

Excerpts from conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and J. Baker, September 13, 1990 (One-on-one)

Gorbachev: We are really entering a new phase, where we will be more and more interested in each other in [the spheres of] political and economic relations, will depend on each other. And the scale of our economy is such that many [of our] projects will be hard to realize without U.S. participation on the same scale. Although, I have to say that the appetites of some of our neighbors are enormous. [...]

And now, when this great country is undergoing a great transition, it is very important that the United States was genuinely involved. This is an integral part of our philosophy and politics. I am speaking sincerely: our generation of leaders cannot allow itself to fail. [...]

Baker: Nobody in the world ever attempted to accomplish what you and your supporters are trying to do today. We are talking about changing the way of thinking that developed over a seventy-year period. Naturally, you have to do it gradually, step by step, otherwise you will not succeed. But I think you know that the President and I came to a firm conclusion a year ago: we want your efforts to succeed, because it corresponds to the core interests of the United States, of the Soviet Union, and of the entire world.

Gorbachev: Yes, this is dictated by objective logic.

Baker: And now, I will confess to you what I told my assistant a couple of days ago: I am not a novice in politics, I have seen many things, but I have never seen in any political leader so much courage, such guts, as you have. I know that you have to act under certain constraints and political limits. I know how hard it is to come to the political decisions that you so courageously make. I want to tell you that President Bush shares the same opinion about you.

Gorbachev: [...] I would like to ask the President and you—I have asked several others about the same—notwithstanding all the problems that you are facing, to find an opportunity to give us a no-interest flexible credit for \$1-1.2 billion. We need such a credit very much now for the coming period of economic stabilization. [...] I understand you. To go through Congress with this issue would take a long time, and it would be unrealistic to count on that. But maybe, taking into consideration your immense experience, you could help us get these resources through some other country?

Baker: [...] In recent days I have engaged in collecting resources to finance our expenses related to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. I have gotten some experience with how to ask for money.

Gorbachev: Maybe something could be done for us, too. What is one billion for the Arabian prince who has \$104-105 billion?

Baker: [...] In four days, I was able to mobilize \$12 billion in three countries, half of which will be directed to assistance to three countries that are most affected by the crisis: Egypt, Jordan, Turkey.

I would like, without linking it to this issue, to touch upon one moment that we discussed today with minister Shevardnadze. Could you help us with air transport for Egyptian and Syrian troops to Saudi Arabia? We do not have enough transport aircraft for this. I understand that it might be difficult for you to take this step, but you did condemn the aggression with us, you voted for the U.N. Security Council resolutions. [...]

I promise, without linkage to this problem, to look at what can be done in order to obtain a loan [for you] from some third country.

Gorbachev: Next week we are expecting a visit from the minister of foreign affairs of Saudi Arabia. And by the way, the minister of science and energy of Israel is coming here too.

Baker: Just please do not ask for anything from Israel, because their money is ultimately our money.

Gorbachev: [...] In conclusion, I would like to say that, notwithstanding this sharp crisis and the complicating circumstances, we see new opportunities as well. If we get the situation under control, not allow an explosion, and find a political settlement, then we have an opportunity to put down foundations for new relations in the world, a new world order. The results of the summit in Helsinki were very well received in the world.

Baker: Absolutely true. We appreciate the position of the Soviet Union, which was especially clearly expressed in the course of difficult discussions at the United Nations. I shared my thoughts about possible next steps with E.A. Shevardnadze. Now we have a real chance to make the United Nations work as its founders envisioned it. This is really a chance to establish foundations for a new world. But this would be impossible to do without solving the Iraqi problem first.

Gorbachev: We agree with that.

Baker: Iraq must leave Kuwait, Kuwaiti leadership must be restored to power, and everything else will follow.

In conclusion, a couple of words about disarmament issues. As I understand it, the situation now is pretty bad. President Bush and you promised the international community that the START treaty will be signed before the end of the year, and that

the agreement on reducing conventional armed forces will be signed in November in Paris. However, we are not moving with the speed that would be needed to solve these tasks in the determined timeframe. I hope that E. A. Shevardnadze agrees with this assessment.

Shevardnadze: I agree.

Gorbachev: So you and Shevardnadze are less optimistic now than me and President Bush?

Baker: Yes, I am less optimistic. The situation is terrible. We have to move much faster because political events are getting ahead of us. In the conditions where you agreed to withdraw your troops from Eastern Europe during the next four years, the agreement on conventional forces looks quite different. We have to conclude it because it will lose any meaning altogether.

Gorbachev: I am in favor of completing all the work. I am asking you to discuss with our minister what should be done about it. This is very serious!

Baker: Good. Thank you for the conversation, Mr. President. I was very glad to see you.

Gorbachev: Give my regards and best wishes to President Bush. Have a great trip.

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