

**Excerpts from Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and G. Bush.
Washington, White House, May 31, 1990.**

GORBACHEV: I highly appreciate your position in regard to what is happening in the Soviet Union, I understand that it is not easy for you to maintain it, as it is not easy for me to maintain the perestroika course. [...]

We happened to live at a sharp turning point in history, and so much depends on you and me. [...] The Cold War is behind us, the new times have come, the world has changed beyond recognition. [...] The global balance is changing. Regrouping of forces is taking place. The world is becoming polycentric.

I think that today it is hard for the United States—even with all their might—to preserve their leadership in the world. Isn't it true that in these conditions the issue arises about cooperation between our two countries? [...]

We do not think that a weakened U.S., a U.S. with a diminished role in world affairs, would be to our benefit. There could not be any profit for us in it because a weakened or somehow discriminated against United States would mean instability in the world.

I am convinced that among the U.S. political circles too, understanding is growing now, albeit slowly, that for America's interests it is important that the Soviet Union was a strong, democratic, modern state, integrated into world economy, into world civilization. [...]

We have achieved a lot already: a new attitude to America is developing, the feelings of hostility toward the U.S. are receding into the past. Opinion polls show that the majority of people welcome the changes in Soviet-American relations.

However, there also exists another reality, and I would like to talk about it sincerely. Literally every day I get information on my desk about the United States continuing to implement military programs, creating new weapons, and apparently counting on using our difficulties in order to beat us in the game. They warn me that the U.S. would use a chance to lure us into a trap. This also exists, unfortunately.

This is where the criticism of our strategic course on cooperation with the U.S. is coming from. Many people believe that this course is wrong and dangerous for the country.

BUSH: Let me react to what you just said in a general way.

In the United States, big changes in the perception of the Soviet Union have taken place, although in some circles the suspicious attitude still prevails. [...] But I repeat again: they are a minority in the country and in the Republican party. [...]

I want you to know that we understand your feelings very well. It is important in the connection to the German issue. There should be no winners or losers.

Our countries bear a unique responsibility for maintaining peace—much bigger [responsibility] than other countries—both for the global peace and for peace in the regions. We appreciate and respect your country's role in it.

Yes, today you are experiencing economic difficulties. Situation in Europe is developing unfavorably for you, but we do not have any intention to hurt the dignity of your country. We appreciate your status of a great power equally responsible for the peace just as we are. [...]

What kind of Soviet Union would we like to see? A Soviet Union which would not be threatened by anybody—not any country, not any alliance. We will have a chance to talk about Germany, but we do not have any disagreements regarding [the goal that] Germany should not be a source of threat to anybody. Germany should be guided by democratic principles. It should give guarantees that the past will not be repeated.

We have different visions about the military-political status of the future Germany. But both you and we have concerns about the future. We can trust Germany. It has paid its debts. [...]

You have a difficult situation with the Baltics. We are in favor of you resolving it on the grounds of your own laws. But we also have great difficulties in this respect. Believe me, it is hard for me to continue to show patience in this issue. I show it because I understand what difficulties you have with Lithuania. They criticize me for this from the left and from the right. They also criticize me for abandoning the principle of self-determination.

GORBACHEV: This is very similar to the situation in our country. They also criticize us from the right and from the left.

BUSH: Yes, I understand that Landsbergis is presenting a challenge for you, provoking you. [...] Landsbergis compared me to Chamberlain. I do not like it. It is not true. He criticizes me for supporting you and not the great American principles of democracy and freedom.

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.

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