

Politburo April 16, 1987
About the Conversation with Shultz

Gorbachev: It was a serious conversation. Shevardnadze did some serious work with him. They worked at night. He brought two planes of experts with him. It was a visit to find out what could be “extracted” from the USSR. It is hard to make any real policy with such people. They are too closely connected to the military-industrial complex. But we made a correct assessment—the administration needed to have something [to show] in relations with the USSR. They understand that if eight years end negatively in this sense, it would be a big minus for the Republicans. And we have not seen any greater interest in relations with us on their part.

Shultz is a special figure. He understands where policy begins—from dirt. I tried to get him to engage in a realistic conversation. I spoke about the broad interests of our two countries, about the fact that other states are interested in the improvement of relations also. I tried to persuade him that nothing would work out in terms of the improvement of international relations if we only consider your interests and our interests. We have to have a common balance. And if we admit that, then we should abandon the temptation to command others.

The world is interconnected, interdependent. Let’s all think. Today there are Republicans, tomorrow Democrats. But there are also the national interests of the United States. We will maintain relations with the present administration to the very end. But the question is: can we decide anything with you, can we achieve anything? Not a single administration in the past had such chances to achieve something in relations with the USSR. And what’s happening? Nothing. Are you capable of anything or not? Your behavior is politically inexplicable. You insist that you are observing important changes in the USSR, but you do not make any corrections to your policies.

I lashed out at him, too, on the issue of spymania. I told him that he, Shultz, is himself the main spy, as well as our Shevardnadze—the main spy, and all ambassadors are spies. You know everything about us, and we know everything about you. And that is good.

We had a long and detailed conversation about the missiles. He tried to convince me that he personally and the President were in favor of the agreement. And I told him, I have an impression listening to you that you are walking around hot porridge and cannot make a decision to do anything.

I told him: show us what you came with. Because as soon as the time comes to decide something serious, you throw us something ugly, or something like that in international situation.

What are you going to do—increase your armaments? Why are you so obsessed with tactical missiles, that we have more of them and so on? We are going to destroy them, so why do you have to increase your armaments with your “Lances.”

Overall, the conversation was good, but essentially empty—we did not move anywhere.

Shevardnadze. Shultz ensured me that both he and the President are in favor of the agreement.

I told him, we are sick and tired of cajoling you. We might get tired of listening to you too. Our people have their own pride. And besides, we are not planning to pull you out of your “Irangate.”

He started to threaten me with their Congress. He did not reject the “key stipulations of the treaty,” but did not accept them either.

Their general tendency is hardening in all directions after Reykjavik, including the INF—they want to keep 100 units and are against the global zero [idea].

The question arises—where do we conduct negotiations on operational-tactical missiles? The Americans insist on Geneva—i.e. together with the INF negotiations, but in a separate group.

On the medium-range missiles we have [good] prospects and we should look for solutions. He was counting every dollar—how much the elimination of medium-range missiles would cost, how much the elimination of chemical weapons would cost, where to direct those freed resources if they would really be freed.

Gorbachev. We treat it simply here: Zaikov, for example, proposes to immediately direct those resources to build other missiles. (Laughter)

Shevardnadze. They are unleashing targeted propaganda: we, the United States, are in favor of creating a defensive system, and the Soviets are in favor of offensive arms. We have to recapture the initiative here.

Gorbachev. In other words, I made Shultz understand that there would be no summit without results on the missiles and on arms control in general. The “explosion” of resentment will be worse than a nuclear one, especially in the third world—and there are billions of people there.

Ryzhkov. Eduard Amvrosievich hinted that in three or four years there will be something “bright” in our economic sphere and other spheres of relations between us.

Gorbachev. I am personally in favor of removing all the residue from our relations, of doing it persistently. Judging by everything, Shultz is inclined to move in this direction. We too need to develop a conception of economic relations with the United States.

We are holding to the correct line. They will not get away from us, we will persist like this.

We will inform Thatcher. We will tell her that we are hoping for a rational approach (to Soviet-American negotiations on nuclear weapons) and that we took your comments into account.

Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow[

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]