

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

O Malta

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: First Restricted Bilateral Session with Chairman Gorbachev of Soviet Union

PARTICIPANTS: The President
General Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Interpreter

Mikhail Gorbachev, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR
Anatoliy Chernyaev, Aide to Chairman Gorbachev
(Notetaker)
Interpreter

DATE, TIME: December 2, 1989, 12:00 - 1:00 pm
AND PLACE: Maxim Gorkii Cruise Liner, Malta

Chairman Gorbachev: I have three points. I already referred to Central America especially Cuba. I recall a letter to you after Cuba. My talks in Cuba weren't simple. Castro expressed caution about our policy -- I explained our aims were good. I said as for our internal affairs we are doing what we want. What you do is your business. He asked me, in effect, to help normalize U.S.-Cuban relations. (S/SEN)

Recently, the Cuban Chief of Staff visited the Soviet Union. He talked to Yazov and said some things, I say this for the first time in the most private way. If Castro found out (S/SEN)

The President: I understand. It will stay with me. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: I think perhaps we would think how to do it. Some contacts. We could participate but that is not necessary. I can say that Castro understands that the world is changing dramatically but he has his own sense of dignity and pride. Even raising this possibility was not easy for him. (S/SEN)

The President: What is he saying? (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: His very words, "Find a way to make the President aware of my interest in normalization." It is on the basis of that remark that I made my comment. (S/SEN)

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The President: Let's put all our cards on the table about Castro. Our allies can't see why we care about Central America. It just isn't a gut issue for them. For the political left in the U.S., it isn't a gut issue. But for the fledgling democracies in Latin America and the U.S. right it is a gut issue. Castro is like a sea anchor as you move forward and the Western Hemisphere moves. He is against all this -- Eastern Europe and the Western Hemisphere. (S/SEN)

Publicly Latin Americans will not criticize a colleague. But Arias' call was a clear indication that Castro is now totally isolated. There is another major Castro problem -- the emigres (in Florida) who have strong emotions about this last dictator. We have had feelers from Castro but never with an indication of a willingness to change. (S)

Switching to Nicaragua, you said Ortega had nothing to do with [ILLEGIBLE]. I am inclined to agree though I didn't use to think so. But I am convinced that they are exporting revolution. They are sending weapons. I don't care what they have told you, they are supporting the FMLN. I am now convinced there is a new shipment of helos going from the Soviet Union to Nicaragua. I don't question Shevardnadze's word on this. (S/SEN)

Chairman Gorbachev: There were U.S. rockets too. (S)

The President I see a solution as in a verifiable election -- free and open -- and that if Ortega loses he doesn't try to cling to power. If it is a free election, we will abide by the results. (S/SEN)

The only other open cancer is Panama, but there is no feeling that the Soviet Union wants Noriega to succeed. He is a terrible problem for us. I asked the Attorney General if our indictments were strong ones. I am seeking for him to get out. This is quite confidential. He said these are good indictments and given feelings on drugs in the U.S., I can't drop the indictments. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: Let me tell you how your steps are perceived in the Soviet Union. People ask are there no barrier to the U.S. action in independent countries? The U.S. passes judgement and executes that judgement. (S)

The President: There is no military operation against Colombia, but if we are asked for help against the scourge of drugs, we will help. (S)

Then I would like to mention the Philippines. (S)

I was surprised at your Philippines reaction. Aquino is democratically elected and asked for our help to prevent the palace from being bombed by the rebels. It never occurred to me that this would cause problems in the Soviet Union, though I probably would have done it anyway. But that notion never occurred to me. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: In the Soviet Union some are saying the Brezhnev doctrine is being replaced by the Bush doctrine. (S)

The President: I want to understand. Here is a democracy saying that it needs help against rebels. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: I agree she is democratically elected. It depends on the context. In Eastern Europe there are governments, legitimately elected, that are now being replaced. The question is in Eastern Europe it is prohibited for Soviet troops to intervene. All now is interrelated. Some now are seeing that we are not performing our duty to our friends. But we have not been asked. (S)

The President: In Eastern Europe, change is peaceful and encouraged by you. In the Philippines, there is a Colonel trying to shoot his way into power. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: I agree -- peaceful change is the way. Our position is non-interference. The process of change can be painful but we believe in non-interference. Colonels can be found everywhere to do those jobs. (S)

The President: If we can stick with the notion of peaceful change, better relations will occur between the Soviet Union and the U.S. I would never give advice to a senior office holder like you. I can accept your criticism, but not on this issue, in this circumstance. Aquino is struggling to bring democracy. I would hope your criticism could be muted. I can accept it but I think that your criticism would cut the wrong way. (S)

I appreciate your explanation in the Philippines. One more comment on Latin America. I don't want to sound like a broken record. Let me express U.S. public opinion on you yourself. There is strong support for perestroika and for establishing pluralistic answers in Eastern Europe -- strong support. But I think people see support for Castro -- almost -- speaking frankly -- as an embarrassment. He is against the causes you are advocating. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: That is pluralism (laughs). (U)

The President: I wish we could find a way. You are spending billions into the pipeline and getting nothing for it, and it does interfere with our overall relationship. The way you have handled it is clear. Castro doesn't just do what you say. (S)

Just to end it -- anything we can do to cut support for Cuba and Nicaragua so we are not on opposite sides. Chile is moving in the right direction -- not toward the U.S. but toward democracy and I don't want these others to get in the way of what I want to do with the Soviet Union. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: The most important thing is that we have no plan for Latin America -- no bridges, no bridgeheads. That is not our policy -- you have it from me. {NEXT LINE ILLEGIBLE}

I am moving toward democracy. Of course they are fledgling and the road ahead will be difficult. We are satisfied with that -- as you -- but we will not interfere. (S)

With Cuba, yes, we have a long relationship -- responding to the economic blockade. We seek to put it on a more normal basis, especially economic. We are trading with Cuba and that meets our need -- sugar, citrus, nickel -- but it is much more to Cuba's advantage. For example, we sell oil to Cuba on a market clearing basis which we could sell for much more. But Cuba is independent with its own view and we don't want to interfere. (S)

I mention Castro's signal because I think it shows Castro sees his interest lies in changing his relations with the U.S. and others. So please give it some thought. If you have something to share with us or something we can pass on. We can note we have had a frank conversation and understand each other better. (S)

The President: We have had feelers from him. But if he could do something in human rights. I will think carefully on it. I will let you know so we don't get disconnected on this. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: We could say that to him about human rights. (S)

The President: He won't even let the U.N. in to see. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: I haven't finished (laughs). (U)

The President: Neither have I. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: O.K. (U)

The President: O.K. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: Let me address Eastern Europe. I have three points. (S)

- (1) The direction of change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is such as to bring us closer -- that is important. (S)
- (2) What I dislike is when some U.S. politicians say unity of Europe should be on the basis of Western values. We have long been accused of exporting ideology. That is what is now being proposed by some -- not you. (S)
- (3) Mr. Kohl is in too much of a hurry on the German question. That is not good. I worry that this could be part of his pre-election game and not because of a strategic outlook. There are some differences in view in West Germany, within the coalition, and with the SPD. We should let Kohl know that his approach could damage things. (S)

For example, would a united Germany be outside alliances or within NATO? Answer is premature and we shouldn't put it forth -- should let it run its natural course. You and I are not responsible for the division of Germany. Let history decide what should happen. We need an understanding on this. (S)

The President: I think Kohl feels an enormous emotional response to what has happened -- as does Genscher. There is some politics in his three part program and some emotional outpouring. I think he knows his allies -- after they support right of the German people to reunify, have some private reservations about reunification. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: Yes I know -- and they have let me know. Unlike they and you -- I am saying there are two states, mandated by history. So let history decide the outcome. Kohl assures me he will abide by understandings made in Bonn. Now he says he wants to talk on the phone and Genscher is coming. I think this is an ? particular prudence. (S)

The President: I agree and we will do nothing to recklessly try to speed up reunification. When you talk to Kohl, I think you will see he agrees. But his rhetoric, you must understand, is emotional and possibly some politics, but mostly emotion. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: It is good that things have [ILLEGIBLE] (U)

The President: The most conservative Americans salute how you have handled this issue. They are now looking back into history. I will be timid -- that is how in a nutshell they describe my refusal to jump up and down at the Wall. This is no time for grandstanding -- a step that looks good but could prove reckless. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: The times we live in are of great responsibility -- great opportunity but great responsibility. (S)

The President: I would like to spend some time on one other point at some time. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: I have one other point as well -- later. A point which you carefully avoided. (S)

The President: Yes, I was hoping to avoid it. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: I once said something -- You used a word that means "a test" to see if we could solve mutual problems. (S)

The President: Afghanistan is more important to you than to us. I was wrong about what would happen after Soviet troops left. Let's discuss it. (S)

The President: Let me not blind side you. You may not want to discuss it. But I would like to know your views concerning the sensitive area of the Baltics. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: Yes, we will. (U)