

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Meeting with Gorbachev

TIME: December 8, 1987, 2:30 - 3:15 p.m.

PLACE: Cabinet Room, The White House

PARTICIPANTS: U.S. USSR

Ronald Reagan, President of the United States  
 George Bush, Vice President  
 Howard Baker, Chief of Staff  
 George P. Shultz, Secretary of State  
 Frank Carlucci, Secretary of Defense  
 Colin Powell, National Security Advisor  
 Rozanne L. Ridgway, Assistant Secretary of State (EUR)  
 Jack F. Matlock, U.S. Ambassador to the USSR  
 Thomas W. Simons, Jr., Deputy Secretary of State (EUR) (notetaker)  
 Dimitri Zarechnak (interpreter)

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, General Secretary, CPSU CC  
 Eduard A. Shevardnadze, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
 Aleksandr N. Yakov'lev, CPSU CC Secretary  
 Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, CPSU CC Secretary  
 Vladimir M. Kamentsev, Deputy Chairman, Council of Minister  
 Sergei Akhromeyev, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces  
 Yuriy V. Dubinin, Soviet Ambassador to the U.S.  
 Sergei Tarasenko, Special Assistant to Shevardnadze (notetaker)  
 P. Palazhchenko, MFA USA/Canada Department (interpreter)

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The President suggested the two leaders take up their discussion where it had left off.

Gorbachev said he would complete his presentation of that morning by adding a few words, with the President's permission.

The President invited him to do so.

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BY MJD NARA, DATE 5/9/00

Gorbachev said he believed the President felt like him and their colleagues following the signing (of the INF Treaty). The two sides had begun to discuss the key problem of reducing nuclear weapons. There was also the concern about conventional and chemical weapons. This was becoming very important. It was coming to the forefront of concern. He did not wish to overdramatize. There was no need to panic. But the Soviet side was in the process of assessing whether harm was being done to equality, to the balance of security. They had been listening to what was being said in Europe. They had the feeling in Moscow that it was hoped in Europe that we would give due attention to chemical weapons, to conventional weapons. The President and he should discuss this. They should give instructions to their colleagues to move forward.

Turning first to conventional weapons, Gorbachev recalled how the two sides had begun the process of eliminating medium-range and shorter-range missiles. The President had recalled in his remarks that he had put forward the zero option. Gorbachev said he had thought the President would then say the Soviets had appropriated the idea for themselves. But the President had put the thought in more sophisticated fashion. Gorbachev had noticed that.

But, Gorbachev went on, when they began to discuss this question there was the issue of British and French arms. They had debated it. The Soviet side had decided to set it aside. Then they had discussed missiles in Europe and in Asia. At Reykjavik it had been decided each side could retain 100 warheads, with the Soviet warheads in Asia. Later they had decided to go to complete zero. They had moved step by step. All these things had gone into the treaty the two sides had just signed.

This experience should not only help with strategic offensive arms discussions, Gorbachev continued. It should also help with conventional weapons. In the West it was said that the Soviet Union had a superiority in armed forces and weapons. In the East it was said that NATO had a superiority in weapons. And both sides were right. Each side had the data proving its case. The two sides should agree to sit down. They should see who was trying to outsmart whom, and who was serious. They should look at the asymmetries. It should be a process; they should go step by step.

Gorbachev went on that the President and he should decide to move forward toward a mandate for negotiations between the two

alliances. Perhaps they should lock their negotiators in a room. They could give them food, of course, but they would instruct them to prepare proposals. Some were saying that the Soviet Union should take certain steps even before this had been done. They said the Soviet Union had an advantage in Central Europe. No one talked about NATO's advantages in Southeastern Europe, which existed, and in an area close to the Soviet borders.

This should be put in the final document (of the Summit), Gorbachev said. They should put their cards on the table. They should think of first steps to lessen confrontation. There was the concept of corridors, of thinning out forces in certain corridors. There was the question of discussing military doctrines. They should seek a common concept of sufficiency, sufficiency for defensive purposes. He would not expand on this list. But the atmosphere created by signing the treaty was not less important than the treaty itself. The two leaders should talk about what he had suggested. This would be well received by the allies of both countries, and in Europe generally.

Turning to chemical weapons, Gorbachev said that at a certain point the British had made a valuable initiative. The Soviet position had in fact been a certain hurdle. The Soviet side therefore took major decisions. After that work went forward toward a convention to ban all these weapons, among all the participating countries, including the United States.

Then there came a slowdown, Gorbachev went on. As the Soviets saw it, someone was holding back the process. It could be either the Soviet Union or the United States. The Soviets knew it was not they. They had stopped production of these weapons. They were building, in fact completing, a facility to destroy them. It was not the Soviet side that was slowing things down. Perhaps it was the U.S. side. Perhaps there were some concerns on the U.S. side. Maybe it was the binary weapons program. The U.S. had already funded production of 155 mm. shells.

Verification was also very important, Gorbachev continued. The U.S. was still proposing verification only of state facilities. That would include all the Soviet Union's, but not all the U.S.'s. There was no equality there.

Gorbachev concluded that the final document (of the Summit) should express a common view that would make it possible to give momentum to the negotiating process. This would enrich their meeting. It would be welcomed by the peoples of Europe, the peoples of the world.

He had wished to raise these two questions, Gorbachev said, by way of concluding their initial meeting. He could confine himself to this at that point.

The President said he did not think anyone on the U.S. side did not favor more disarmament. The U.S. side thought the main priority should be to move forward in START. But if we continued on that path, we would face the question of short-range, or battlefield, weapons. It would only be possible to eliminate them if we had first restored a balance in conventional weapons. The two sides should find a way to move forward on this. But, he recalled, it was not armaments that created distrust, but distrust that created armaments.

Gorbachev commented that confidence could not grow in an empty place. The arms control process would help it grow. That was dialectics, under the Marxist approach.

Secretary Shultz said that the U.S. side wanted to work with what had been said at that meeting, about conventional weapons, about chemical weapons. That was desirable. But the question was not so much one of language as of content.

The U.S. side would like to see the mandate being worked on in Vienna finished as soon as possible, the Secretary continued. It was pretty well along. In the framework of the Vienna talks there was also discussion of human rights. The Soviet side had made proposals, the U.S. side had made proposals. It was the Helsinki framework which held all these things together. So the two sides needed to deal with all these aspects. The U.S. side wanted to do that. Then, as Gorbachev had said, the sides should proceed on to deal with the asymmetries. They should try to move toward an equal situation at lower levels. The U.S. side had some ideas. Perhaps they would parallel those of the Soviet side.

Like the Soviet side, the U.S. side made a point of moving forward as a member of an alliance, the Secretary continued. This was not something the U.S. and the Soviet Union could just do together. Most of the arms under discussion on the Western side belonged to U.S. allies. But it was true that the U.S. and the Soviet Union had important parts, and could energize things.

Gorbachev said he supported what Secretary Shultz had said concerning the linkage to allies. The working group should work on this topic during the visit. They should develop ideas. When they had done so, the two sides should consult with their allies. Then Carlucci and Soviet Defense Minister Yazov could

meet. This would move the process forward.

Secretary Shultz said he was all for meetings between defense officials of the two sides. But we had to be careful about acting as if the U.S. and Soviet sides could work things out, and then consult with allies. We could not have that. It would not work. The allies see the importance of the issues, but the two sides needed to go about it right. But they should come to grips in Vienna with all the topics that had been discussed. This meant not only a mandate for negotiations on conventional weapons but also a mandate for confidence building measures. They should get that done, in the early part of the next year.

Gorbachev said the two sides had a common view that the topic was important, and he agreed we should not rush, but he had reservations when he heard Shultz say it. The Warsaw Treaty Organization had put proposals on the table eighteen months ago. It had still not received an answer. As he had told the President, he had not come to Washington to bicker, but to do real politics. At the stage we were at, recriminations and complaints just served to delay things. Gorbachev pointed to the main negotiators, sitting at the back of the room. They had felt this on their skins, he said. One needed to be persistent to succeed.

Gorbachev continued that with regard to substance the U.S. side had said there was generally agreement. But he had one question. He did not want to link conventional disarmament to Helsinki. Helsinki included many things, human rights and other things. We should tackle conventional disarmament straight on. We should not make a package. The U.S. had made Jackson-Vanik fifteen years before. That was a package, and over fifteen years the U.S. had been unable to untie it.

Secretary Shultz said the U.S. side was prepared in the working group to discuss conventional arms in relation to the CSCE process. Our Ambassador at Vienna, Warren Zimmermann, would be there. Perhaps a subgroup could be formed to work on this problem.

Gorbachev suggested that the formulation in the statement could stress cooperation with allies; that was important. Secretary Shultz said Gorbachev had better believe it. That was, Gorbachev added, if the chairman agreed. The President said he did.

Gorbachev asked about chemical weapons. The Secretary said this was a more severe problem. For fifty years there had been a

moral consensus against them. This had been broken. It was important to try to put it back together.

Gorbachev asked if the Secretary were referring to the 1925 Convention. The Secretary said that he was. It had worked, more or less. Actually, the fact that some countries had possessed these weapons had probably had some deterrent effect. But there were now many countries which had or could have them. They had been used in the Iran-Iraq war. At the same time there was the problem of verification. There was a need for a broad consensus. But it would be hard to get.

The U.S. side thus saw both the urgency and the difficulty of the issue, the Secretary said. There was real work to do. The two sides had had excellent discussions on the topic, in the content of his meetings with Foreign Minister Shevardnadze. The U.S. side wanted to see progress. But it had no illusions. He suggested that they have their people work on it. This could be reflected in any statement. But the problem was genuinely difficult.

Gorbachev asked if the U.S. side saw the goal, for the two sides and for others, as speeding up the drafting of the convention. Secretary Shultz said it did, as long as we went about it realistically.

The President commented that any country with a fertilizer plant could make chemical weapons. It was an almost impossible task to know that they are not being made. Secretary Shultz said we thus had an impossible but necessary task. Chemical weapons were potentially very destabilizing. Gorbachev said there was no cause for panic.

Gorbachev continued that he wished to draw the President's and the Administration's attention to another issue. The Soviet side had noticed that in European political and journalistic circles there was discussion of how to compensate for the elimination of INF missiles in Europe. If such thinking prevailed, it would be very dangerous. The two sides should interact and take a common stand. There could be new weapons, of great new capacity. If all the talk of reinforcing or adding new forces in Europe became true, the whole process would be more difficult. This was especially true since they had agreed to eliminate INF missiles over a certain period of time.

(At this point, at 3:00 p.m., Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr A. Bessmertnykh and Disarmament Department Director Viktor Karpov took their places at the table.)

The President commented that it was here that we needed to take the most steps to create trust. There was a legacy of mistrust because of Soviet expansionism. Gorbachev commented that compared to American expansionism the Soviet side's was a small child. The President responded that the U.S. side did not think so. There had been four wars in his lifetime, and the U.S. had not gained an inch of territory.

Under the U.S. system, the President continued, it was not enough just to say something. You had to do something. We had people here from every part of the world. There was thus a kind of dual loyalty. The first question asked was what you were; more and more people had to name three or four places. There was a pride in where one's parents and ancestors were from. They were proud of them, as well as of being American. So there were elements in our country that had big resentments over what happened where they had come from. Signing the treaty was therefore not enough. There was also the question of getting it ratified.

Gorbachev said the Supreme Soviet was even larger than the Senate. It had some 2000 members. He expected ratification would be a sharper process than usual. It opened up many questions. There was the question of why the Soviets had been so generous toward the Americans. They were eliminating four times as many missiles. But it used to be that parity had been recognized. So the question was why it was being broken. The Soviets would need to tackle this even before the formal ratification process. It was not easy to take the first step toward disarmament. People asked how it was possible to have disarmament with the U.S. when the Soviet Union was ringed with U.S. bases. People asked how Gorbachev could bow down to the U.S., and do more.

Gorbachev continued that he had just seen a recent Gallup poll in the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It had been an independent poll. It had shown that there were not many enthusiasts for the treaty in the Soviet Union. About half the Soviet people had expressed certain doubts. After all the Soviet government had said the principle should be equal security. That was one reason why he had brought Dobrynin along; he was head of a commission in the Supreme Soviet. So was Ligachev. But he thought he would have Dobrynin with him.

The President said that Gorbachev's comments underlined the need for trust. If Gorbachev genuflected before him, he would stomp his foot. Gorbachev said he was not referring to himself

personally. He was one thing. But pride was a matter for a nation. He represented a nation. We had to deal with each other on the basis of equality, of respect, of taking each other's concerns into account. We needed to make real policy.

The U.S. side accused the Soviet side of all sorts of sins, Gorbachev went on. What was needed was to look forward instead. During the forty-five years since the War so much had piled up that if we just went on with complaints -- on the Soviet side there were all sorts of doctrines to complain about, the Truman Doctrine, the Eisenhower Doctrine, the Carter Doctrine -- we would put each other on trial. This was not the constructive policies people wanted. Gorbachev advised the Vice President to reflect on that. Unless policy reflected what people wanted, you could win an election, but not succeed in the long term.

The President commented that the U.S. side welcomed moves toward democratization in the Soviet Union, toward glasnost.

Gorbachev replied that he wished to say a few words about that. It was people's greatest wish to go to bed and wake up in the morning to see everything changed for the better. But even in fairy tales the heroes had to go through trials, and in real life things were even harder. He would continue to fight conservatism. He would continue to fight those who sought to shackle people in dogma. But he would also fight adventurists. There were the equivalent of the Red Guards in China, who wanted to push ahead without thinking.

It would not be easy, Gorbachev said. But the present leadership had taken a firm stand to move along that path. Certain politicians, perhaps Matlock, were looking for an opposition. There was opposition, in every single Soviet. It would be foolish to deny it. They were children of their times. But of political opposition there was none. There would be debates. There would be differences of views, and exchanges of views. But he could assure the President and his colleagues that the Soviet side would be moving ahead toward democratization. That was, if the U.S. would permit them to do so. He asked the American side to let the Soviet side do it their own way.

The President said there was a U.S. President who had once said something very profound. That was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In America there had also been people who had thought that government should have more control of people. Roosevelt had asked where, if people did not have the capacity to run their own lives, we would find among them the tiny group that could run not only their own lives but those of others.

He did not want to offend Gorbachev, the President continued, but he had recently talked to a U.S. scholar who had visited Gorbachev's country. On his way to the airport he had had a taxi driver, a young man finishing his education but also driving a taxi because he needed money. The professor had asked the young man what he was going to be; he had replied that he had not yet decided. The professor got to the Soviet Union, and there he had had basically the same conversation, with a taxi driver finishing his education, but also driving a taxi. When he had been asked what he would be, he had replied: "They haven't told me yet."

Gorbachev said he knew the President liked anecdotes about the Soviet Union. It was indeed a country rich in anecdotes. He had only one request: that the President not ask Matlock to collect anecdotes for him. This would stop relations entirely; that would be the biggest joke.

Secretary Shultz asked if he could get a word in edgewise. People were waiting for the working groups to start. There had been discussion of strategic arms that morning. Notes had been exchanged; there were things to work with. Gorbachev and the President had also had a discussion about conventional and chemical weapons, so that was additional material. There was one area that had not been touched on. Perhaps they could reach it the next day. That was regional issues. (Gorbachev interjected agreement.) Here the Secretary assumed the working group would plow in without guidance from the leaders' discussion.

Gorbachev said he would welcome that. Bessmertnykh and Ridgway knew their respective positions. The Secretary joked that the problem was that they knew the positions of both sides.

Gorbachev said the Soviet side intended to conduct a more businesslike discussion of regional issues with the President and his colleagues. But there was too little time for it that day. They could get into it the next day.

Secretary Shultz said that as self-appointed housekeeper, he might also mention the nuclear testing statement as something to issue the next day. It would be good to have a continuing flow of things out of the meeting. Gorbachev said the two sides should look at it.

Gorbachev said he had made a note to himself that morning. His thought was that in discussing the ABM Treaty, where the two sides agreed on a non-withdrawal period, they should say not only, as the Soviet proposal had it, that if one side violated

the ABM Treaty the other side would have the right to resume increasing offensive weapons, but that if one side violated it the other side would have the right to end its moratorium on ASAT weapons, i.e. not only to resume production of offensive arms but also to resume ASAT production. That would be an equal obligation for both sides.

Secretary Shultz said it was not clear to him what Gorbachev meant by a moratorium on ASAT. Gorbachev said the Soviet side had been observing such a moratorium since 1983; of course it was unilateral. The Secretary said that our moratorium was imposed by Congress. Gorbachev said he knew that; but in actual fact it was a moratorium. The Secretary said he now understood what Gorbachev was driving at.

Secretary Shultz continued that in his view the ABM Treaty deserved discussion in the working group, and perhaps also back at the main table: the President had important thoughts on it.

Gorbachev asked if they should call it a day for the time being. Or perhaps the President wished to make suggestions on strategic weapons that day. The President replied that he did not.

The Secretary asked if it were agreed to begin the arms control working group at 4:00 p.m. Shevardnadze asked if it would take place at the State Department, and the Secretary confirmed that it would.

Gorbachev concluded that in the previous two hours they had made an important event. It was a bridge to the future. The Soviet side was ready to build it over. By the time the President came to Moscow the two sides of the bridge should be locked together. The President said they should meet in the middle. Gorbachev said he agreed fully.

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