

## **Record of Conversation between Gorbachev and Members of the U.S. Congress Fascell and Broomfield, April 4, 1986**

Gorbachev: Greetings to you. I want to express my appreciation for this opportunity to meet and talk to you. It is good that the contacts between U.S. Congress and the Supreme Soviet representatives have been energized. Some time ago they were stopped completely. Both sides should think about the substance [of these contacts] so that they would not remain just a ballast.

Fascell: I want to state from the start that we are very happy with this trip and appreciate the honor to be received by you.

We would like to hand to you the letter from President Reagan [...]

Gorbachev: Listens to the translation of the letter, thanks [the Congressmen].

Judging by the first impressions of the content of the letter, I can say that we share the thoughts expressed in it about the need to continue [our] efforts to improve our relations, which we started in Geneva. The letter contains other statements similar to what we are saying too. You know that in Geneva the President and I, jointly and individually, stated that our meetings are useful and should be held, that our common goal should be the improvement of relations between our two countries. We signed a joint statement, which states that there could be no winners in a nuclear war and it should never be unleashed.

Moreover, we wrote in the joint statement that neither of the sides would strive for military superiority. It means that we are thinking the same thoughts. However, when it comes to implementing agreements, then something does not work. I would like to know your opinion about this--why is it so? [...]

When I was waiting for your arrival, and the journalists came here, I told them that, in my view, it is very important to understand two realities well. We agree that the United States is a powerful state, with whom we have to live. It is a reality. In the same way, the United States has to accept the reality of the Soviet Union. One character of our satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin used to say that he wanted to "close America." The Soviet Union does not have such an intention. And even if we had such an intention, "this would not depend on us."

Fascell: And we do not have any intention to "close" the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev: And this is very important. The American people chose their way of life, their government. The Soviet Union made their choice. If we started questioning the choice of the American people, what would come out of it? What kind of policy would it be? Policy should be built on realities, on the understanding that every nation has a right to choose its way of life, its system of government, on its own. At the same time, of course, we understand that you do not like some aspects of our policies, our life.

Fascell: Trust, mutual understanding--these are the most important things that we need. And I think that this kind of contacts between us are the only road to establishing trust. [...]

I am convinced that we absolutely must stop this kind of ping-pong that we have been engaged in lately. I have to say that you are good at it.

Gorbachev: We were thinking, as a matter of fact, that we had put an end to this kind of ping-pong in Geneva, that there we laid down the starting line for a real, realistic policy in relations between our two countries.

Fascell: We also thought so.

Gorbachev: And so, do you think that it is us who turned away from this road?

Fascell: No, I don't think so.

Gorbachev: Truly, look at what we were doing after Geneva. When we came back from Geneva, and the term of our unilateral nuclear testing moratorium came up, we extended this moratorium for three extra months, because we wanted to set an example, take practical steps in accordance with the Geneva agreements. We took those steps and invited the United States to reciprocate.

On January 15, we presented a 15-year multi-stage program of disarmament measures, envisioning liquidation of nuclear weapons by the end of this century. By the way, we developed this program very carefully, trying to ensure a mutually acceptable balance of interests at every stage, so that nobody's security interests would be undermined at any stage. Any other approach would have been simply unrealistic, even if we or you proposed it.

We called for a cessation of nuclear testing because we saw this measure as a simple step, which also would be based on the experience we had already accumulated. Truly, we have a treaty banning nuclear testing in three spheres, an agreement to limit underground nuclear testing, we also conducted negotiations on a complete ban on all nuclear testing. Thus we have a good base, good experience. Before, we had difficulties with the issue of inspections. Taking this into account, we announced our readiness to accept any forms of oversight--whether national technical means, [or] international control with participation of third countries adjacent to us. We thought this position was realistic. We are convinced that the resolution of this issue would be a good thing for both of our countries, for the entire world.

Fascell: I understand completely.

Gorbachev: On the issue of intermediate range nuclear weapons in Europe, the problem of counting the British and French nuclear potential created difficulties [for us]. Before, we demanded that the United States remove their missiles [of this range] from Europe and expressed our willingness in that case to reduce the number of our missiles to the level equivalent to the number of the British and French nuclear means. But we did not reach an agreement on this basis. Then we decided to make a step in your direction and stated that we are not demanding to count the British and French nuclear means in an agreement, but are willing to agree that Britain and France would just abstain from increasing their nuclear potential. We thought we made a real step to meet the other side halfway and were waiting for an appropriate response.

And what did we hear in response? What was the reaction? In response we were told that the new Soviet proposal only puts everybody in a difficult situation. We were told about the alleged Soviet superiority in conventional weapons, about chemical weapons, about tactical means. Our proposals cover all of those [issues]. But we thought that in order to make negotiations easier, one needs to make a first step, and we proposed such a first step. And along the way, we explained additionally that we propose to solve this issue without linking it to strategic weapons or to the space.

The answer we received, to sum it up, could be characterized as purely negative. The United States decided to hide behind the opinions of its allies--West European countries and Japan, otherwise, it would be hard for them to justify their negative position.

Fascell: I cannot agree with this [...]

I hope that when A. F. Dobrynin starts his discussions in the United States, he would have everything necessary so that we could after all make some progress. Because I believe sincerely that we can achieve something useful and reasonable if only we stop what we have been engaged in during the recent days, and think seriously what to do next. We understand that progress here should come in such a way that it does not undermine your positions and your principles. It is quite natural, and we do not demand anything from you, which we will not do

ourselves. But I think that the road is open, and there exists an opportunity to move ahead, to continue [our] work on the basis of the method that you and the President used so successfully in Geneva.

Gorbachev: I want to say the following: during the long period of time when the campaign against us was winding up in the United States, I did not make any comments, only observed this strange competition where the President, the Secretary of State, Mr. Weinberger, members of U.S. Congress--all took part in it. A lot of things directed against us were said, they even remembered the "evil empire" and said that this characterization was correct. All this could be partially explained by the rhetorical needs and that is why I abstained from comments at first [...]

But then there were more serious things--the demand that the Soviet Union cut by 40 percent the number of its diplomats in New York, the appearance of the American naval squadron in the Soviet territorial waters, the action against Libya, which was not limited to the show of force, but included an actual strike against that country.

Is it that they in Washington think that they deal with people with weak nerves? Is it that they think that now we can act like obsessive gamblers? Is that how they understand the spirit of Geneva in the United States? After all these steps, we should really start thinking [what to do] lest our friends in Washington do not get an impression that we here in the Soviet Union are these meek bunnies, who are willing to sit quietly and wait for mercy from Washington. [...]

Gorbachev: In the sphere of Soviet-American relations, more than anywhere else, we need new thinking. [...]

In our time, it is impossible to ensure security by military means.

One more illusion is that one can ensure their own security to the detriment of other's security. It is crucially important to get rid of this illusion in Soviet-American relations.

Fascell: I agree with you.

Gorbachev: I constantly read relevant information and I came to a conclusion that we know practically everything about what you are doing, and you know practically everything that we are doing. And this [knowledge] strengthens my conviction that an effort to construct one's foreign policy on the aspiration for superiority is illusory. I spoke about all this at the CPSU Congress, where we stated clearly and openly how we see the modern world and the role of our two countries--the USSR and the USA--in this world.

Fascell: I must say that your speech at the Congress created a very strong impression, it was distinctly forward-looking and people greatly admired the political skill and the economic perspective that it put forward. We understand that you are ready to seriously tackle the important issues in relations between our countries, the issues of ensuring peace. [...]

Gorbachev: I would like to return to our relations as a matter of principle.

I would like to repeat the main thing--we need to give up the efforts to build our relations on illusions and prejudices. We, on our part, undertook a thorough and realistic analysis of the global situation and the U.S. [global] role, and we came to an absolutely definitive conclusion: while denying the hegemonic claims by the United States and their aspirations to play some kind of special role, we at the same time acknowledge that the United States is a reality, and even more so, the most serious reality among the countries, with which we interact. The United States has legitimate interests and we acknowledge the U.S. role in international affairs, the contribution of the American people to the development of the world civilization and the fact that one cannot resolve global problems, and first of all the problem of ensuring peace, without the United States. We want all of this to be reflected in our practical policy. That is why we are

trying to improve relations between our countries, [we] want to achieve mutual understanding between the USSR and the USA, and primarily--in the resolution of issues, on which the fate of the world rests.

How is this all reflected in the minds of the American politicians? This is how: the peaceful intentions of the Soviet Union are perceived as signs of weakness.

Recently, we received information that the U.S. Congress undertook a comprehensive analysis of the plans of economic and social development of the USSR in the light of the materials of the CPSU Congress. The authors of this analysis believe that the Soviet Union is interested in disarmament because it badly needs resources for its economic development. And what conclusion do they come to? This is their conclusion: we need to use this interest of the Soviet Union in order to squeeze unilateral concessions, such [concessions] which they would not agree to in other circumstances.

Fascell: I have never heard about such conclusions. Maybe something like this is present in some people's minds but I think that it would be impossible to realize such intentions.

Gorbachev: The next thesis of this analysis: the Soviet Union is calling for cessation of nuclear testing. The USSR wants to achieve this goal so badly that Gorbachev himself engages in this campaign. They draw the following conclusion: the United States should continue testing. [...]

That is why we were hoping that the President would respond to our proposal positively. We are often accused of making propaganda proposals. Well, if it is propaganda, then why not catch Gorbachev at his word, why not test his intentions by accepting our proposal.

Fascell: You know, an element of political games and propaganda is probably present in everything, but I think you are right--from the political point of view it would be best to test your intentions by responding to your proposals. However, the reality is such that the United States is not ready, for some reason--either political or military, I don't know--they are not capable to make the big leap, which you are calling for, at this time [...]

You know, I represent the Democratic party and I did not vote for President Reagan in the last elections. But I met with him numerous times and discussed many issues. I became convinced that he completely sincerely aspires to achieve some agreement between our countries, which would allow us to reduce tensions and to stop the arms race. And the fact that there are two such leaders now on the political arena--the President and you, a person who inspires a great deal of interest and admiration--without exaggeration, creates a unique opportunity, the like of which we had not had for a long time, and may not have soon again. Of course, in the next election, I will be supporting my party again. But I want to assure you that Reagan is the most popular president in the history of the United States since Roosevelt.

The new President will be a new person, and he will need a couple of years to figure out which door in the White House is which.

Therefore, the best situation for an agreement is now, when we have the new leadership on your side, a new energy, and on our side you have a President who wants to go in history as a peacemaker. It is also important that he will be able to garner support for this from the American people.

Gorbachev: Well then, let us search for a step that we could make jointly. But I repeat--a meeting would be useful and the atmosphere in our relations will improve only if we are able to find an issue, which is substantively important, an agreement on which would genuinely mean a big step ahead after Geneva. In the opposite case, if we just keep exchanging pleasantries, and meanwhile the arms race will continue and spread to other spheres, then it would be a real

deception. I don't know how such deception would look from the moral point of view in the United States, but it is not acceptable for our morality.

If the United States needs more time in order to think through what is happening and to take a responsible decision, then we are willing to wait. But one thing cannot be postponed--the issues of disarmament. Because the locomotive keeps rushing forward with a great speed. Today we still have the opportunity to stop it, but tomorrow it might be too late already. That is why in my speeches I so persistently emphasize the need to act now. I want to be understood correctly. We are not trying to hide the fact that we are genuinely interested in [disarmament], but [you] need to see the reasons for this interest of ours. So far, I cannot say that they understand me correctly in the United States.

Fascell: Truly, it is very important that you are correctly understood. And that is why it is so important to use any opportunity for contacts and improving mutual understanding. This process in itself is absolutely necessary. [...]

[Source: The Gorbachev Foundation Archive, Fond 1, opis 1. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]