

November 19, 1990

**Record of a Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev
and President of the US George Bush in Paris**

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Summary:

Gorbachev and Bush discuss options for responding to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

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REPORT ON THE BASIC CONTENTS OF A CONVERSATION
BETWEEN M.S. GORBACHEV AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE USUS, G. BUSH

Paris, 19 November 1990

G. Bush. I am glad to see you. I constantly think about you. You are going through a difficult time. Of course, I do not want to interfere in your internal affairs, but permit me to say: we will try to do everything that we can to help you in your burdensome task.

M.S. Gorbachev. Thank you.

G. Bush. I think that the awarding of your Nobel Prize, which was very warmly greeted in the US, is also an expression of confidence in your ability to find an answer to all of the difficult issue with which you are dealing.

M.S. Gorbachev. You are right when you say that we are going through a difficult time. But it cannot be any other way, if we are really changing and carrying out cardinal changes in our society. There is no way back, despite all of the problems and shoals which we have uncovered. I constantly speak both to my colleagues and to our citizens: we must find responses to our problems while moving ahead, not looking back.

The issue of the tempo of the changes, the speed of movement, and priorities, are another matter. Here we must think. Each country has its priorities, and even each of our republics has its huge differences and particularities. But everyone must move ahead, understanding that we have little time. Hence the necessity for decisive actions.

[Five pages omitted in the original.]

[G. Bush.] I understand your words about the fact that caution is necessary, patience, restraint.

A few days ago, while a guest of Chancellor Kohl, I was in his native city for a while, where you were not long ago as well. And afterwards, I visited one of our military towns and looked in our boys' eyes, who are our children and grandchildren. And I thought: how I do not want them to have to go into battle. I think that you as well, after coming to power, looked at young Soviet soldiers with the same feeling.

In this issue, I need your help. We must get a resolution passed in the UN which would sanction the adoption of the necessary measures, that is, the use of force, in order to convince Saddam Hussein that he must comply with the UN's demands. Frankly speaking, I do not see any other way of convincing him that he must do what the entire world is demanding of him.

We are dealing with a difficult, unpredictable person. In his cruelty, he can be compared to Hitler. You know that I made a mistake in comparing him to Hitler. But, if it came to that, even Hitler did not blockade foreign embassies and did not turn people into targets. And when many American Jews told me that you cannot compare Saddam with the person who is guilty of the mass destruction of a whole nation, I answered that today the American embassy has been surrounded, and tomorrow someone else's could be, not to mention the hostages - here he is not sparing a

single country.

I want you to know: the mood in the US on this issue is not entirely unambiguous at present. But if you look at public opinion surveys, a half of those who do not approve of my actions consider that I should have gone on the offensive earlier. Add to that the 60% of Americans who support me, and you get solid support.

But I do not want to use force. However, I have come to the conclusion that such a resolution is necessary. And, thinking about the fact that you and I want to construct our relations with a view to the future, I consider that your support would serve as clear evidence of our partnership.

That is why I am asking you to support me. And not so much even just me - who knows; in two years, another person could be President. I am asking for your help to do what is just. If you cannot give me a conclusive answer yet, I would be ready to understand you, but all the same, I ask you to take into account the fact that your answer has an extraordinary important significance for us.

Our two countries were enemies, but today we are working together. If in the given case you cannot help me, then we will cooperate nonetheless. But I am asking you to help me send Saddam this signal. We calculate that it will be enough [to compel] Saddam to do what is demanded of him.

I wanted to speak with you about this alone, and not in the presence of colleagues, for two reasons: in order to say everything that is on my mind, and in order not to force you to give a conclusive answer now.

M.S. Gorbachev. I have thought everything over - both my conversation with James Baker and your letter, Mr. President. This is an extraordinarily important moment not only for us both, but also for everything that you and we have begun doing together in the world. If we do not now prove that we are in a condition at this new phase of the world's evolution, to cope with similar problems, that will mean that what we have begun does not count for much. If you and I are not in a condition to cut off aggression, annexation, a flagrant flouting of international law, then it means that we are doing something wrong. No, we must prove the opposite, and that means that we must find a solution to this problem. That is the first and the most important thing.

Secondly. On the strength of the choice that we in the Soviet Union have made (and, I am assuming, that you in the US have made an analogous choice), we do not want the United States and its President to end up in a difficult, critical situation. And if in this situation we go our separate way, each by his own path, it means that we have attained little in our relations. Although, of course, in the future, in all likelihood we will have our differences, and then we will have to sit down at the table and discuss them. But in the given case, I am convinced, we must be together with you.

In my heart, I very much want, as you probably do, that there be no blood, no casualties, no loss of American boys, because a lot of bloodshed would be a blow to the President of the US. And for simple Arabs, this would also be very bad. For that reason, we definitely prefer that a settlement be achieved without bloodshed. And I am assuming that you are also for that. After all, if a war begins, it could turn out to be worse than Vietnam.

That is the dilemma which we must resolve. On the one hand, to try to avoid a military resolution. On the other - to take yet another step, which would increase the pressure on Saddam Hussein.

When I spoke with Jim in Moscow, I asked him not to go down the path of Article 51 of the UN. It must be clearly established that we will act within the framework of the UN. That is very important.

Perhaps that is incomprehensible to certain portion of American public opinion. They might think [Deskat'], why bother with the UN, with the Security Council, at the same time that Saddam Hussein is getting brazen and treats the US like a commonplace state which can be forced to its knees? But I think that the position which you and I have taken is the correct, responsible position.

And so, after all-around consideration and analysis, we have come to the conclusion that a UN Security Council resolution should be adopted. We believe that it should be, so to speak, two-tiered, that it should incorporate your proposal and mine.

The first point should contain essentially an ultimatum to Iraq - comply with the UN resolution. But we will give him a time period, a last chance to think it over. In the second point it will be said that in case of noncompliance with this demand, all appropriate measures for the restoration of justice can be taken.

We agree that such a resolution should be adopted while you occupy the chairmanship of the Security Council.

Besides that, we believe that during the period when the ultimatum will be in effect, a series of steps should be taken. I think that our countries should find the opportunity to meet with the Iraqi leadership at some sort of level, for instance, at the level of the ministers of foreign affairs, and present them with our demands: you must leave Kuwait a free people, or else the mechanism which really will force you to your knees will be put into effect. The other option is to send
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llar with that message, as happened during the Iran-Iraq war. But that option seems weaker to us than the direct, two-sided approach.

G. Bush. It seems to me that such a two-sided approach has great merits. What should be, in your view, the duration of the ultimatum?

M.S. Gorbachev. Let's say, until the middle of January. After that, it would be decided to put into place all appropriate means, and moreover, there would be no need to adopt yet another resolution for us to do so. That would throw out a bridge to further actions, and such a decision would be made while the US occupied the chairmanship of the Security Council.

On China's position. We see that the Chinese have now begun to maneuver. However, I do not think that they will cast a veto on the proposed resolution.

G. Bush. I think that if you and we take that approach, the Chinese will follow us. You know that we are having problems with the Chinese, but we are assuming that the Chinese will not want to be isolated.

M.S. Gorbachev. It seems to me that you should agree to remove sanctions against China.

G. Bush. Here there is a legal problem. I vetoed a Congressional resolution directed

against China. And so far, I have been able to maintain on my position. In general, I agree with you, but under our crazy system...

M.S. Gorbachev. Now it is not only your system.

G. Bush. In any case, if you are going to talk to the Chinese, tell them that our administration is insistently trying to normalize relations. Solidarity within the UN...

[The text breaks off in the original.]