

**May 11, 1989**

**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 tactical nuclear weapons.

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Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

## CONVERSATION

between M.S. Gorbachev and US Secretary of State, J. Baker

11 May 1989

□(The first part of conversation occurred only in the presence of E.A. Shevardnadze).

□M.S. Gorbachev. Greetings to you, Mr. Secretary of State. It is good that we have met. The ice has cracked. And now the ice must begin to move. I say that every spring. And now we must think about how to continue under these conditions those transformations which are occurring in both of our countries and in the entire world, all of what has been started by the joint efforts of the Soviet Union and the United States.

□J. Baker. I thank you for your words of welcome, Mr. General Secretary. I must say that before my departure here, I spoke a lot with the President, and he asked me to say that he is very interested in my trip. He also asked me to tell you that we want to renew cooperation with the Soviet Union on the whole spectrum of our relations. We are striving for active, constructive, positive, and constantly expanding relations with your country.

□The President asked me to express his thanks to you for the letter which you sent to him not long ago. He especially asked me to tell you that he values your announcement that the Soviet Union has not been supplying arms to Nicaragua since 1988. He asked me to ask you the question: do you object to making that fact public? This could be done after my meeting with you or in some other way. As I said yesterday to your minister of foreign affairs, it would be very useful for us if you could inform us about that. [The next 21 pages are omitted in the original]

□[M.S. Gorbachev.] There is also the particular problem of tactical nuclear weapons. In this regard, I would like to remind you of what happened here, at this very table, in April of 1987. Perhaps you know about this. At that time, the problem of so-called short-range missiles was being discussed. Secretary of State Shultz insisted that our new short-range missile, "Oka," which is called the "SS-23" in the West, although it has a range of less than 500 km, be included in the agreement on INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces]. At first we objected, but then agreed to this. At that point we agreed with Secretary of State Shultz that such missiles would not be deployed in future by either side. That is how it was; read the reports, and you will be convinced of the fact.

□And now it turns out that you are planning to deploy a missile in the 1990s that is analogous to our SS-23 missile. I am not even talking about how that looks from a point of view of morality. But how does that affect the prospects for talks? In any case, it is clear who will bear responsibility for the consequences?

□We and our allies proposed to conduct negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons. We are assuming that the nuclear component of dual-purpose weapons will also be examined at these negotiations. You assert that the Soviet Union has an advantage in conventional weaponry. But after all, the elimination of asymmetry in the area of conventional weaponry is the essence of the first stage of the cuts which are being discussed in Vienna. Why not also take the same tack in the area of tactical nuclear weapons?

□This year, the Soviet Union will unilaterally withdraw 500 [units of] nuclear ammunition for tactical nuclear weapons from Eastern Europe. If you were willing, we

could also examine more radical steps. We are ready to withdraw all of our nuclear ammunition from the territory of our Warsaw Pact allies over the course of 1989-1991, of course, on condition of an analogous step in response by the US.

□ Perhaps the American people are not very sensitive to the problem of tactical nuclear weapons. But in Europe, this issue is very pointed. We are ready to exchange opinions with you on these issues, both on our proposals relating to conventional armaments, as well as on tactical nuclear weapons. We are ready for consultations relating to possible steps in this area. I would like to inform you about our proposals ahead of time, because we want to engage in realpolitik [real'naia politika] with you.

□ I heard that a special working group has been set up in the National Security Council of the US whose task is to discredit Gorbachev and perestroika. Perhaps Mr. Gates himself is leading that work. If that really is so, we will never step out onto a wide road in our relations. For our part, we do not plan to play dirty tricks [pakosti] on the United States. Such efforts would simply be unrealistic. But we have a right to count on the fact that the United States will treat us the same way. All the same, the experience of past years demonstrates that on the basis of joint efforts, on the basis of finding a balance of interests, we can move ahead, can find resolution which would, so to speak, profit both sides. I think that such an approach would strike a chord with you, as a former minister of finance.

□ So let us score points [nabirat' ochki] together in the arena of public opinion, working together, cooperating, and engaging in realpolitik.

□ J. Baker. We are coming from the same starting point. We share your point of view, and I want to assure you that in the National Security Council... [following 4 pages missing in the original]

□ [M.S. Gorbachev.]...to cut them again at the second stage, let's say to 25%, and, finally, to complete the reduction to the levels we are proposing by 1997. At the same time, we can also discuss the problems of tactical nuclear weapons. We are not proposing to run out ahead with it.

□ J. Baker. So you are proposing first to eliminate the asymmetries?

□ M.S. Gorbachev. We only want to say that the process of negotiating on nuclear weapons is necessary. It must move ahead as linked with the process of reducing and limiting armaments in Europe. A reduction of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe would take place no earlier than the asymmetries in the area of conventional weaponry will be eliminated. Perhaps in parallel with the second stage of reducing conventional weapons.

□ We have talked about the fact that this issue is politically attractive. I think that that is not at all the only thing that is at issue. It is a vital issue for the Europeans. After all, tactical missiles cover a significant portion of the territory of Europe.

□ J. Baker. I cannot agree with you. The essence of the matter is not that they cover a significant portion of the territory of Europe, but that to a significant degree, they have ensured peace in Europe over the course of many years, being a part of our flexible reaction strategy. And that is a defensive strategy.

□ M.S. Gorbachev. But, after all, we are not asking you to agree to some unilateral steps. We are proposing steps on the basis of mutuality.

□ Now I would like to return to what I discussed at this table with Secretary of State

Shultz. I must say that in light of that discussion, your effort to undertake the modernization of the missiles is unexpected to us. I agreed with Shultz that such missiles would not be developed.

□S.F. Akhromeev. I want to remind you that Secretary of State Shultz proposed first to keep 75 such missiles in Europe on each side. Afterwards, however, he agreed that there should be no such missiles in Europe. And we assumed that the United States would not develop such missiles.

□M.S. Gorbachev. On this subject, it is important to remember that we want to preserve trust between our countries.

□J. Baker. I have a different understanding of the issue. I would like to ask Ambassador Ridgeway, who was present at those discussions, to make a statement.

□R. Ridgeway. In the course of the negotiations, we agreed to count SS-23 missiles which had a range of more than 500 km. We agreed not to have a system of that range. In the framework of that understanding, we agreed not to deploy such a system, although we were not talking about a missile to replace the "Lance." In April of 1987, the issue came up before NATO in the following form: a second zero or deploying a certain number of missiles. NATO decided not to deploy missiles of a range of more than 500 km. But we were talking about entirely different missiles. So I cannot agree with Marshall Akhromeev.

□M.S. Gorbachev. No, that is not how the matter stood.

□E.A. Shevardnadze. At that time, we made a concession, and our military staff even criticized us for refusing the SS-23 missiles.

□S.F. Akhromeev. I want to emphasize that the SS-23 missile does not have a range of 500 km. It was included in the INF Treaty in keeping with the so-called rule of type. We agreed with Secretary of State Shultz to count this missile in keeping with this rule. However, the United States knew that its range was less than 500 km.

□M.S. Gorbachev. At that point there was a situation where we had to find a way out of a deadlock, and we agreed to a compromise with the American side, but to do that, we had to overcome the position of our military staff. Now the question arises: why are we cutting these SS-23 missiles? Incidentally, we, as it turns out, have not cut them completely. But now you are bringing the same missiles here.

□J. Baker. The need for modernization arises in connection with the large imbalance in favor of the USSR, with your large advantage in tanks and other sorts of conventional weapons. Perhaps at some stage it will be possible to begin a discussion if first you have the opportunity to reduce your advantage on tactical nuclear weapons, of cutting it to our level. Then, perhaps, we won't need to modernize.

□M.S. Gorbachev. But then we could hand you a whole list of our concerns. But, after all, that is the reason for the negotiations in Vienna, and we have every intention of attaining real results. But we consider what you are planning to be extremely undesirable, and, moreover, harmful to the negotiation process.

□J. Baker. I have just been given information on the Soviet Union's modernization of short-range nuclear weapons. Over the period of 1981 to 1988, the Soviet Union conducted a thorough-going [kompleksnaia] modernization of tactical nuclear weapons. And so, a significant number of "FROG-7" missiles were replaced with SS-21 missiles, which have increased precision and accuracy. Old artillery weapons

were replaced with self-propelled nuclear artillery guns. As a result of which, instead of NATO's former advantage in this category, the Warsaw Pact now has a 2:1 advantage. As the Soviet Union itself recognizes, it has an 11:1 advantage in the area of small-range missiles, which have a threefold capability of delivering conventional, nuclear, or chemical weapons.

□M.S. Gorbachev. I do not want to go into all of these details right now. They must be discussed at the negotiations. I have set out our position more than once - in London, Washington, and in other places. I will not repeat myself. What you are talking about took place with the signing of the INF Treaty. From that time, the situation has not changed.

□ I raised the issue so that you could weigh our concerns as to your modernization. We are for the process of negotiations with you. We want this process to be effective and businesslike. At the first stage is an elimination of asymmetries. And in this general context, the issue of tactical nuclear weapons will not disappear anywhere; it cannot be abandoned. It causes great concern on the part of the Europeans, not only in the West, but also in the East. So this knot must be untied. Think about this issue. We do not want to knock heads [stalkivat'sa lbami] with you.

□E.A. Shevardnadze. And the best way is to begin negotiations.

□M.S. Gorbachev. This will also permit the ironing-out of public concerns. Let's think about it.

□J. Baker. You are asking this of us, and we will do it. But there is a difference between our approaches. We believe that a minimal quantity of nuclear weapons is absolutely necessary for our flexible reaction strategy, which guarantees peace-keeping in Europe. We understand the political attractiveness of a third zero. But that is a specifically political attractiveness, and not a strategic one, not from the point of view of security. So that we can cooperate with you on this issue, [or], in any case, find a way toward such cooperation, it would be more serious if you said: we are ready to reduce our very significant advantage. Then we could have a talk about these weapons. But while we are in an unfavorable position, we cannot do that.

□I want once again to recall your words: no doubts should arise between us about the fact that one of the sides wants to put the other in an unfavorable position. So here we are already in an unfavorable position; you have superiority in tactical nuclear weapons, and in conventional arms. And here, recognizing the political attractiveness of a third zero, you are insisting on negotiations and thus are trying to put us in an even more unfavorable position.

□M.S. Gorbachev. No, that is not so. We do not want there to be misunderstandings between us on that count. Your arguments that the Soviet Union possesses an advantage here have not convinced me. After all, in air-power, the superiority is on the side of the West. If everything is combined, there are inequalities, horrifying inequalities, on a very high level, between us on tactical nuclear weapons. I repeat that it will be very difficult for you to prove that your position on this count is reasonable.

□J. Baker. I have already told you that we understand the political attractiveness of your position.

□M.S. Gorbachev. At present, negotiations directed at a radical lessening of the military confrontation in Europe have begun. And in these conditions, the modernization of nuclear weapons, moreover a modernization of such a character, raises many questions relating to the US's intentions. So, I repeat, now that

negotiations have begun, let us instead think together how to co-ordinate them in the context of this problem as well.

[Subsequent pages omitted in the original].