

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: : The President's Meeting with Gorbachev,
December 10 Noon

TIME & PLACE: December 10, 1987, 12:00 m. - 12:15 p.m.,
The Oval Office, The White House

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.

USSR

Ronald W. Reagan, President
of the United States
George Bush, Vice President
Howard H. Baker, Chief of
Staff
George P. Shultz, Secretary
of State
Frank Carlucci, Secretary
of Defense
Fritz Ermarth, Special
Assistant to the President,
NSC Staff (notetaker)
Thomas W. Simons, Jr.,
Deputy Assistant Secretary
of State (EUR)(notetaker)
Dimitri Zarechnak (interpreter)
Others

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, General
Secretary, CPSU CC
Eduard A. Shevardnadze,
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Aleksandr N. Yakovlev, CPSU
CC Secretary
Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, CPSU
CC Secretary
Sergei Tarasenko, Special
Assistant to Shevardnadze
(notetaker)
P. Palazhchenko (interpreter)
Others

After initial pleasantries, the President opened by saying that he'd had a chance to review the joint statement. He understood that working delegations were now focused on the START and Defense and Space portions of the statement, and suggested that we get a report.

Gorbachev said that meetings were now in progress between Marchal Akhromeyev and Mr. Nitze. While they were working, he proposed that he and the President could have some further

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discussions of regional issues, and the President agreed.

Gorbachev asked to say a few words because he had the impression that the U.S. side had not appreciated fully what he had said on regional conflicts the day before. He had sought to emphasize two or three important concepts. First, that regional conflicts are very worrisome in that they inject tension into U.S.-Soviet relations. It was necessary to find some method or arrangement, some means of acting to permit an interaction between the two countries in the interest of themselves and the parties to conflict. The two sides had to discuss an approach to cooperation.

Gorbachev continued that this caused tension in our relations. We had to find a method of action that would make it possible to take into account the interests of the parties to regional conflicts, as well, of course, as our own interests.

Second, Gorbachev went on, we needed to take account of the trends that have emerged, toward reconciliation among conflicting sides, toward a political settlement of problems. Regional organizations were involved too. A situation had emerged that presents a chance, if we move in a businesslike spirit, for us to play a constructive role.

Take Central America, for instance, Gorbachev said. The Guatemala agreement had been adopted. We could express a positive response to it. For example we could say both sides would not supply arms there except for small arms. This was just an idea. What was important was a positive statement. ✓

On Cambodia, Gorbachev went on, contacts had begun between Sihanouk and the people in power. They had talked. Other forces should of course be brought in. Vietnam had given the Soviets assurances that they will withdraw. The principle of U.S. and Soviet support for a political settlement there was important. In Angola too there were good opportunities to move forward to resolve the conflict politically.

The Middle East was of course a grave conflict, Gorbachev said. It had deep roots. But the whole world believed that an international conference to solve it was necessary. He understood there were doubts about this in the U.S. But what the Soviet Union supported was not inconsistent with what the U.S. supported. There could be bilateral contacts in that framework. Israel could meet with the Arabs, with whomever it wanted. But mention of a positive response would be good for the world. The world was looking for the U.S. and the Soviet

Union to cooperate in a businesslike way.

The day before, Gorbachev went on, they had concentrated on Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war, because these were particularly acute conflicts. But with regard to Afghanistan he had felt there was no interest on the President's part. But if, without any publicity, there was an interest in resolving the problem, the Soviets could withdraw their troops and the U.S. side could stop its assistance to certain forces. If there were agreement to that, the two sides could say that as of a date certain the U.S. would stop its assistance, and the Soviet side could say that its troops would not participate in any military operations. They should let Afghanistan be neutral.

There was a basis for cooperation on Afghanistan, Gorbachev went on. But the U.S. side's attitude seemed to be: you're there, you should extricate yourselves, it's your problem. Naturally, if that were the American attitude, it would be harder for the Soviet Union to extricate itself. The two sides should do better than that.

Gorbachev noted that he accepted the language on regional issues in the joint statement. But what he wanted was practical solutions to the issues.

On the Iran-Iraq war, Gorbachev went on, he could say honestly, with no hidden intent at all, looking the President in the eyes, that the Soviet Union did not want to create problems for America. It wanted neither economic problems nor solutions which created (tragic) drama for the Administration. American forces were involved. He felt, Gorbachev said, that there was a basis for regional cooperation between the two sides in this area.

He had had a short one-on-one discussion with the Vice President on this, Gorbachev continued. The Vice President had expressed doubt that Gorbachev or the President could entrust their security interests to UN forces. He could say, Gorbachev went on, that the two sides should make those forces deserve trust. This was inherent in the first resolution. Movement could be made. But if the question arose as to a real need to cease the supply of arms, the Soviet Union would support this.

Gorbachev urged the U.S. side to think about these things. It had experienced what kind of people the Iranians were. A precise calculus of what would happen was needed. If they were pushed too hard, there would be an explosion, and then the only

thing left to do would be for the U.S. to use the forces it had there. This would push the Iranians further, and doing it could be dangerous not only in the region itself. The Soviet side knew these people. It was not saying it did not want to cooperate with the U.S., with other forces involved. Iran was close to the Soviet Union; it was important to them. ~~It was also important to the Soviet Union.~~

The President said he thought his reply should come when they resumed (for lunch) at the White House. He just wanted to say one thing. It concerned Nicaragua; it also concerned Afghanistan. The Afghanistan government had its own military forces. If the Soviet Union departed that would be fine. But there were the the mujahadin, who wanted a voice in their own government. If it were denied them, if they were disarmed, they would be at the mercy of the Afghan government. That would not permit equal participation in forming a new government. If both sides were to come together to form one, both would have to be armed. Or one would have to disband the Afghan military for them to be equal.

Similarly in Nicaragua, the President went on, the U.S. side was for a peaceful settlement. We simply wanted the Nicaraguan government to recognize other citizens who did not agree with it. But it was never willing to do that, even though the Contras were prepared to lay down their arms. The Sandinista government just wanted to take over. Soviet supplies made it the most powerful military force in the area, not only against the freedom fighters, but more powerful than Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala put together. *This frightened all in the region and put them on edge*

Gorbachev suggested they continue at the White House.

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