

## **Record of Conversation**

**Between S.F. Akhromeev and F. Carlucci at the Pentagon, December 9, 1987 (16.30-17.30)**

F. Carlucci. Mr. Marshal, I welcome you to the Pentagon. Allow me to open our dialogue. This morning at a meeting between the President and the General Secretary I touched upon the question of trust, and was somewhat surprised by the reaction to my words. It seems that my words were interpreted as an attempt to pull the USSR into the SDI, which is completely contrary to our intentions. If I understand your position correctly, you are primarily worried about the possibility of an offensive potential appearing at a certain stage in the systems created within the SDI framework. Moreover, if we agree on a period during which we would not deploy offensive systems and would not withdraw from the Treaty, you will want to have guarantees regarding the predictability of our behavior. We discussed with General Abrahamson and with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff what steps we could take in order to alleviate your concern about these issues. We proposed "open laboratories" in Geneva, to which you have not given us an answer. According to this proposal and some new aspects we are ready to undertake a number of programs to strengthen trust, and we hope that this would be mutual. These measures could include some traditional steps, such as for example exchange of data, notification of tests, etc.; as well as an exchange of delegations, including delegations to laser stations in Stanford, to the Livermore laboratory and others from our side and corresponding projects on your side. We could show you some of the satellites being created within the framework of the SDI. In the sphere of space exchanges we could use the "Shuttle" and the space station "Mir," for example, for mutual control of work in space. The objects we create could even be inspected by people going into space. With the condition of reciprocity we are confident that both sides could secure their interests in the sphere of national security.

Gen. Abrahamson. The Apollo-Soyuz program was a major step forward in terms of strengthening mutual trust. A similar step would be measures for collaboration in space at a new stage of the program "Shuttle" and "Mir," as well as measures within the framework of our proposal of "open laboratories" in general.

W. Crowe. The SDI program is very important to our President and to our armed forces in general. This means that we are prepared and striving to seriously consider measures for securing mutual trust.

S.F. Akhromeev. Allow me to repeat our position, which has already been presented by the General Secretary at the meeting in the State Department this morning. We consider the main direction of the work for strengthened security to be first reduction, and then liquidation of nuclear weapons. We have already agreed on the liquidation of two classes of nuclear weapons, now we are conducting negotiations on a 50 percent reduction of strategic offensive weapons, and the negotiations are going rather well. Should these negotiations be successful, there could be further reductions in the future. As the amount of offensive weapons decreases, so will the necessity of having defensive weapons decrease. This is true for the USSR and the US, and other countries will have to

join the process of disarmament. Moreover, conventional weapons are being rapidly improved in terms of increased power and accuracy. There are hundreds of nuclear energy and chemical facilities in the world, the destruction of which would lead to massive losses. In other words, we need to clearly understand that the time for wars is over, nuclear as well as conventional wars. On this basis the rightful question arises whether an anti-missile defense is necessary to a country. If we disengage ourselves from political and economic factors and follow purely military reasons, we believe that the deployment of an ABM [system] of a country would destabilize the situation, creating a defense potential in the US for countering a retaliatory nuclear strike from the USSR while preserving the offensive potential of strategic nuclear means [of that country].

F. Carlucci. Firstly, the SDI program from the start was conceived as a part of our proposal for the 50 percent reductions. Essentially we are proposing a concept of a stable transition for both sides from a policy of “a pact of mutual suicide” to a policy of strategic defense. You are also developing a similar program, only under a different name.

S.F. Akhromeev. Substantial research in this area is conducted with one significant difference: according to the words of the President and the Secretary of State, if the research is successful, the US plans to start deploying national ABM systems, while the USSR states that it does not have this intention.

F. Carlucci. But we stated our readiness to collaborate with you during the agreed period of non-deployment of the SDI and non-withdrawal from the Treaty. Moreover, a number of other countries already have, or are planning to obtain, nuclear weapons. The General Secretary stated the position of the USSR very well today, which included the interpretation of the ABM Treaty in his original understanding. I would like to note that judging from notes of negotiations, our interpretation of the Treaty differed from yours from the very beginning. As for the US Congress, it has not yet reached a single position on the interpretation of the Treaty; furthermore, in this fiscal year it has allocated funds for conducting tests within the framework of the broad interpretation of the Treaty. The SDI program is widely supported in the country and you would be making a fundamental mistake in our political dynamics if you do not consider this fact. Any Senator could tell you that the agreement to limit strategic nuclear forces would not be ratified, regardless of how great it was, if only it was said that it undermines the concept of the SDI. You cannot stop the SDI program. We can make agreements about predictability, timeframes, collaboration, etc., but the SDI program will not be the price to pay for limiting strategic nuclear forces, and our President was clear on this point. One more thing: we do not accept restrictions on the levels of the parameters we test.

S.F. Akhromeev. As realists we will have to consider the possibility of the Congress' position on ratification. But you also should take into consideration that the position of the Soviet side is not a whim of a handful of people, it is the position of an entire nation. As for the military aspect, which we possibly will discuss tomorrow with Admiral Crowe, I would like to say that we are very worried by your intention to build your country's ABM. It is well known that the US conducts and intends to continue to

conduct a policy based on force toward the USSR. On this basis we draw conclusions about the intended purpose of the ABM system, and we look for a corresponding answer. I hope you are informed about our economic and technological possibilities, which despite certain shortfalls allow us to respond in case of an unsuccessful outcome of the negotiations, with measures asymmetrical to the SDI. It is not difficult to grasp that in 15-20 years there will be a response to the SDI. There is no reason to think that the country's SDI system will provide an absolute and insurmountable defense.

F. Carlucci. Tomorrow Admiral Crowe will lay out in more detail our point of view on the advantages that the SDI offers to both sides.

S.F. Akhromeev. I am concerned about your words regarding the prospects of the START Treaty ratification. It seems that both sides should be thinking about this already at this stage.

E.P. Velikhov. I am worried if we have any guarantee that ultimately a sufficiently stable situation will develop, and that a stable path will lead to it. I am also very worried about the fact that we have different opinions on the significance of certain technological achievements, such as lasers for example. On our side we are skeptical about the possibility of developing weapons based on laser technology, and therefore we wonder whether your scientists are giving you correct information. Regarding the proposal of "open laboratories," it would seem that only those laboratories would be open that would be working on projects, which would prove to be unsuccessful.

F. Carlucci. During your conversation with Admiral Crowe tomorrow, Mr. Marshal, I expect that these and other purely military questions will be discussed, especially in the light of the political atmosphere that was created at the highest-level meeting.

S.F. Akhromeev. I agree, but I would also like to discuss the problem of reducing military forces and weapons in Europe. Summing up today's conversation I would like to say that even if it did not lead to concrete decisions, at least it will leave us with a great deal to think about. In conclusion allow me, Mr. Secretary, to thank you for the frank nature of today's conversation.

[Source: Obtained from a participant by the author in 1996  
Translated by Anna Melyakova]