

February 9, 1990

Soviet Record of Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and US Secretary of State J. Baker

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Summary:

Gorbachev and Baker discuss cuts in strategic arms and conventional forces, focusing on air-based and sea-based cruise missiles.

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Russian

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RECORD OF CONVERSATION

between M.S. Gorbachev and the Secretary of State of the US, J. Baker
(with expanded staff)

9 February 1990

□M.S. GORBACHEV. I am glad to see you, Mr. Secretary of State, and your colleagues, old and new acquaintances. E.A. Shevardnadze told me that your negotiations have begun. I would like to affirm that your visit has not only practical, but also great political significance. Our dialog continues and deepens, and moves on to new boundaries of mutual understanding.

□At Malta, we spoke more on a philosophical plane about a new stage in the evolution of world events. But on a practical plane, some things seemed fairly remote. I thought: why was this juxtaposition of views necessary, especially in light of the fact that after Malta, the development of events was rapid, and became a test for the level of our relations, of our mutual understanding.

□Of course, I cannot say that the American positions and actions at the end of the last and the beginning of the current year were always ideal. Although ours too, may have been [less than ideal]. But on the whole, all of the leaders of the leading countries at that time acted more responsibly, in a more considered fashion, with an understanding of how important it is now to show reserve and circumspection. And that by itself, I think, is even more important than any agreements on the details which you can work out with E.A. Shevardnadze on this or that concrete issue.

□E.A. SHEVARDNADZE. But all the same, it is better when there are such agreements... [Next two pages omitted in the original.]

□[M.S. GORBACHEV.] You know, during the process of reconstruction, we made it a rule not to walk away from any problems, regardless of whether we liked them or not, of whether they were difficult or simple. We must not be afraid of problems, [but] must untie knots. That is a tried and true [vernii] principle, and it applies both to our and to your affairs.

□It is good that we have a definite supply of trust with you, that we can be convinced of the desire of both sides to change the situation fundamentally for the better.

□Now on concrete issues. I was told about your proposals on air-based cruise missiles and mobile-based cruise missiles. I believe that we have something to think about here. Some of the elements can form the basis of a conclusive agreement on our positions. In particular, our positions on verification coincide. But I think that the main criterion still is the issue of the extent to which we keep to the level of 6000 warheads. I believe that we must confirm this level, and within its framework we can maneuver.

□When we examined your first proposals on air-based cruise missiles, it became clear that its implementation would give you a significant advantage, if I am not mistaken, of 2000 warheads. This is by no means equality. We cannot move away from the principle of equality. Neither the Congress, nor the Supreme Soviet will agree with this...

□J. BAKER. I am glad that you have raised this issue. My assistant R. Bartholomew could dwell in more detail on the problem of equality. For my part I want to say the following.

□The problem of air-based cruise missiles which you and the President instructed us to resolve at the given meeting has three basic aspects. Those are the rules of counting, differentiating markings, and range.

□As for the differentiating markings, we have essentially adopted the position of the Soviet Union. As for range, the US earlier advocated a maximum range of 1500 km, and the Soviet Union, [one of] 600 km. Now we are proposing a maximum range of 1000 km; that is, we have moved by more than a half toward your position.

□We have also shown movement on the counting rules. Formerly we proposed counting bombers as 10 air-based cruise missiles without any other limitations. Now we are proposing to count 10 warheads in place of American bombers and 8 in place of yours. Besides that, we propose that the actual arming [with missiles] not exceed more than two times that level. In that way, our planes would be counted as 10 air-based cruise missiles with a possible arming of 20, and that yours as 8 air-based cruise missiles with a possible arming of 16 units.

□It is true that in keeping with our approach, each side will be able to exceed the agreed level of 6000 warheads, although only with slow-flying air-based cruise missiles, which, in addition, will have to overcome air defenses. Moreover, the chance to exceed the level of 6000 warheads will be equal on both sides.

□And so, we have recognized your position on one of the aspects of this problem, have conceded more to you on the other, and on the third are proposing a resolution on an equal basis.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. There is one point on which not a single percentage point will help [po kotoromu ni odin protsent ne spaset]. That is the criterion of range. But on the other issues, we can work and search for a final resolution.

□J. BAKER. You mean to say that if we find a solution on the problem of range, then on the whole the problem of air-based cruise missiles can be resolved?

□M.S. GORBACHEV. I think that it can.

□J. BAKER. Perhaps in the second half of the day we can search for a solution to the problem of range.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. I am ready to include Marshal Akhromeev in that search.

□J. BAKER. I hope that you will agree that we have moved significantly from our former positions.

□S.F. AKHROMEYEV. Yes, there is definite movement.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. And now the issue of sea-based cruise missiles - that really is a taboo issue for you. We are always unlucky [in this respect]: both in the previous and in the current administration, there are many people with navy biographies. Shultz was from the navy, and now the President himself served in the navy. But I hope that in the person of the Secretary of State we are dealing with a politician who understands realities. I will not comment in detail on the problem of sea-based cruise missiles, but I see that the conversation, at long last, has begun. That already is very good. Before, they didn't even want to have a conversation.

□J. BAKER. Yes, the conversation has started, despite the fact that at one time the

current President was an officer in the navy and I [also] served in the navy.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. Then it will be difficult for us. Perhaps it is more than a symbol. (Everyone laughs).

□...I will say frankly: for us, your position on the fact that sea-based cruise missiles of any range must be kept in mind. Here again, we must talk about a range of 600 km. And missiles of a 70 or 25 kilometer range - from a strategic point of view, they are rubbish. That rubbish must be discarded. And secondly. In all areas of arms limitations, verification is important. I am very impressed that you are agreeing to verification of air-based cruise missiles. And here, in the area of sea-based cruise missiles, verification is also needed.

□And so, the issue of criteria on range is key. The limit of 600 km must be affirmed. Then we will be able to talk about everything else...

□J. BAKER. Do you mean that if we throw away everything that you are calling rubbish - missiles with a range of less than 600 km, you will be able to agree with our approach to solving the problem of sea-based cruise missiles.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. If we solve the problem of range, then we can discuss the statement you are proposing. But all the same, the issue of verification arises. There should be verification in all areas.

□J. BAKER. I wanted to move step-by-step. As for verification, our proposal consists of the idea that a discussion of this problem start at the level of Ambassadors Burt and Nazarkin.

□E.A. SHEVARDNADZE. Yesterday we stated some new thoughts which are now being worked through.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. I think that we can work on that. But the most important thing is to affirm the limit to a range of 600 km.

□J. BAKER. We are ready to analyze that and are ready to continue the discussion in the second half of the day. What do you mean when you talk about your thoughts on verification?

□E.A. SHEVARDNADZE. We proposed to make limitations on the types of surface ships and submarines in the interests of ensuring verification.

□J. BAKER. Let us carry on the discussion.

[Subsequent pages omitted in the original].