

February 7, 1991

In the morning I chaired a meeting of experts on the Persian Gulf War: Yura Mirsky and his team (thirteen people). They said many smart things. Surprisingly, these narrow specialists are also divided into Westerners and Arab patriots. Nevertheless, the conversation was much more interesting and useful in a practical sense than yesterday's meeting of the official "Group on the Persian Gulf War," headed by Bessmertnykh (Yazov, Primakov, Kryuchkov).

I rewrote the draft statement on the Persian Gulf prepared for Gorbachev by the MFA. Returned it to Aleksandr Aleksandrovich.

February 9, 1991

On my insistence, Gorbachev held a meeting of the Persian Gulf War group. Baker has already announced the course of action, and Mitterrand too. Everything in noble terms. Plus, Iran got active, ready to "get things done," it offered its mediation. Our orthodox people raised a public outcry about the horrors of war. The subtext is obvious: Hussein is our ally and embodies the anti-imperialist forces, while we are betraying him.

Gorbachev was a little capricious about the text of the statement. He made mean jokes along the lines of "Chernyaev didn't go far enough in editing the MFA text to ingratiate the Americans." And then he stepped up the text precisely in this sense, adding that we are affirming our support of the UN Security Council's resolution. Today the text will go on air. On the spot, Gorbachev decided to send Primakov to Baghdad. It would be a strong step, he said, not like Kryuchkov's proposal to invite Aziz here again.

We speculated a little about the prospects of events. I shared the analysis of experts I had received recently. Overall, it looks like this: the war is ending. Hussein will surrender as soon as ground troops start advancing past Kuwait. It will look "honorable"—in the face of superior forces. Not capitulation! He is counting on appearing a hero in the Arab world. He dared to raise a hand against Goliath himself (?), so to say, and even hit Israel with some missiles. Unreciprocated! He will get the airplanes back from Iran. The prisoners will be released home from Kuwait, though without weapons. And he will have an army again to continue ruling. Since the whole world will be dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict—it cannot be avoided—Hussein will be able to boast that after all these years of waltzing around the problem he made it move forward, making sacrifices for the "great Arab cause" and "for the glory of Islam." We'll see whether this view will be justified.

February 15, 1991

Yesterday M.S. met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait. His name has many "Sabah's" [Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah]. He is a most cunning Arab. M.S. knows how to make an important international move in a simple way, for example, with the phrase: "I hope that in the near future Kuwait will again become a prosperous state..."

Today he met with the Foreign Minister of Iran, Velayati—smart, reserved, intelligent, but a Persian! Velayati barely said anything the whole time, only asked two “clarifying” questions in the end. He wrote down every word. Gorbachev won his confidence by sharing his concern that the Americans will deal with the region according to their own plans if they crush Hussein militarily and if the political factor is not added in time. Naturally, he found an “anti-American understanding” with his interlocutor. While yesterday, when he spoke with the Arab, he was full of conviction and unequivocal about the inviolability of our unity with the United States against aggression, about the USSR’s commitment to the UN Security Council’s resolutions, etc.

The *New York Times* published an article on Gorbachev in the worst tradition of the past: he is a dictator, a liar, he’s playing a double game in the Persian Gulf, tricked the Americans with disarmament, etc.

February 18, 1991

I’ve gotten lost in the cobwebs of service. On Saturday a trio from the European Community was in Moscow—the ministers Michelis, Poos, and Van den Broek. They came to preach to Gorbachev about democracy and the Charter of Paris. But they got a counter-attack: are they not ashamed for believing that Gorbachev betrayed *perestroika*?! The ministers got confused, mumbled some banalities. However, the campaign to unmask Gorbachev persists in Europe. They don’t want to hear any of his arguments. They have no doubt that there was an attempt to “restore order” in Lithuania and Latvia by force.

Today Aziz was here (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq). Gorbachev handled it masterfully. He outlined his plan for Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait. This time, Aziz did not make a peep. Gorbachev made it clear that Bush really does not want to appease Hussein. He wants strike him dead (for the morale, and considering the interests).

Gorbachev is trying to beat Bush on humanism, but by American standards it is worth nothing. We’ll see whether Hussein will agree to his plan. One has to worry that the Americans might strike precisely during these days to foil the plan. But Primakov seems to have done his job. In his time, though, Shevardnadze also did all the right things by joining the UN Security Council’s resolution and in effect reaffirming our agreement to military action should other measures fail.

Today I sent information to Bush, Kohl, Mitterrand, Andreotti, and others, on the outcome of the meeting with Aziz. M.S. assigned Bessmertnykh and Primakov to write it, but I ended up doing it.

February 22, 1991

Gorbachev called Washington today at 7:30 p.m. Baker was on the phone. They greeted each other. Baker spoke for a long time. Five-seven minutes later, Bush showed up and joined the conversation. Gorbachev told him that he was at an event to mark the anniversary of the Soviet army. There were six thousand people present. This is why he could not phone earlier. He said that Jim (Baker) outlined the position currently held by the U.S. administration in regards to what to do with Hussein. “I have a question,”

Gorbachev said, “Is it true that the various resolutions to the situation we have been discussing with Iraqi representatives over the last 24 hours, that these ideas are unacceptable to the United States?” He listed the points of the plan that he pressed upon Aziz earlier, and which had been conveyed to Washington. This is the plan Jim had been reacting to.

1. Hussein immediately declares full and unconditional withdrawal of troops from Kuwait.
2. The withdrawal starts the next day after a cease-fire.
3. The withdrawal takes place strictly within a fixed timeframe.
4. After 2/3 of the troops are withdrawn, the economic sanctions against Iraq are lifted.
5. After the full withdrawal of troops, the causes of the UN Security Council’s resolutions in effect disappear, and the resolutions are annulled.
6. The withdrawal is monitored by observers appointed by the UN Security Council.

The most difficult question is the timeframe for withdrawal. “You recall,” Gorbachev said, “That I categorically rejected the six weeks first mentioned by Aziz.”

“And now,” Gorbachev continued, “I heard from Jim that none of this is acceptable. The question arises—what do we prefer, a political method or a military action, i.e. a ground offensive? In working with you, I saw my role in protecting the population and the soldiers from terrible casualties, while at the same time achieving strategic objectives—to eliminate the conflict. If you have the same position, then we have to find a solution that would be tough, but doable. If you make an ultimatum, you are paving the way for a military solution. If a political solution is unacceptable to you in principle, that is another matter. I think based on what we were able to achieve in Moscow with Aziz, and considering your suggestions, we could call a meeting of the Security Council and somehow integrate both plans (yours and mine) to find a political solution. We should do it urgently, within a day or two.

The most important thing, and I want to emphasize it right now, is that from the beginning of this conflict and until the last moment we stand together. We used all imaginable and unimaginable means, including the first phase of military action, to force Hussein to back down, to comply with the Security Council’s resolution. And we achieved it. This is already a lesson to everybody. This is the new reality, which everyone—all potential aggressors and war mongers—will have to reckon with.

Thus, we have an opportunity to salvage the situation at the brink of its transition into the most difficult phase associated with a war on the ground. I think this already is a major victory. The world and the people of the United States, I think, will appreciate the actions of their president. And the fact that during the crisis we worked together not only with each other, but with other major partners, will mean it is a joint achievement also. Everybody will see that both presidents, while remaining steadfast in achieving their goal, nevertheless did not forget that the human life carries the highest value. I think you can be 80-90 percent sure that the entire world community would approve.

I repeat, right now there is every reason not to lose the chance for a political solution. Let us not succumb to pressure, let us not be nervous. There is pressure here, and in your camp, and all around the world. Our responsibility is very high, George. If right now we make a move to avoid further carnage in its worst form, it will be a major achievement for many years to come. These are my arguments; forgive me for my ‘grandiloquence.’”

From the other side of the wire poured clarifications about Aziz and his ability to actually convince Hussein to completely withdraw. It seems that Bush was fervently arguing that this will not happen. M.S.’ attempts to jump into the conversation were unsuccessful. After listening for 2-3 minutes, M.S. kept saying “George! George! George!” But the latter would not let up.

“I understand everything,” Gorbachev said when Bush finally stopped. “We do not have different views on Saddam Hussein. His fate is sealed. And I am not trying to whitewash or justify him, to preserve his image, etc. But we both have to deal with him because he is a real active player who opposes us. We are not talking about Hussein’s personality or his methods. We are talking about using what we achieved to curb his aggression—the enormous contribution to this effort by the United States and the American President—to transfer the solution of this issue into a purely political track and avoid a greater disaster and tragedy for a great number of people. This is the central issue. The prestige of our countries and ourselves, George, are locked in this matter.

I will convey your demands for Hussein through Aziz. But I repeat my final suggestion: let’s maybe determine it right now, namely that we present a joint initiative to convene the Security Council and immediately start a review of the entire package of demands to Hussein. We have to squeeze everything we can out of him to force him to meet our requirements.

Remember, George, that our priority is collaboration with the United States within the framework of our responsibility to our own people and the world community. At this moment this responsibility is to resolve this conflict and achieve the goal while avoiding a catastrophe.”

Bush again objected. Gorbachev told him that we are waiting for a new response from Baghdad (after the nighttime talk with Aziz). Therefore it is crucial right now to ask oneself: are we taking a course for a political or military solution.

*[Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive]*