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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

REAGAN-GORBACHEV MEETINGS IN GENEVA
November, 1985

Second Plenary Meeting

DATE: November 19, 1985

TIME: 2:30 - 3:40 P.M.

PLACE: Maison Fleur d'Eau
Geneva, Switzerland

PARTICIPANTS:

United States

President Ronald Reagan
George Shultz, Secretary of State
Donald T. Regan, Chief of Staff, White House
Robert C. McFarlane, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Arthur Hartman, Ambassador to the USSR
Paul Nitze, Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State on Arms Control Matters
Jack F. Matlock, Jr., Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert E. Linhard, Senior Director, National Security Council Staff
William Krimer, Interpreter

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev
Eduard Shevardnadze, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Georgy M. Korniyenko, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
Anatoly F. Dobrynin, Ambassador to the United States
Aleksandr Yakovlev, Chief, Propaganda Department, Central Committee, CPSU
Leonid M. Zamyatin, Chief, International Information Department, Central Committee, CPSU
Andrey M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, Assistant to General Secretary Gorbachev
Sergey P. Tarasenko, Assistant to Minister of Foreign Affairs
Soviet Interpreter

The President offered Gorbachev the floor to comment on the President's presentation during the morning session.

Gorbachev said that they both had discussed how to conduct their meetings and during the preparations had discussed whether to focus on the causes of tensions or on solutions. Both sides had said a lot about causes. He is convinced that if they start making up a list of objections, they will not get far toward normalization, more trust and more respect -- and most importantly, toward giving some impulse to the Geneva process, which is at a crucial stage now.

He will be reasonable in what he proposes. He does not plan an extensive debate over what President said. But, as he said during the private meeting this morning, the Soviets reject a "primitive approach" toward the world around us -- that is that everything can be traced to some Soviet plan for supremacy or world domination. We have discussed this many times, and when it raises regional issues, the U.S. frequently charges the Soviet Union with expansionism -- in Afghanistan, Angola, even South Yemen.

Hotbeds of international conflict do sour international relations, Gorbachev continued, but the Soviets cannot share U.S. views of the causes of regional conflict. You say that the Soviet Union and Soviet expansionism is responsible. But that is either a mistake or a deliberate distortion. If U.S. policies are based on this mistaken view, it is difficult to see the way out of these problems. An assessment of Soviet policy in the Third World on the basis of such a misconception can lead only to undermining international security.

Let me give you our view, Gorbachev said. We take a "principled approach" to the developing countries and their problems. First, we have no monopolies in these countries which exploit their manpower and resources. We seek no commercial concessions, but rely on our own resources one hundred percent. Therefore, we have no selfish interests or expansionist aims, and desire no military bases.

Second, if you look at the developing world in an unbiased way, you will see that there is a long-term objective process which began after World War II. It is a natural one of third-world countries first pressing for political independence and then striving to gain control over their own resources and labor. This is the root cause of what is happening.

You overestimate the power of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev observed. The U.S. attributes to USSR the power and capability to upset the whole world, but we are realistic pragmatists who categorically oppose attempts to dominate other countries from

the outside. We do oppose the export of counterrevolution. Attempts have been made to crush revolutions in the past. This happened with the American revolution, with the French Revolution and with the October Revolution. But the idea that that small numbers of people from outside a country can turn it to revolution is not realistic. India, Indonesia, Korea -- these are all countries with millions of people.

The U.S. speaks of Afghanistan and Ethiopia as if it were the Soviet Union that stirred the pot there. But we first heard of revolutions there on the radio. We had good relations with Haile Selassie and were not the cause of the revolution there. It is wrong to think we are plotting; this is just not right. But people want freedom and we do support "progressive movements." We make no secret of this and it is in the Party program. But we have no secret plans for world domination.

The U.S. has its values and the Soviet Union has its own. Regional problems are caused by a social struggle evolving over many stages. Sometimes you support one faction and we another, but both of us can play a role together to solve problems, and in some areas we already do so.

In Afghanistan, the Soviet Union supports a "regularizing process" around that country, a political settlement under the United Nations, and you could help. The U.S. however does not help. You say the USSR should withdraw its troops, but actually you want them there, and the longer the better.

Gorbachev continued, saying that the Soviets are ready to promote a package solution involving a non-aligned Afghanistan, Soviet troop withdrawal, the return of refugees, and international guarantees of no outside interference. There are possibilities for a political reconciliation, he added, and said that Afghanistan is already ready to cooperate, but requires the cooperation of all groups.

He then asserted that the Soviet Union has no plan for using Afghanistan to gain access to a warm water port, to extend its influence to the Persian Gulf, or to impinge on U.S. interests in any way. It is a situation which could be used to improve our overall relationship, by fostering cooperation by the conflicting sides and abstaining from interference. It is an area we should explore, he concluded.

Gorbachev then stated that these are just examples to illustrate the Soviet policy toward the Third World. Basically the issues are internal problems for the states involved. We can continue to work on these issues with our discussions by specialists on regional matters.

Gorbachev then noted that the President had charged that it is the Soviet Union which had been building up its arms while the U.S. acted with restraint. This is a major question. Much depends on the character of the present strategic situation and how it will develop in the future. It is the central question of our relations.

Gorbachev continued by saying that twenty years ago there was no strategic balance; U.S. had four times as many strategic delivery systems than the USSR and also forward-based systems. He then asked rhetorically what the U.S. would have done if the Soviet Union had possessed four times as much? The U.S. would have had to take steps, just as the Soviet Union did, to establish parity.

In fact, Gorbachev asserted, the U.S. has tripled the number of its nuclear weapons and has more nuclear weapons than the Soviet Union. Negotiations began as we approached parity, and the Soviets have not violated the nuclear balance and are not trying to surpass the U.S., since superiority cannot be the basis for normal relations. All institutes which study the problem, including the ISS in London, conclude that there is strategic parity. Force structures are different, but they support different strategies.

The Soviet Union wants parity at a lower level, he continued. We are for equal security and agreed to embark upon the negotiations in Geneva. We must meet each other half way if we are to find a way to reduce strategic weapons. The time has come for us both to muster the political will and realism to make progress and to end efforts to outsmart or overrun the other side. Even now, due to computer technology, one side could get ahead in space. But we can match any challenge, though you might not think so. We know that the U.S. can meet any challenge from us and we can meet any challenge from you. But why not make a step which would permit lowering the arms level?

Gorbachev then said that they, the Soviets, think SDI can lead to an arms race in space, and not just a defensive arms race but an offensive arms race with space weapons. Space weapons will be harder to verify and will feed suspicions and mistrust. Scientists say any shield can be pierced, so SDI cannot save us. So why create it? It only makes sense if it is to defend against a retaliatory strike. What would the West think if the Soviet Union was developing these weapons? You would react with horror. Weinberger has said that if the USSR had such a defense first, it would be bad. If we go first, you feel it would be bad for the world, feeding mistrust. We cannot accept the rationale which says it is good if you do it and bad if we do it.

Gorbachev then said that he knows President is attached to the program, and for that reason the Soviets have analyzed it seriously. The Soviet conclusion is that if the U.S. implements its plan, the Soviet Union will not cooperate in an effort to gain superiority over it. We will have to frustrate this plan, and we will build up in order to smash your shield.

You say the Soviet Union is doing the same, he continued, but asserted that this is not the case. Both of us do research in space of course, but Soviet research is for peaceful purposes. The U.S. in contrast has military aims, and that is an important difference. The U.S. goal violates the ABM Treaty, which is of fundamental importance. Testing is also inconsistent with the Treaty, and can only exacerbate mistrust.

If the U.S. embarks on SDI, the following will happen: (1) no reduction of offensive weapons; and (2) Soviet Union will respond. This response will not be a mirror image of your program, but a simpler, more effective system. What will happen if you put in your "seven layers" of defense in space and we put in ours? It will just destabilize the situation, generate mistrust, and waste resources. It will require automatization which will place important decisions in the hands of computers and political leaders will just be in bunkers with computers making the decisions. This could unleash an uncontrollable process. You haven't thought this through; it will be a waste of money, and also will cause more distrust and more weapons.

Gorbachev then referred to the President's remarks regarding the need for a defense against some madman in the future who might get his hands on nuclear weapons. He observed that they should remember that they will have sufficient retaliatory force for a long time to deter such use.

Gorbachev then concluded by saying that verification will not be a problem if the basic question is solved. The Soviets are prepared for full verification of a ban on space weapons. If such a ban is agreed upon, then the two countries could negotiate on their respective proposals for offensive weapons reduction. The Soviets are ready to compromise. If space weapons are banned, the situation would be completely different; it would create a new attitude on the Soviet side. The process would be different, however, if they leave Geneva without any agreements. If agreement on this point is not possible, they the Soviets would have to rethink the current situation.

The President then made the following points:

-- Gorbachev's presentation illustrates the lack of trust between us. It is difficult for us to understand the level of suspicion which the Soviet Union holds.

-- Even when we were allies in World War II we encountered inexplicable Soviet suspicion. For example, permission was not given for U.S. bombers to land on Soviet territory in order to reduce the dangers of bombing our common enemy. We cannot understand this kind of suspicion.

-- Gorbachev spoke of parity, but there is none today. True that U.S. once had nuclear superiority, but in June, 1946, offered to place all nuclear weapons under international control. It has also made numerous other offers, and the President listed twelve such between 1953 and 1969.

-- Since SALT-I was signed, the Soviet Union has added 6,000 nuclear warheads. Since SALT-II, 3,850 have been added. Meanwhile, the U.S. removed 2400 warheads from Europe, while the Soviet Union threatened Europe with its SS-20's. Our Allies requested protection and it fell to President to implement their request when Soviets refused to conclude an agreement to remove the threat.

-- Now we are locked in a Mutual Assured Destruction policy. The U.S. does not have as many ICBM's as Soviet Union, but has enough to retaliate. But there is something uncivilized about this. Laws of war were developed over the centuries to protect civilians, but civilians are the targets of our vast arsenals today.

-- The Strategic Defense Initiative is the President's idea. History teaches that a defense is found for every offensive weapon. We don't know if strategic defensive weapons will be possible, but if they are, they should not be coupled with an offensive force. Latter must be reduced so it will not be a threat. And if strategic defenses prove possible, we would prefer to sit down and get rid of nuclear weapons, and with them, the threat of war.

-- Regarding Afghanistan: Their "leader" was supplied by the Soviet Union. Actually he was their second choice, since the first one did not work out as they wished. The Soviet invasion has created three milliion refugees. He made suggestion for solution at UN. Specifically, how about bringing about the mutual withdrawal of all outside forces, then forming a coalition of Islamic states to supervise the installation of a government chosen by the people of Afghanistan?

-- Regarding Cambodia: We signed an agreement with North Vietnam. It was violated and the North Vietnamese took over South

Vietnam and also Laos and Cambodia. It now rules Cambodia. We should put an end to this and together supervise establishment of a government chosen by the Cambodian people.

-- Regarding Nicaragua: The Soviets have advisers there. The Sandinistas have built a tremendous military machine, far more than they need for defense. They have declared an aim of spreading revolution elsewhere. The President then reviewed the history of Somoza's removal -- the appeal to the OAS, and the Sandinista promise of free elections and a free press. But then when Somoza was removed, the Sandinistas forced other groups out of the coalition and are trying to establish totalitarian control. The Contras are only trying to reinstate the goals of the original revolution.

-- Such things as those noted are behind our suspicion and mistrust.

-- Every military judgment has it that Soviet forces are designed for offensive operations.

-- The U.S. willing to work on an agreement to move away from mutual threats. SDI would never be used by U.S. to improve its offensive capability or to launch a first strike. SDI should not lead to an arms race; we can both decide to reduce and eliminate offensive weapons.

-- These are things we could do to remove mistrust. Our goal is not an arms race. We can return to parity in one of two ways: either we both reduce offensive weapons, or we can build them up and use defensive systems to offset them. The U.S. does not seek superiority, but will do what is necessary to protect its freedoms.

Gorbachev then asked what they should tell their negotiators in Geneva.

The President replied that they could be given guidelines to reduce nuclear weapons, say by 50%. We could negotiate on the structure of forces, since we know the structure of our forces is different.

Gorbachev asked about the U.S. goal of SDI and how this relates to our January agreement to prevent an arms race in space.

The President said that he did not see a defensive shield as an arms race in space. He then recounted a conversation between a Chinese official and Ambassador Walters, in which Walters was asked what happens when a man with a spear that can penetrate anything meets a man with a shield that is impenetrable. Walters responded that he did not know, but that he did know what happens

when a man with no shield meets that same opponent who has the spear. Neither of us wants to be in the position of having no shield.

Gorbachev then asked whether the President considered developing SDI weapons as the militarization of space.

The President replied that he did not. If the technology was developed, it should be shared. Neither side should deploy until the other did. It should be done in combination with lowering offensive weapons so that neither could gain a first-strike advantage.

The President then invited Gorbachev to take a walk for another private conversation and the two departed at 3:40 p.m.

Prepared by:
Jack F. Matlock