thinks that there should be talks between experts on all aspects of this issue. Such talks could touch upon questions of verification

and the obligation to determine the conditions and ways of attaining a complete prohibition of nuclear tests. Such a meeting which the President had also spoken of, should take place as soon as possible, perhaps at the beginning of July.

Dubinina continued that Gorbachev thinks that the U.S. and USSR have certain common elements of an approach to the important issues, and that it would be possible to cooperate, including at the Summit, on such issues as improvement of nuclear power plant safety, peaceful uses of space, and other bilateral issues. Gorbachev has some thoughts on how to proceed in preparing this work. The Soviet side is proposing to work together without wasting time and using the fora and channels which already exist, such as the respective embassies. The foreign ministers of the two countries could then analyze the results of this work, and make final decisions with regard to the Summit.

Dubinina said that in his letter, Gorbachev indicated that he was for movement, for active preparations, and for a drastic turn in U.S.-Soviet relations.

At this point Dubinina handed Gorbachev's letter to the President, together with an unofficial Soviet translation.

President Reagan thanked the Ambassador and indicated that he was glad to hear that the General Secretary was looking forward to the Summit. The President had never given up belief in a Summit in the US, as was agreed in Geneva. He recalled that when he had talked with the General Secretary in Geneva, the President had indicated that before we could talk about weapons, and what was fair, we needed to remove the distrust which existed between the two countries. This needed to be done more than in words, it needed to be done with deeds. He had indicated that the US did not seek to acquire an advantage over the USSR, but that the record showed that there were reasons for US mistrust. After the Second World War, in which the US and the USSR were allies, the US disarmed. During that war, the US did not acquire one foot of foreign territory. At the same time, after the end of the war, the US was the only country in the world with nuclear weapons. It could have dictated its will to the world, but it did not do so. Instead, it proposed that all weapons be turned over to an international board, so that no country could threaten any other one. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, embarked on a program of massive rearmament which was offensive in nature, and which could not be justified by the need for defense.

President Reagan continued that General Secretary Gorbachev had not said this, but previous Soviet leaders had reiterated many times that the goal of Marxism and Leninism was the achievement of a one-world Communist state. Could the US ignore this and think

that it was not a possible target? General Secretary Gorbachev had not made such a statement and was the first Soviet leader to Reagan's knowledge who proposed to decrease the number of nuclear weapons and to completely eliminate them. The President welcomed this and was willing to join in this effort, since he had had this same goal for many years, but not through something like the SALT Treaty, which simply regulated an arms increase, but real negotiations to reduce the number of such weapons.

The President said that in order to achieve these aims there would need to be deeds to show that both sides wished to eliminate the distrust which exists between them, and which makes each feel on guard against the other.

The President emphasized that the US side was very grateful for the steps taken by the Soviet government to allow reunification of families through emigration. The Soviets had not seen the US give this a lot of publicity, or make public demands or take credit for it. It very much appreciates the Soviet actions.

The President indicated that he wished to conclude the meeting with the following thought, since he had already taken up a great deal of the Ambassador's time. He realized that with the new Soviet administration, June had been too early a date to have set for the Summit. Now the US side was faced with a difficulty due to elections in which members of the U.S. side would be involved. The US would very much appreciate it if the General Secretary or the Ambassador would propose a date after the early November elections for the Summit. Then the two sides could get together to work on issues to decrease the mistrust between the two sides.

Dubinina thanked the President for his frank and candid remarks, especially for discussing those things which he had discussed in private with Gorbachev. The President was aware of the position of the Soviet Union on these issues, since Gorbachev had indicated them, so Dubinina did not wish to dwell on this. He did wish to stress and stress again that the Soviet Union wants to live in peace with the US, and that it had no intentions with regard to the United States or other countries or regions except those of peaceful coexistence, peace and cooperation. The two countries fully shared a common goal of reducing arms. The President would see from Gorbachev's letter that the two sides are close to very significant agreements, and such agreements could be realized in time for a possible Summit. The Soviet side was proposing to begin preparatory work immediately. Then the foreign ministers might meet in September to evaluate the results of the work. This could take place immediately preceding the UN General Assembly. It was very important to prepare thoroughly for the Summit, and the US and USSR could really set an example and start the work of real disarmament.

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Dubin in concluded by saying that the USSR was approaching this in a constructive and optimistic fashion, and that it was ready to get down to work.

Drafted by D. Zarechnak, OPR/LS  
Cleared: EUR:TWSimons, Jr.

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