

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
James A. Baker, Secretary of State  
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 U.S.S.R.  
Raymond Seitz, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs  
Robert D. Blackwill, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Condoleezza Rice, Director for Soviet and East European Affairs NSC Staff (Notetaker)  
Demetri Zarechnak, Interpreter

Not H.S.?

Eduard Shevardnadze, Foreign Minister  
Yuriy V. Dubinin, Ambassador to the U.S.  
Aleksandr A. Bessmertnykh, Deputy Foreign Minister  
Viktor P. Karpov, Deputy Foreign Minister  
Sergey F. Akhromeyev, People's Deputy, Supreme Soviet  
Aleksy A. Obukhov, Department Head, MFA  
Teymuraz G. Stepanov, Aide to Foreign Minister Shevardnadze  
Sergey P. Tarasenko, Head, Evaluation and Planning Administration, MFA  
Georgiy F. Mamedov, Deputy Head, USA and Canada Administration, MFA (Notetaker)  
Pavel R. Palazhchenko, Interpreter

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 6, 1990, 10:00 - 11:40 am EST  
Cabinet Room

The President: Let me say, welcome. You come at a complicated and interesting time. Jim has filled me in and I would like you to pay my personal respects to President Gorbachev. Please say anything that is on your mind. Our relationship is absolutely vital and I want it to be better. You know that the Baltics have caused a complication in our relationship. It is necessary to overcome that and I look forward to the Summit with President Gorbachev which I hope will be a productive meeting. (S)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: Thank you for your hospitality and attention. May I express my genuine satisfaction about the talks and negotiations while I have been here. I share your view that we are in a complicated time of dynamic events in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa. I met with the Secretary of State in Africa and there we both felt the atmosphere of change. The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are great powers and have a special responsibility to our people and those of the world. We are guided by a very large responsibility. I want to convey from President Gorbachev and from the entire Soviet Union regards. Mrs. Gorbachev also asked that I pass her regards to Mrs. Bush. She wanted you to know that she values their relationship as well and hopes that it evolves over time. (Ø)

The relationship between Secretary Baker and I has become one in which we have the ability to discuss international problems in an open, candid, frank and realistic way. I want to give you the original of the letter from Gorbachev. You have a copy. I will not recount its contents. There are ideas there about the problems and issues that Gorbachev thinks are important. (Ø)

I thought that I should raise a few points. I brought a small piece of paper with general comments about U.S.-Soviet relations and their development. You have participated for a long time in the U.S.-Soviet dialogue and you probably remember what the dialogue was like when it began in 1985. I remember it as one of mutual complaints and recriminations. I remember sharp exchanges on humanitarian affairs, sharp recriminations about regional behavior, mutual feelings of animosity. The exchanges were quite emotional. A lot has changed. The process of getting to this point was difficult and painful. You were a participant in establishing the new relationship. Now looking at the agenda we have an extremely broad range of questions on which we engage: arms control and disarmament, humanitarian issues, regional issues, transnational affairs. Only the UN is a forum that encompasses as broad a range of issues as the U.S.-Soviet dialogue. The Summit agenda is very important. I think that it is becoming a norm that we discuss things openly and I think it is important that we have now a date for the Summit. Setting the date itself gives us a very important mark toward which to move. It will become like Malta pushing progress forward. (Ø)

Concerning the goals of U.S.-Soviet relations, let me say that Gorbachev speaks of a possibly unique evolution of the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship. Talks that I have had here confirm this possibility. I know you are following our exchanges. We have been working well, have built a good relationship between ourselves. It is possible now to have constructive negotiations. Personal relations between us allow us to discuss even the toughest problems openly, allowing us to be totally candid and then to implement. After Malta, much has changed. (Ø)

There are improvements and movement forward in the arms control talks despite the fact that we have very many important differences still. On the ABM Treaty on space we made good movement in Wyoming, on ALCM and SLCM we had good movement, no

difficult questions remained. We have made progress on mobile ICBMs, telemetry encryption and non-deployed missiles. We have made good progress in the conventional arms talks. Despite skepticism, I believe that we have good prospects for the completion of those talks before the end of the year. Then nothing will stand in the way of the meeting of the 35. (S)

We have made substantial progress on chemical weapons. I want to emphasize the importance of your proposals as discussed with me by the Secretary of State. Your readiness to stop at some point the production of chemical weapons will be an important step forward for us. We will be examining your proposals over the next few days and will reply soon. Despite problems in strategic arms, chances are still good to initial a treaty in June. Our intention to prepare and adopt a declaration of intent on future arms control despite certain differences is useful. There is mutual understanding that strategic arms control should be an ongoing and continuing process. I think that the content of a statement should be obvious assuming we can find a way to agree. (S)

On the protocol of nuclear testing, I have always said that the nuclear testing protocols are very important to us. Nuclear testing causes significant domestic problems for us. There are protests against nuclear testing. You have in the past had public protests too and the problem may become difficult for you in the future so we should move forward on nuclear testing. If we are able to prepare agreement on conventional arms we believe the practical preparations should begin for a Summit of the 35 and then after the Summit a CFE treaty could be signed. Subsequent phases could be identified for further conventional arms talks. We should identify a program for the future. (S)

I will not speak in detail about the unification of Germany. At the next CSCE Summit, we will have to prepare and design some fundamental European security structures, some guarantee of security against a background of development not only in Germany but development in Eastern Europe. It used to be that any Soviet proposal immediately brought a negative response from the United States. We did the same thing. It is now happening that we are jointly proposing resolutions in the UN and other countries are voting for our proposals. This is a change. (S)

Let me speak to Open Skies - the negotiations are not proceeding rapidly but toward the middle of the year I believe that we will be able to sign an Open Skies treaty. You do not mind that I am listing these elements? (S)

The President: No, this is useful. When you finish I will be able to comment. (U)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: Then briefly, I am speaking of positive things but this does not mean we don't have problems between us. Many things have changed in our approach to transnational problems. It has become a part of the agenda because of the initiative of the Secretary of State to deal with these transnational problems. We have good experiences in

discussing and finding ways to resolve them - to take into account our interest with those of other states. Yesterday, we began to list the agreements on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, on environmental protection, on counter-terrorism, some had proposed a Soviet-American environmental association. We have identified trends in the peaceful exploration of space, of safeguarding the ecological system. Both sides are interested in protecting the environment. I have said that we are ready to participate at a high level in the White House Conference that you will have on the environment. It will be an important part of your dialogue with Gorbachev to talk about these trans-national issues. For instance, in Africa, there is a threat of famine. We can still, I believe, adopt radical measures to stop the destruction of the land. But that can take 8-900 billion dollars over the next ten years. Developed countries will have to contribute to this process. (Ø)

Now, what is lacking in our dialogue? We are not yet able to engage on economic problems. World economic problems are of a global nature. These deserve attention. One figure is illustrative. Overall the debt in the world is 1.3 trillion dollars. We must look for ways to resolve this. In the bilateral area - I remember your remarks at Malta - that the overall U.S.-Soviet relationship makes it possible to have economic relations. On the trade treaty we have made a good beginning. It will be of limited value. But I hope it can be concluded although there are still some problems. We are also working on a bilateral investment treaty and cultural centers are being prepared. (Ø)

Some ask about a Soviet-American University that would not cost too much but would be a good step forward and we have agreement on expanding student exchanges. The cooperation and dialogue between our military officials is very good. I remember that I invited Weinberger when he was Secretary of Defense. The Soviet Minister of Defense wanted to visit the United States but those visits did not take place at that time. Now we have a good ongoing process and relations in that area of new quality with a new degree of trust. It is still important that we work to continue to reject certain stereotypes that are a legacy of the past. The discussion of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development seems to be in that category. We hear that you do not want the Soviet Union to be able to get loans. This should be a thing of the past, we are not looking for your help. We are only looking to be treated as partners. The sooner we abandon stereotypes the better for all of us. (Ø)

On regional conflicts, I am under the impression, after my trip to Africa, that where third world countries used to be suspicious of Soviet-American cooperation they now think that it is useful. I have seen that prejudice about this is disappearing. There is more trust. They are encouraging us to act more actively on our agenda. The President of Angola said this to me and reported in detail on his visit here. While the problem of apartheid is one of the most difficult, conditions are good I think for dismantling apartheid. This is of great importance and we should try to facilitate the solution of the problem. (Ø)

We also discussed Afghanistan, Cambodia, and the Middle East. We have worked well together. There is good understanding concerning these conflicts. In Central America I can only say that we accept the results of the free elections there. (Ø)

May I say a word about the problem of stability. This is not only an issue of nuclear arms though it is an important element of that problem. Gorbachev mentions in his letter that at this stage we need to think about a qualitatively different phase in arms control. He speaks of balanced measures to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. There is need for continuous dialogue on strategic stability. This is a matter of tremendous importance. The idea of stability between countries who confront each other is one thing but there is stability between countries that don't consider themselves enemies. At Malta we said that the United States and the Soviet Union had achieved a new closeness. Gorbachev said that we are ready not to regard the United States as our enemy. That is a phrase that is not empty or wishful thinking. It is a promise to implement this idea practically. It will be complicated and contradictory but we need to pursue this as our goal. On strategic stability, I must emphasize that the ABM Treaty is considered by us to be the basis of strategic stability. (Ø)

I know you are following perestroika, our internal development, and we are aware of your remarks. I want you to know that we appreciate your support of our process. There are many contradictions, we face many serious problems. Recently, I was asked would you do things differently if you could begin again. I said we would have to start in the same way. There is no other way to develop our society, to develop our country. Social and economic problems are always difficult. Nevertheless, our per capita consumption, our standard of living, are high by most standards of the world. We do not have a crisis. We need, maybe three years to implement fundamental laws. We believe our economy will be healthier using the positive experience of other countries - capitalist experience, socialist experience, and the experience of the world-wide scientific-technical revolution in which, quite frankly, we lag behind. (Ø)

We are a multi-ethnic country. America is too. The problem is our state structure has a fundamental principle that is different than yours. We are a Union of fifteen sovereign states. This is stated in our Constitution. When we began democratizing -- when we recognized the need for pluralism -- it was a very difficult step for us because pluralism was not warmly greeted. (Ø)

The problems of inter-ethnic relations are more dramatic. In the Trans-Caucases we have even had clashes and bloodshed. In Central Asia, in the Baltic republics, we have problems. The legal process has been lagging behind our political process. In the Constitution of 1977, which all republics adopted by referendum, there is the right of the republics to secede. But a mechanism was not established. No one asked what the conditions were, the circumstances under which this could happen. That was lacking. The laws that we adopted were unfortunately adopted

after Lithuania took its steps. I know that this is being discussed here. I said at the airport that that is OK. We understand that it is an issue of debate in the United States and everyone can voice his opinion. I have said and I wish to reiterate that our main weapon is dialogue. With any state that is true but particularly with our own people. Perestroika and democracy, the right to self-determination, these are all a part of our program. Dialogue must be open, candid and frank with our people and with our leadership. The course of developments is difficult to predict. Different ethnic groups there [in Lithuania] - not everyone supports the Supreme Soviets ideas about secession and relations among the republics. We must make sure that there are no inter-ethnic clashes. In Lithuania, for instance, there are 350,000 Russians, 300,000 Poles, 100,000 Byelorussians; these are important numbers. There are also big factories that belong to the central government. We have concluded that it is necessary to have Presidential authority in the Soviet Union to deal with some of these problems. In establishing that authority, we did it only to protect democracy. Gorbachev wanted me to tell you that he will adhere to the principles that he has stated. (Ø)

The President: I would like to reply. This is what I was hoping you would do - explain your positions. I will not go into arms control. You and Secretary Baker will discuss that. I hate to start on a less positive note - but the feeling of our side is that we have moved back from positions that we thought we had agreed. I know you want progress - I do too. If we can stay with the progress we have made in the past and then move ahead I think we will get an agreement. I want an agreement. More talk is necessary but you should know that our people feel that there has been some pulling back on your side. (Ø)

Let us see if we cannot get back on track. You ended your remarks on the Baltic states, laying out your constitutional issues, I need to make a few remarks: 1) We do not want to complicate, for the Soviet leadership, problems that you view as internal problems. Gorbachev knows that I am not using excessively hot rhetoric. As a matter of fact, I am under fire here for not using hot rhetoric. Not having recognized, however, the incorporation of Lithuania, we are in a position where we must support self-determination, and recognize their stated desire for independence, and democracy. We must hold to this position. (Ø)

Churchill said, "Jaw, jaw, jaw; not war, war, war." What he meant was, engage in dialogue. I know you have reservations about the word "negotiation," we aren't using that word. But let me say I think we are responsible for the restrained response of the Europeans. There must be a solution for this problem because that can keep our relationship on track. We are caught up in fifty years of history. We are respectful of your views and of your problems. But there must be dialogue and discussion. I don't know if I have the right to be optimistic or pessimistic. But today I have heard that some discussions have begun and that is good. (Ø)

I agree with what you say about the relationship. There is less suspicion though it is not completely removed. You cannot say that it has been removed on your side and I cannot say that it has been removed on my side. I hope the people will understand that we support perestroika and also Gorbachev's handling of these difficult situations. We have seen you help bring about a peaceful evolution in Eastern Europe and there are, we understand, ethnic problems of the union in the Soviet Union. We are sympathetic, strongly sympathetic, to the Lithuanians and their desire for self-determination. I hope you will go forward into discussions with them. We don't have a desire to interfere in your affairs, but the force or perceived crushing of Lithuania would be a problem. I know people think I hide behind the Congress and some Congress people, including Bob Dole, have told me they have had good conversations with you. When Primakov was here, he asked about the system and I said it was a difficult one. He thought I was some sort of heretic. But it is a good system. We want to move forward with you in arms control and on the economy. The Congress has a lot to say about that and as I said we all feel very strongly about the Lithuanian people and their rights. Gorbachev has said certain principles underlie perestroika. Given that and given our own principles, if the aspirations of the Lithuanian people were suppressed I, too, would feel strongly about it. I want you to communicate the strength of my feelings to Gorbachev. (S)

Let me return for a moment and say that we must recapture any lost momentum, set the stage for closing out any issues at the final Ministerial. We have an ambitious timetable. We will bring as much to closure as possible. We have a lot of work to do. There needs to be a lot of effort at the expert level. We've been able to sustain considerable progress during this turbulent period. I don't want to lose that progress. I will instruct our negotiators to go back and redouble their efforts. I hope you will do the same. On CFE, let me say, that I cannot imagine serious preparations for CSCE unless we have a CFE Treaty. I am confident that we will. I appreciate what you said about my proposal on chemical weapons. Let me say that I am troubled by the lack of progress on the original initiative on Open Skies. Your government will have to accept a really open regime, not just token flights, not just in good weather, not just in daylight. All must be open if we are going to have an effective regime. I told our military and intelligence services that they were going to have to accept this kind of openness. Not everybody liked it. This sends an important signal as to what kind of relationship we are building. It is more than symbolism, but it is also an important symbol and it will benefit our overall relationship. On human rights, let me say that I am pleased with the number of emigrants. We've made dramatic progress and this helps our overall relationship. (S)

This is far more than symbolism, it is the emotional issue. I am working toward a waiver of Jackson-Vanik and we are making progress on a trade agreement. I hope your emigration law will have been passed so we can move forward on Most Favored Nations status. Let me communicate to you my personal interest in direct flight for Jewish emigrants to Israel. Please reconsider your

position on this. Finally, let me say that the tolerance of ethnic and religious differences are not automatic fruits of democracy. It is necessary to work at it. On Germany, let me just say that we are interested to see that the Soviet Union and the West European countries have some similar concerns. I have talked with Chancellor Kohl and even though unification is coming fast, it is proceeding in an orderly fashion. The Two Plus Four will be a useful way to dissolve the Four-Power rights and responsibilities but we should not put new constraints on a sovereign German state. Germany has been a good democratic ally.

(S)

You know that we, the Germans, and the West European countries agree that the unified Germany should remain a full member of NATO, including its integrated military structures. Even some of the East European leaders are coming to that conclusion as a major element of stability in Europe. NATO is also the anchor for American military forces in Europe and thus our commitment there. You and President Gorbachev have said that you want the United States to remain in Europe. The United States will keep a significant military presence in Europe as long as our allies want us to. You should understand that a strong NATO is the best way to ensure our presence. (S)

We are working with you and the other European countries to strengthen the CSCE. CSCE will be an important pillar in the new Europe but we should not try to make it do more than it can. Those of us who remember when Europe was not at peace do not want to return to notions of collective security that almost inevitably fail. (S)

I understand you might be skeptical. I am often reminded of the enormous loss of life in World War II in the Soviet Union. Marshall Akhromeyev has told me about the 20 million people that you lost and I am not unsympathetic but I would urge that we stay in close touch. The U.S. willingness to stay in Europe is a stabilizing force. I want to convince Gorbachev of that. That it is in our interest and in the interest of a Europe whole and free and the common European home as you call it. It's not all that popular a position here at home. No President would want to stay in Europe if no one wants us to stay. There are pressures in the United States for us to go home, but they are containable pressures. I believe that stability is enhanced by a U.S. presence. You know our position on NATO. We feel strongly and we must convince you that a Germany in NATO is no threat to the Soviet Union. People ask me who is the enemy? I say unpredictability. An expanded NATO mission does not mean a threat to Soviet interests. NATO will take into consideration the new conditions. (S)

On regional issues I agree that we have entered into a new phase. In Nicaragua we believe that the dialogue contributed to the change there. We still have reservations about Castro. And in the days of perestroika, he is a tremendous holdout. He is the old guard. We look forward to a peaceful resolution of Afghanistan. Let me say again, that we are not interested in seeing a radical regime that would exacerbate or threaten Soviet

interests. It is not in the U.S. interest or in global interest to have that happen on your border. There is no thinking that there should be an alignment of our interests against yours. (S)

Secretary Baker: We agreed we have discussed Afghanistan for fifteen months and that we find ourselves closer to a positive approach now. (S)

The President: I was pleased when Secretary Baker conveyed your thinking on the Summit. Everyone wondered if moving this up a few days meant that there was some dire emergency. They asked if we had Lithuania in mind. I said that when things were more complicated there was even more reason to have discussions. It was more important. We are in total accord that an early Summit is a good idea. We have shortened the fuse and we will have to work hard but I am very happy about the arrangement. Let me now, if I may, invite you in to receive a personal letter. I hope that the Summit comes through with flying colors. Let me just say just one more word. I am not regarding the Soviet Union as a foe. We have our differences. We have come a long way in five years. I do worry about instability. Stability is something that we are for. Whatever we do in Europe we will keep stability in mind. Let me say too that I am hopeful that in the Middle East we will be able to move forward. The days of trying to exclude the Soviet Union from this process are over. We urge you to use your influence there as much as possible - to participate in whatever talks happen. On the economic side, the problems do require attention. We want discussion on how we can facilitate what you're trying to do in your economic reform. There I would point to something like the Greenspan visit. So, let me summarize - my own assessment of where we are. (S)

This is a vitally important relationship. (S)

Problems are now arising because of Lithuania - that makes our relationship more difficult than three months ago. (S)

We are determined not to contribute to the difficulties that you face at home. (S)

I don't however want to convey a relaxed feeling. We feel strongly about the Lithuanians' rights. (S)

I am determined to move forward in arms control. (S)

I want to contribute to stability and to the creation of a Europe, whole and free or, as you call it, a common European home. A idea that is very close to our own. (S)

I want you to convey my warm best wishes to Mr. Gorbachev. I want to tell him that I won't tell him my problems if he doesn't tell me his. There are enough for both of us to go around. (S)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: Thank you for your remarks regarding your own goals. I won't comment in detail on them but let me say a few things. (S)

There is little time until the Summit to achieve practical results. We attach great importance to Secretary Baker's visit to the Soviet Union in mid-May - May 16. We do believe that those ministerial talks must review what has happened and push it very far forward. (Ø)

You spoke extensively about Lithuania as did the Secretary of State. Our qualitatively new relationship enables us to speak candidly and to discuss our internal domestic problems. When reporters asked I said that we could have said this is just our domestic situation but that would have been a formalistic answer. We understand that this is an issue in the United States. I have noted that you said this is a domestic matter of the Soviet Union. (Ø)

You have said that the Soviet Union has backtracked on the main agreement which was the ALCM counting rule. We did accept the U.S. counting rule which was not easy to accept. On some questions, however, you disregarded certain agreements that we had made. You, yourself, are a diplomat. You know that both sides have to adjust. We thought that the question of the international verification on ships and submarines was the principal that we agreed to in the December 1987 joint statement which was signed by top leaders and we thought we had an agreement to on-site inspection. The U.S. has retreated on that; but we are not saying that in an accusatory fashion. Maybe there was special considerations that had to be taken into account. We are not saying it in an accusatory way but we were concerned about this change in the U.S. position. (Ø)

In principle, we favor mutual concessions without that there will not be any agreement. There will be no serious way to get the work done. I wanted to make sure that you heard this because I have had to complain to my very good friend, Jim Baker, on this matter. It is important that we have dialogue. Gorbachev raised it at Malta. You said you needed to think about it. But the dialogue on naval arms control has got to begin someday. Let me thank you for your attention and express my confidence that we will be able to move toward a very good summit when Gorbachev comes here. (Ø)

The President: Let me just say again that I hope you can accept my chemical weapons proposal. There is widespread support for it world-wide. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: Mr. President, I have said that your proposal on chemical weapons and promise to stop production was a major step forward. The two percent continues to worry us. We don't understand it to a substantial degree. The reaction of all participants of the Geneva group would be that we should agree to a complete destruction. We are at a stage where we can find common ground however and we will study it. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: I heard you say that there was an acknowledgement of Lithuania as an internal Soviet issue. What the President said was that it is your position that this is a domestic issue. (Ø)

The President: We have never recognized the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union. You must understand. (Ø)

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze: I have not come here to ask for anything on this. We have our laws, our rules. It is our state. We have our constitution. We will act within them without violence because it is against our principles to use violence. The U.S. position is up to you and to the American leadership. We are grateful for your restraint and for your support but your position is up to you. (Ø)



National Security Archive,  
Suite 701, Gelman Library, The George Washington University,  
2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037,  
Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, [nsarchiv@gwu.edu](mailto:nsarchiv@gwu.edu)