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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Eduard Shevardnadze, Foreign
Minister of the Soviet Union (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President
and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Jack F. Matlock, Ambassador to the Soviet
Union
Paul Wolfowitz, Under Secretary of Defense
Raymond Seitz, Assistant Secretary of State
Robert D. Blackwill, Special Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
(notetaker)
Dmitry Zarechnak (Interpreter)

Eduard Shevardnadze, Minister of Foreign
Affairs
Viktor Karpov, Deputy Foreign Minister
Alexander Bessmertnykh, First Deputy Foreign
Minister
Yuriy V. Dubinin, Ambassador to the United
States
A. Obukhov, MFA Chief of US and Canada
Directorate
T. Stepanov, Assistant to the Foreign
Minister
S. Tarasenko, MFA Chief of General
Secretariat
G. Mamedov, MFA First Deputy Chief of US and
Canada Directorate (notetaker)
P. Palazhchenko (Interpreter)

DATE, TIME September 21, 1989, 2:00 p.m. - 3:05 p.m. EDT
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Let me welcome you to the United States. I am
delighted with the letter from President Gorbachev and was very

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pleased to receive it. There is a great deal of interest across the country in your visit. I am pleased that you and Secretary Baker can continue your dialogue. We are very pleased with the preparations for this visit. (U)

I feel in a personal sense that I have a good relationship with President Gorbachev. We feel nothing but affection and warmth for him and I want him to understand this at a personal level. I hope he knows I want to accelerate this relationship. I can comment on your arms control proposals and Secretary Baker will later faithfully represent my views. There are no serious elements in the U.S. that want Soviet reforms to fail. Please reaffirm that to President Gorbachev, although I hope it is not necessary. We support perestroika and we do not want to complicate your reform efforts. In New York, President Gorbachev said some elements in the United States did not want perestroika to succeed. That does not include either me or my Administration. Please tell him that. We have confidence in him, and please do not place great weight on the gloomy forecasts sometimes heard in both our countries. The important thing is that the reforms continue. Between us, President Gorbachev and I can create a whole new fabric of U.S.-Soviet relations. (S)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of all my colleagues I would like to greet you here in the White House. This is my first meeting with you as President. You have made a personal contribution to U.S.-Soviet relations. I would like to convey to you most warm greetings from President Gorbachev and the leaders of the Soviet Union. I recall the meeting and good talk I had with you when were Vice President, during the election campaign. The thoughts you expressed were captured in the phrase, "the new closeness." This fully reflects our concept of U.S.-Soviet relations at the current stage. (S)

During the last few years we have gone through an important period of establishing a level of mutual understanding. Having this positive experience in building our relationship, we can move to partnership where possible, and we are ready for this further stage. The INF treaty and the steps forward in bilateral relations, such as over 40 bilateral agreements signed in the last few years, demonstrate how far our relations, including people to people contacts, have come. (S)

We can be bolder. There has been an erosion in both of our countries in the image of the enemy. The atmosphere of U.S.-Soviet relations is quite different than when I became Foreign

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Minister four years ago, when the tone was so confrontational. Now, we are planning a joint statement on human rights. The Soviet Union is moving toward the highest standards in this area and we appreciate your support for holding the CSCE human rights conference in Moscow. The Supreme Soviet will soon adopt new legislation on entry into and exit out of the U.S.S.R. (Ø)

You spoke warmly of President Gorbachev. I would like to stress the important political asset represented in your personal relationship with President Gorbachev. Nothing must spoil or poison this trust. (Ø)

I would not wish to idealize our relationship, but one truth is elementary. Relations between states can only develop if there is domestic stability. Therefore, we appreciate the high degree of U.S. interest in democratization and renewal in the U.S.S.R. We have reassessed and condemned our previous policies quite a bit recently, but we will not wipe out or negate the accomplishments of the decades of our country. There are tragic events in our past which are difficult to explain. But the historical goal we have traversed is glorious and only on the basis of these accomplishments can we move forward on reform. We must not forget our two countries together saved world civilization in the Great Patriotic War. There is no alternative to perestroika. We have just completed a Central Committee plenum on the nationalities problem, a painful problem. We are a union of 15 states, as stated in our constitution, which poses special problems. We believe we have now adopted policies that ensure each state will be self-governing, and that will restore stability. We are creating a new political culture and we have made mistakes. But we do not see anything bad about this expanding political awareness. People in the Soviet Union are in favor of perestroika, although there are conservatives who oppose it. But our people believe in perestroika, want perestroika, and this process cannot be reversed. (Ø)

It is not easy to develop our new laws on the economy, including those on cooperatives -- which produced 6 billion rubles of goods last year. We are trying to reduce the incompatibility of our economy with those in the West. Thus, we have emphasized joint ventures, 1500 in all and 80 with the United States. I call your attention to all this work on our economic legislation because these developments should allow more economic interaction between us. We are not asking for aid from you. We want only equal cooperation. We have no doubt, to conclude, that perestroika will succeed. I know some of my friends say we have 5 months, or

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1 year, or 18 months and then we will collapse. This is not a serious view. I know my country, and predictions of catastrophe for perestroika are not serious at all. We will succeed. (Ø)

Let me say a few words about President Gorbachev's letter. In the past several months, we have moved forward in arms control. But the goal of 50% reductions in START remains to be achieved. The main theme in President Gorbachev's letter is that we must remove obstacles to agreement in Geneva on strategic arms. You were right when you said in your letter of June 20 that there is a conceptual gap on the ABM issue. We should stick to the Washington formulation and return to the subject after a START treaty is concluded. We will have to decide what is permissible under the ABM Treaty. Research and testing could be permitted except for ABM components. We would not insist on a fixed period for non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. Our political decision to eliminate the Krasnoyarsk radar site demonstrates our commitment to the ABM Treaty. (Ø)

One important question remains and I would like to speak frankly. A year ago, your scientists visited the Krasnoyarsk radar. It would be good if our experts could visit your radars in Greenland and the United Kingdom. (Ø)

On the issue of SLCMs, the question is different. Important political decisions need to be taken. We should look at this problem in a broader way, in the effort to rid the seas of nuclear weapons. We hope you will join us in this effort. We should concentrate on verification, without which no progress is possible. A limit on SLCMs could be set by means of mutual obligations which would be made in connection with the treaty, but outside of it. (Ø)

On ALCMs and heavy bombers, we are ready not to count B-52s and other aircraft that are conventionally armed within the 1600 limit. These aircraft would be counted outside the 1600, perhaps with a limit of 100. The U.S. side should then accept a realistic counting of ALCMs and reaffirm a 600 kilometer range cut-off in defining such systems. There should be interim work on verification measures, as you have proposed, but covering all strategic offensive arms. We have the same approach to data exchanges. We hope to sign an agreement with notifications for strategic exercises. (Ø)

We do not see any insurmountable obstacles to agreement on nuclear testing, based on work already done. Work should be

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completed at the end of this year and can be signed at the Summit. (Ø)

We would like to ban fissionable material. I will discuss this with Secretary Baker. (Ø)

On chemical weapons, we should speed up work on a convention banning CW. Your personal interest and that of President Gorbachev will assist that effort. It would be good for us to set a target date to complete a treaty, in 1990 or 1991. (Ø)

On CFE, I will discuss this with Secretary Baker. We think we can get results, as you have suggested, in 6-12 months. We are ready to work together with you. We would like to have the 35 CSCE Foreign Ministers meet in 1990 to work on a treaty and, by the end of the year, hold a Summit to sign the agreement. (Ø)

In order to accelerate work in Vienna, we need to start negotiations on short-range nuclear forces. Conditions are ripe for such discussions. We could start moving toward elimination of these weapons. (Ø)

We are interested in your Open Skies plan. We shall participate in an international conference on this subject. We have some suggestions that we will put forward in Wyoming. (Ø)

Concerning regional problems, there is a great range of possibilities for cooperation: Lebanon, the Middle East, Central America, Asia, Cyprus, and other problems. I would like to discuss with Secretary Baker the situation in and around Afghanistan. This is very important to us. (Ø)

To conclude, Secretary Baker and I have already had useful meetings this year. We have developed a frank, businesslike relationship that makes it possible to discuss all complex problems and move toward solutions. (Ø)

The President: Thank you. I was hoping to hear such a broad treatment of the issues. On the regional issues, President Carter was here this morning discussing the upcoming elections in Nicaragua. The question of Nicaragua is a thorn in the side of our bilateral relationship. I want Secretary Baker to discuss this with you in detail in Wyoming. On the subject of Afghanistan, we have no interest in seeing an anti-Soviet regime installed in Kabul. Secretary Baker will elaborate on this. We should be able to find a solution to the Afghan problem. We need

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to make progress. (S)

On conventional forces, I am pleased with the Soviet willingness to see positive aspects in the NATO proposal. We want to move forward, keep the momentum. An early CFE agreement would be good. (S)

On START, we, despite what columnists here say, are interested in an early agreement that enhances stability and will reduce the risk of war. You are not going up against a stone wall in START. We are ready to move. Secretary Baker will go into this more later. (S)

Secretary Baker: I think the letter from President Gorbachev is interesting, but it does raise questions we will want to go into detail on in Wyoming. (S)

The President: On DST, a START treaty should not be held hostage to an agreement on Defense and Space, negotiations which should stand on their own. (S)

I appreciate what you said on chemical weapons and this is an area on which we must find a solution. Secretary Baker will discuss a new CW initiative on our part. If we can reach a CW agreement, we will greatly reduce our stockpile. Secretary Baker will give you the details. As we lead up to full ban, we can make major reductions in our respective stockpiles. (S)

I also appreciate your position on Open Skies. Secretary Baker will go into this in more detail. (S)

On the issue of nuclear testing, we have made good progress on verification, and I think decisions on our side will push forward the negotiations and allow us to finalize the nuclear testing treaties in the near future. (S)

Turning to the subject of perestroika, we are fascinated by the process of reform in your country. We have great respect for the principle of cultural autonomy. We are sensitive to the changes going on in the U.S.S.R. I do not want our interest, however, to be misunderstood, to complicate developments in the Soviet Union. This is a delicate issue, and needs to be handled carefully. (S)

It is important that you and Secretary Baker have a good, frank discussion about Eastern Europe. We think the Soviet leadership has handled the Polish situation admirably. We hope you feel the

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same way about our policy. We want to support changes toward democracy in Eastern Europe, but do not want to be reckless or silly about it. We also admire your policy approach toward Hungary. On Eastern Europe, I want us to be in such close touch that we do not misunderstand each other's intentions. (S)

We need to work on mutual problems together. I would love to hear your view on Cuba and Castro, who is so far behind the power curve. (S)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: I cannot promise that, but I will discuss Nicaragua, where I will stop after New York. This will be my first visit to Nicaragua, the first by a Soviet Foreign Minister. We want a free, fair election and the Nicaraguan leaders want that too. I want to say we are not sending weapons to Nicaragua. We gave our word and we have kept it. Before the election, there will be no arms supplies to Nicaragua. (S)

The President: I hope you will have a good talk with Secretary Baker on this problem. We are troubled by the flow of substantial arms shipments into Nicaragua. The arms are coming from somewhere. I do not question what you say, but we need to talk in detail with you about this. (S)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: It is one thing when a journalist makes such a charge, another when a U.S. official makes such a charge. We keep our word. (S)

Secretary Baker: You need to tell us who that official was and when the charge was made. The level of East bloc shipments to Nicaragua has increased and that is what we have said. If we said it was Soviet arms, then please give us chapter and verse. (S)

The President: We can iron this out, but we are concerned. The total amount of Bloc arms supplies to Nicaragua has increased. (S)

Secretary Baker: In a spirit of candor, we think arms are coming through Cuba and are East Bloc, including Soviet, in origin. (S)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: I have no reason to suspect the Cubans but, in any event, the Soviet Union cannot be held responsible for all countries with whom we have good relations. (S)

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The President: We appreciate your coming. You and Secretary Baker have much to talk about. (U)

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