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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

The Secretary's Third Meeting with Shevardnadze

Time: Sunday, February 21, 8:45 pm to 1:10 am  
Place: Soviet Foreign Ministry "Osobnyak," Moscow

Subjects: Conventional Arms, Regional Issues (Central America, Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq, Angola, Cambodia, Korea, Middle East)

Participants

U.S.

The Secretary

National Security Advisor Powell

Under Secretary Armacost  
Ambassador Matlock  
Ambassador Nitze  
Ambassador Ridgway  
Ambassador Oakley

EUR/SOV Director Parris (Notetaker)  
Dimitri Zarechnyak (Interpreter)

U.S.S.R.

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze

First Deputy Foreign Minister Vorontsov  
Deputy Foreign Minister Bessmertnyk  
Deputy Foreign Minister Adamishin

Ambassador Karpov  
Shevardnadze Counselor Tarasenko

USA Department Deputy Chief Mamedov (Notetaker)  
(MFA Interpreter)

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Afghanistan

The Secretary expressed the U.S. view that a real opportunity had emerged for a political resolution. Afghanistan was an important issue in U.S. - Soviet bilateral relations. It would have a dramatic impact were withdrawals to begin by the time of the President's trip to Moscow, as the General Secretary had hinted. This would be very positive. Both the U.S. and Pakistan fully supported the Geneva process and had said so publicly. We hoped that the next round would be the last.

Two issues, the Secretary explained, now needed to be faced: completing the Geneva agreements; and facilitating a comprehensive settlement.

On the first set of issues, the task was to fill in the remaining blanks in the Geneva instruments. These involved timing and modalities of Soviet withdrawal.

With respect to a timetable, we had been encouraged by the General Secretary's willingness to speak in terms of less than a year. We had noted previous statements setting the goal for a complete withdrawal by the end of 1988. We believed this should remain the goal. A short timetable would facilitate negotiation of subsequent phases and make withdrawal easier.

We also welcomed the Soviet acceptance of the principles of phasing and frontloading, and now needed to nail down the details. The Pakistanis had proposed that fifty percent of the Soviet force withdraw in the first three months of the withdrawal period. We supported that, and understood that Moscow might be considering a quarter of their troops in each of the three next three month periods. Such a schedule would make sense.

We also believed it essential that substantial troop movements begin immediately when the agreement entered into force, and that preparations for withdrawals -- such as assembly in staging areas -- be observable between signing and entry into force. The Secretary suggested that the Soviets might want to drop a figure -- perhaps 20,000 troops -- to be moved out during the first week or two, or at least before the summit meeting. This would give an important sense of irreversibility to the process.

The areas the Secretary had mentioned, he said, were important because the obligations to be undertaken by Pakistan and the U.S. were frontloaded. Were we to act as guarantor, we needed to be able to reassure the American public that there would be no "partial troop withdrawal."

Also important was the concept of a military standdown. Soviet experts had said, and we agreed, that such an arrangement could expedite the troop withdrawal process. We had noted Soviet statements that during the withdrawal period Soviet troops would engage in no military operations, except to defend themselves against direct attack. Both sides should work to ensure the effectiveness of such arrangements. Recent statements by resistance chief Khalis suggested that the resistance was willing to work with the Soviets to set up ceasefires. A shorter timetable, frontloading and a standdown would make it easier to elicit resistance cooperation. A U.N. monitoring force might also have a role to play.

With respect to refugee resettlement, a major goal of the agreement was to create conditions conducive to the return of the refugees. Beyond careful implementation of Instrument III, this would require massive supplies of foodstuffs, seeds, agricultural implements, and other non-military humanitarian assistance. For that reason, the U.S. intended to continue furnishing humanitarian aid to refugees in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Indeed, this was a burden which should be widely shared, and we assumed that the Soviet Union would do its part.

Moreover, the Secretary pointed out, it appeared that concern over the refugee resettlement question lay behind President Zia's having recently focused on the question of interim government arrangements. The Secretary recalled that, during the Washington summit, the U.S. had argued that linking this question to Soviet withdrawals would complicate matters. Now the Soviet Union had, in fact, delinked the two issues. But Zia had, apparently, reestablished a linkage.

It was important to recognize, nonetheless, that in so doing Zia had obtained something positive from the resistance -- consideration of an interim government which would include representatives from the current regime. It was also our understanding that the resistance were prepared to have such a government sign the Geneva accords. It was not yet clear that it would be possible to establish an acceptable interim government, but the effort was worth making.

The Secretary next indicated he wished to raise an issue which the two sides had not discussed before: the cessation of Soviet military aid to the Kabul regime once an agreement entered into effect. This issue loomed larger as closure in Geneva became imminent. The key to promoting stability, should an agreement be reached, would be to avoid actions that would encourage continued warfare or complicate the search for international reconciliation. For its part, the U.S. was prepared to cease military aid upon the entry into force of a satisfactory Geneva

agreement.

Noting that the Declaration of Guarantees under discussion in Geneva obliged guarantors to "invariably refrain from any form of interference and intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan," the Secretary said that the U.S. assumed that Soviet military assistance to Afghanistan constituted such interference. Perhaps this was not an issue, but it would be well to be clear about it. We assumed that both guarantors would cease military assistance once an agreement came into force.

This was important to us, as it would create an symmetrical situation with respect to the guarantees the two sides would undertake on non-interference, including military assistance. It would be impossible domestically for us to sell an assymetrical arrangement on this point. In this regard, we had noted Marshal Akhromeyev's remark that Soviet troops would withdraw with their equipment, and knew of First Deputy Foreign Minister Vorontsov's statement to the Pakistanis that Kabul had all the military resources it needed. The Secretary welcomed the spirit of those statements, and emphasized that Soviet assurance that military deliveries to Kabul would cease with the commencement of withdrawals would be an important element in the overall picture.

In conclusion, the Secretary said that he would welcome Shevardnadze's reactions and views. The U.S. wanted to do all it could to make the next round in Geneva the last one, and to enable the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan as Gorbachev had proposed.

SHEVARDNADZE opened his remarks by quipping that he wondered what Vorontsov and Armacost had been up to.

This was not, the Foreign Minister said, the first time that he and the Secretary had discussed Afghanistan. As a party directly involved there, the Soviet Union had a strong stake in resolving the problem as quickly as possible. Shevardnadze could once again assure the Secretary on the instructions of the Soviet leadership that a final decision had been made to withdraw.

THE SECRETARY noted that Shevardnadze had believed him when he told him that during their September, 1987 meeting in Washington. He did not doubt it. The question which had to be addressed was, "how"?

SHEVARDNADZE said that in any complex process, there were distinct phases. The same was so for Afghanistan. At the

present, the most important task was to complete the Geneva talks. Otherwise, prospects for a settlement could become quite different. All kinds of unforeseeable options could emerge if no solution were possible.

The U.S. was well aware of the agreements which were emerging as a result of the Geneva process. That process had been going on for five years with the participation of the Afghan and Pakistani governments. Only one document -- dealing with the withdrawal of Soviet forces -- remained to be agreed. The Soviet Union had now clarified its position. The precise number of months of the timetable was not an important issue. The Soviet and Afghan governments had reached an agreement on this point. Shevardnadze agreed that it would be ideal if it proved possible to begin implementation of a Geneva agreement by the time of the President's visit to Moscow. That was the spirit in which the Soviets had made their decision; that was an important factor in the dates they had chosen. The most important factor was that the President was coming. Withdrawals should have started by then.

THE SECRETARY noted that this point had not been lost on us.

SHEVARDNADZE replied that it seemed to him that the U.S. and Soviet Union now needed to join forces to bring the Geneva process to a successful conclusion. Anything which complicated the process should be set aside. For if the process did not come to a successful conclusion, other options might emerge. The Soviet plan was therefore linked to the next round in Geneva. If closure was reached and an agreement signed, Soviet forces would begin pulling out as planned. As to the precise timing of the withdrawal, that was a prerogative of the Soviet and Afghan governments, in accordance with the agreement which they had reached.

THE SECRETARY asked if Shevardnadze would not pass on relevant details of the agreement.

SHEVARDNADZE replied that, once the Geneva talks had reached a conclusion, the U.S. and other interested parties could be informed on the numbers, strength and other elements relating to the withdrawal. It was hard to describe such factors in detail without solving the basic problem. The General Secretary had said, however, that Moscow was ready and willing to withdraw the major portion of Soviet forces during an initial phase, if circumstances permitted.

THE SECRETARY pointed out that the U.S. needed more detailed information to be able to decide whether any any agreement which might be reached was satisfactory. We assumed that we

would receive the information we needed to make that call.

SHEVARDNADZE replied that agreement would be reached in Geneva on the timetable for Soviet withdrawal. There was already agreement that the major portion of the troops would be removed during an initial phase. As to specific numbers, phases, etc., these would become clear once agreement had been reached in Geneva.

As for Zia, he seemed to be looking at a variety of options. He talked about creating a new government, but no one had any idea how such an effort could succeed. The task was complicated; there were many factors. But if he really wanted Soviet forces to withdraw, this could be achieved through bringing the Geneva process to conclusion.

Shevardnadze recalled that at one point he had called on the U.S. to lend support to efforts to form a coalition government in Afghanistan. Even then, there had been doubts in Moscow that this was feasible. Now there was no alternative to completing the Geneva process. If the U.S., the U.S.S.R. and Pakistan stayed out of the way, the Afghans would settle their own affairs. The Afghans were tired of war; the refugees wanted to return home. They would find a solution. But if the U.S. and Soviet Union or Pakistan sought to impose a new government, it would be nothing more or less than interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

As for the refugee question, Shevardnadze questioned the notion that the Kabul government could not establish the necessary conditions for resettlement. The refugees' return was the key to any settlement. An entire instrument in Geneva was devoted to the issue. It provided the guarantees necessary to encourage the return of all refugees -- even Hekmatyar and other fundamentalists.

As for aid to the refugees, Shevardnadze thought it would be well for the U.S. and U.S.S.R. to coordinate thinking on the matter. The Soviet Union was ready to do its part. 100,000 refugees had already come home, and Moscow was helping with their resettlement. The U.S. could also play a role. So the question of the refugees was not hopeless, as the instrument on refugees made clear.

THE SECRETARY asked if the Soviets visualized a role for the UNHCR. That seemed to the Secretary a pretty good concept.

SHEVARDNADZE agreed that it was not a bad concept. This was a channel which could be used. But government channels should not be ruled out -- whether the government was a coalition

government, a transition government, an interim government, or what have you.

THE SECRETARY asked for clarification that it was the Soviet position that the UNHCR could serve as a channel for refugee relief assistance, that aid could also flow through the government -- interim or otherwise, and that it could also go directly to groups in Afghanistan. There were a variety of possibilities.

SHEVARDNADZE replied only that, at this point, there was no agreement on the final instrument. The implementation of the various elements of the agreement remained to be discussed. These issues could be addressed without delay once the Geneva process reached closure.

Turning to the Secretary's points on terminating Soviet military assistance to the Kabul regime, Shevardnadze said that the question of the disposition of Soviet military equipment in Afghanistan would also be addressed once agreement had been reached in Geneva. Under the terms of the agreement, Pakistan and the Soviet Union undertook to do certain things, and the U.S. undertook certain guarantees. If one now sought to break up what had already been achieved, the Soviet side might have to revise its position on withdrawal. The work in Geneva had been underway for five years. There was provision in the instruments for all "everything." Pakistan, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. had undertaken certain commitments. There could be no retreat from this.

THE SECRETARY pointed out that SHEVARDNADZE had not addressed the issues he had raised on military assistance.

SHEVARDNADZE said he had difficulty in doing so. It was not possible to ignore the fact that the Kabul regime was a legitimate government with which the Soviet Union had certain agreements and, thereby, certain responsibilities. Since the establishment of relations in 1921, many major agreements had been reached between the two countries. If the U.S. were now to insist that the Soviet Union terminate its commitments to the Afghan government with respect to the supply of military assistance, the Soviet Union could make the same claim with respect to U.S. military aid to Pakistan. All U.S. aid to the resistance went through Pakistan, yet Moscow did not seek to impose a cut off of U.S. military supplies to Pakistan.

The situation might be different once the Geneva process had come to an end, Shevardnadze said. Perhaps there would be no need to supply weapons in that case. Perhaps the Afghans could find a common language which would make such supplies

unnecessary. Thus, Shevardnadze would formulate the problems as follows: until the Geneva accords were signed, there should be no new conditions. Otherwise, the whole process could unravel. The Soviet decision to withdraw had not been an easy one. To hinder its implementation would be totally unjustified.

As for Pakistan, Zia's approach could not be considered serious. After negotiating for five years with the Kabul regime, Zia had told Vorontsov he would sign in Geneva on March 30, but not on March 15. What difference did two weeks make?

In short, Shevardnadze concluded, real possibilities had opened up for resolving the problem of Afghanistan. Would the U.S. seek to encourage them? At the Washington summit, the President and the Secretary had said that Afghanistan should be resolved as soon as possible. The Soviet decision to withdraw had not been an easy one.

THE SECRETARY replied that the U.S. supported the Geneva process. We wanted the next round to be the last.. We wanted to see the General Secretary's announcement implemented.

Our role, however, was to be one of guarantor. As such, we would be under an obligation to end our own military assistance upon entry into force of a "satisfactory" Geneva accord. That meant we had to decide what was "satisfactory." The Secretary had sought simply to give Shevardnadze a sense of the major factors which would affect our decision. Thus, he had outlined our views on frontloading, and we had noted Gorbachev's apparent willingness to accept this concept. We also wanted to make clear our views on ceasefires, and had done so.

We also wanted to be certain that the Soviet interpretation of the Declaration of Guarantees meant that the Soviets, like we, would in fact terminate military assistance once an agreement entered into force. We felt it was important for Moscow to have in mind the things which would affect our decision on whether such an agreement was "satisfactory" in terms of our willingness to act as a guarantor.

In the same vein, we had wanted Shevardnadze to have the benefit of our views as to why President Zia felt it important to address the question of an interim government in Afghanistan. It was not clear whether or not the Afghans would be able to bring this about. We hoped they would.

SHEVARDNADZE interjected that the Secretary was touching on some very important questions with respect to relations between sovereign states. Moscow had important obligations to the government of Afghanistan. What kind of government that would

ultimately be was not clear. But the Soviets could not just abandon their commitments. There was a legal issue here.

Frankly, Shevardnadze considered, the U.S. should have considered the matter more carefully before expressing its willingness to serve as a guarantor in Geneva. It would appear that, when it made this commitment, Washington did not believe that the Soviet Union would withdraw. It now appeared that America was introducing new demands, just when prospects for a real settlement were materializing. The Soviets wanted to withdraw their forces. The details of the withdrawal would become clear once an agreement was reached. Moscow was not trying to hide anything. But introducing new complications had to be avoided. Shevardnadze suggested that the Secretary consider how the U.S. would react were Moscow to insist on the termination of U.S. aid to Afghanistan.

Quoting from the Declaration of Guarantees, THE SECRETARY pointed out that the language on non-interference did not provide for exceptions on the basis of prior understandings. Noting that the two sides appeared to agree on the desirability of Afghan neutrality, he pointed out the incompatibility of a situation such as that of, e.g., Austria, with the provision of military assistance from one of the superpowers. We simply wanted to reassure ourselves that the Soviet side shared this view with respect to Afghanistan. From Shevardnadze's reaction, the Secretary was not sure this was the case. It was important to be clear on such matters as the end game approached. He asked Armacost to comment.

ARMACOST said he had to points to make. First, he recalled that in 1985, when the U.S. had been asked to undertake the role of guarantor, we had made clear that our agreement was contingent on a "satisfactory" accord's being reached in Geneva. Obviously, we had to see the terms of any settlement before we could provide a definitive commitment to guarantee it.

Second, the fact that the current Afghan government was unable to exercise a fundamental function of sovereignty -- control of its national territory -- was a serious consideration. A major struggle was in fact taking place on Afghan soil. The Kabul regime exercised effective control over only a small portion of that territory. The resistance, on the other hand, exercised control over much of the country. Now we were being asked, in effect, to terminate assistance to groups which controlled a majority of Afghanistan's territory, while a faction which exercised significantly less control continued to receive aid. We had felt that an interpretation of the Declaration of Guarantees which imposed no new obligations on either party could help resolve this dilemma.

THE SECRETARY reiterated that he had tried to outline the considerations which would influence the U.S. decision on whether it could undertake the role of guarantor for a Geneva accord. We thought the agreement which was emerging was something we could support. We wanted to do so. We therefore wanted to be clear on Moscow's views, and wanted the Soviet side to understand our own.

SHEVARDNADZE reiterated that it was impossible to start a new process after five years in Geneva, when an agreement was in sight. If the U.S. wanted the problem of Afghanistan solved, the accord had to be signed. If the U.S. was so certain as to the weakness of the current Kabul government, what was its concern? As for the Soviets, their obligations would pertain regardless of whatever government is in Kabul following the withdrawal of their forces. They could not simply nullify existing agreements.

The U.S. might consider the current government illegitimate. The Soviet Union disagreed. It had all the attributes of a sovereign government. Many states recognized it. It was represented in the U.N. Pakistan had negotiated with it for five years. This could not be ignored. The Soviet Union had obligations to Afghanistan and it would meet them. In the future there would be no flow of arms to Kabul, only food. But Moscow could not unilaterally nullify agreements which had been reached with "kings and emperors."

The main thing was that the Soviets wanted to get out of Afghanistan. As for what followed, it was not up to Moscow to determine the future of Afghanistan. The Soviets would welcome a neutral, nonaligned sovereign Afghanistan. But that was not something for the U.S. and Soviet Union to impose. Whether Afghanistan looked like Austria or Finland was up to the Afghans. Perhaps, after a Soviet withdrawal, Afghanistan would move toward neutrality. But that would be determined after a Geneva agreement was reached. Once that had occurred, moreover, the Soviet side could be more specific with respect to their plans for withdrawal.

Should it prove impossible to reach agreement in Geneva, other options could emerge. This was not in the U.S. interest.

THE SECRETARY noted that Shevardnadze had said that the Soviet Union would be sending food rather than arms after its withdrawal. He hoped somebody had written that down.

SHEVARDNADZE said, "no." What the Soviets were after was peace in Afghanistan; no war, no bloodshed. This was what served

Soviet interests. Shevardnadze and the Secretary had discussed this many times. The Secretary in the past had said that resolution of Afghanistan was a key in U.S. perceptions of the Soviet Union. Shevardnadze had interpreted this as the words of one who was in favor of a just settlement of the problem. So, now, Moscow was complying.

THE SECRETARY said that the two ministers' past discussions of Afghanistan had often concluded with the recognition that we saw matters differently. That was why we had welcomed the General Secretary's recent statement. We believed the Soviet Union intended to withdraw. We were trying to help with that, and wanted to encourage the process in Geneva. That was why we had outlined the conditions which we considered important. We would continue discussing the issues with Pakistan. We would be available when the Geneva talks resumed. We hoped the process would be fruitful. There was no question that withdrawal would have an enormous impact on American perceptions.

SHEVARDNADZE thanked the Secretary for his thoughts. The Foreign Minister predicted that they would have an "intense" discussion of Afghanistan in March if there had been no agreement in Geneva.

THE SECRETARY said that we would study the situation.

Iran - Iraq War

SHEVARDNADZE suggested that the ministers next take up the Iran-Iraq war. He pointed out that the problems of Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq and the Middle East were the problems of a single region.

THE SECRETARY agreed, observing that it was a mistake to see the issues Shevardnadze had referred to as isolated.

On the Gulf war, the Secretary said he had been briefed by Armacost on the Under Secretary's exploration with Vorontsov of a new concept -- that of some kind of time interval between a vote on an enforcement resolution and its entry into effect. ARMACOST added that the key to the concept was the notion that the resolution would automatically take effect on a date certain in the absence of Iranian compliance.

Noting that the concept would seem to put pressure on the diplomatic process, THE SECRETARY said that it struck him as a good idea.

VORONTSOV commented that it might give the Secretary General some useful flexibility.



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