

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Malta

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Brent 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 3, 1989, 11:45 am - 12:45 pm
AND PLACE: Maxim Gorkii Cruise Liner, Malta

The President: I want to discuss an idea on bibles and a proposal on Billy Graham. (Described the question he is asked about the Baltics). (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: I have discussed how we see a [ILLEGIBLE]. Many problems have arisen. We were ready to deal with them through greater autonomy. If separatism would become dominant, that would be dramatic. I must not create a danger to perestroika. The Soviet peoples would not understand. We lived together for fifty years, we are integrated. We have sixty million living out there in nationality areas. Fifty percent of Estonia are Russians, over 50% of Latvians are now Russian, Lithuanian majority in Lithuania. In the Ukraine, 50 million are non-Ukrainian. Kazakhs are only 30% of the population. Our country is that way and separatism brings out strong feelings by people. (S)

There has been a calming down but still there are problems. This is a sensitive issue for us. I hope you understand our position. This would bring out all sorts of terrible fires. If the U.S. has no understanding it would spoil relations with the U.S. more than anything else. (S)

The President: But if you use force -- you don't want to -- that would create a firestorm. You will get that question. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: We want all to get equal treatment. If we removed our MVD troops from Nagorno-Karabakh we would have war. We are committed to a democratic process and we hope you understand. (S)

What happened here is precisely what we wanted. We are very pleased. There are some in both countries who don't like what we are doing. But we are right. Destructive forces should not be allowed to undermine this. Let me [ILLEGIBLE] some. (S)

The President What forces? (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: Sometimes lies are presented in the press, etc., i.e. that Gorbachev sold his friends down the river as a student after drinking ...[ILLEGIBLE] (S)

The President: I never heard of this. We have a lot of nuts. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: I know you don't believe it. (U)

The President: The visit is exactly what I hoped. I didn't respond to all arms control but we want to move forward. But we must be prudent. We are looking for ways to make further reductions, especially in manpower in CFE. I must consult with NATO. (S)