

Plan of Conversation

Between M.S. Gorbachev and the President of the United States R. Reagan before the first trip to Washington. May 1987.

(A draft dictated by Gorbachev to his adviser Anatoly Chernyaev)

The first conversation will last an hour and a half. Thirty minutes of that will be one-on-one. The rest with together with the ministers, for we have to develop all the problems and then include the working groups.

How do I envision the conversation?

After the greetings I will go over Geneva, Reykjavik, and the work done afterwards. This is an entire stage. The work was done at the top as well. The dialogue was enriched, greater realities were considered. It is very important that the element of reciprocal personal responsibility of former officials was considered.

For the first time we have a document that allows us to discuss the problems of START and to plan out our steps. We will discuss the questions of chemical weapons and conventional weapons, as well as regional problems.

The very nature of this broad scope of problems already evidences the fact that we are capable of examining together key issues of world politics. And we are ready to rise to the level that the nations expect from us.

The nations want for us to become closer. They do not want any more confrontation. I have an enormous collection of letters from Soviet people. I could read from some of them. The leitmotif of all these letters is: "Let us have a life, too!" We have to express the people's will—that of our people and of others. What we are doing right now in Soviet-American relations will forever be in world history.

Nuclear weapons. This issue worries our people as well as the American people. Movement forward is planned. And we need to be prepared to control the arms race.

Regional conflicts. I would change the approach to this problem. We need to cease the mutual accusations. We should put away the question of the causes of conflicts. There are varying real conflicts before us. There are tendencies for political solutions and even for national reconciliation. These possibilities exist in Central America, in Afghanistan, and in Kampuchea.

The Middle East. There is awareness that we need a joint effort, that separatist agreements are not reaching their goals. In Angola there is evidence of a desire to look for away out through political means.

This is the situation. People turn to you and to me with hope. Let us approach the negotiations from this point of view. Of course, some will try to get their way. The objectors will make noise. But somehow we need to start competently making sense of everything. And we should use the positive signals.

I would welcome negotiations that would lead to real results. Take the medium-range missiles agreement for example. We had so many doubts and difficulties. And America almost cancelled Reykjavik. If the negotiations get stuck on polemics they will not lead to anything. For example, I did not agree with many things in Geneva. It was clear to me that our positions are far apart from each other. But I forced myself not to

exaggerate the difficulties. And now I note that it gave us the opportunity to move forward. I would like your visit to Moscow to be an official visit. We will gain great political capital and I am ready to collaborate with you until the end.

Now we call in the ministers and continue the conversation in a large group.

On nuclear weapons. On testing. Each side should thoroughly consult with its scientists, so that on that basis it would make decisions and conduct negotiations, taking into consideration its own security and the consequences for the entire world. The same applies for the SDI and the anti-SDI. The principle is clear: when one side breaks the ABM Treaty the other side is free of its obligations under the Treaty.

We should propose to create an international committee from prominent scientists. The members of this committee would have direct access to the CC CPSU General Secretary and the President of the U.S. Reagan. The representatives of the Pugwash movement could take part in this committee. Propose a mutual ban on nuclear explosions for the duration of the negotiations on banning testing.

Afghanistan. We know [Diego] Cordovez' position. The most important issue here is to name the date of the troop withdrawal and at the same time the cessation date of the U.S.' aid to Mujahideen. From the time the withdrawal date is announced the troops will not fight and will use weapons only for self-defense.

There is an idea to gather together all the opposition parties in Afghanistan and try to assist them in making a coalition government (or a transition government), but based on parity. The United States and the USSR would aid it politically (on a 50/50 ratio). We will push for it: you from the side of Pakistan and the Mujahideen, we from the side of Najibullah.

The coalition government should be immediately recognized by the United States, the USSR, and Pakistan. Excuses that the U.S. cannot influence the Mujahideen cannot be taken seriously. The United States can influence Pakistan, and the Mujahideen are powerless without Pakistan. As for our influence on Najibullah, this matter is not so simple. He is not our puppet, as the West is wont to think. He has his own connections and possibilities.

Iran (the matter at hand is the Iran-Iraq war). Let us try the following. What is going on there could hinder the entire process of improving relations. If the situation is any more charged the consequences could be unpredictable. It will make the internal situation in the United States more difficult and it will seriously impact us.

I will say: you invited us to collaborate on Iran and we invited you to collaborate on Afghanistan. But what can we pass it off for? We are using Pérez de Cuéllar's capabilities to move this matter towards settlement. Let us try to work together from this foundation. We need to stop the military action if the UN Committee will begin their work.

To pump both camps with weapons is the most dangerous and hopeless affair.

If we speak of a "package" we could do the following: right away we prepare the second resolution of the Security Council and concurrently a resolution to exchange the U.S. fleet in the Gulf for UN fleet. Here we add Afghanistan. We will unite two problems: here your and our interests intertwine. We will pacify the entire region this way.

Nicaragua. Let us state that we support Guatemala's proposals and supply the sides with only infantry weapons.

Other observations. The terminology for Afghanistan should be: neutral, non-aligned, pluralistic Afghanistan. The term "friendly" is not appropriate. We will be removing advisers from the army, we will leave the hospitals. The Afghanistan-Iran block should be well thought through.

The Middle East. The international conference on the Middle East. Everybody is for it. Bilateral relations—under the roof of the USSR and U.S. We have no bias against Israel. It is an organic part of the entire process.

Palestine. This is the kernel of the problem. A federation with Jordan is possible. We will not be able to solve the problem without the Palestinians. The process leading to the conference will show us how this will be done. You should influence the process. We will work with Syria and the UN. Our diplomatic relations with Israel are part of the process of general regulation.

The Jewish Question and Soviet-American relations. The key idea is to take this question out of Soviet-American relations. Why it was included there is history. We know with whom we will start a dialogue: with liberal Jewish organizations in the United States. They are knocking at our door. There are some among them who support Jewish national development in the USSR rather than emigration. They want to develop culture, newspapers, theaters, assemblies, religious communities. How realistic is this? I think it is realistic. The Jews have a strong influence on the affairs of the Middle East and on the mass media. This amplifies the significance of the problem.

Someone from our delegation should contact the Jewish organizations in the U.S.

Give a draft of the memorandum to Reagan, so the groups could begin working without waiting for the results of highest-level talks.

[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow
Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive]