

**March 15, 1985**  
**Conference of Secretaries of the CC CPSU, Held in the  
Office of CC CPSU General Secretary Comrade M. S.  
Gorbachev**

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**Summary:**

Following general Secretary Konstantin Chernenko's death, Soviet officials discuss a Warsaw Pact meeting and conversations with various foreign leaders.

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

- English Translation

CONFERENCE

of Secretaries of the CC CPSU,  
Held in the Office of CC CPSU General Secretary Comrade M. S. Gorbachev

15 March 1985

Attending: Cdes. G. V. Romanov, V. I. Dolgikh, B. N. Ponomarev, M. V. Zimyanin, Ye. K. Ligachev, K. V. Rusakov, N. I. Ryzhkov, K. M. Bogolyubov, N. Ye. Kruchina.

GORBACHEV. I think that we gave a fitting farewell to Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko. It was well received by the party and the people. I spoke with Konstantin Ustinovich's family yesterday. The family is very grateful. Now we have to think through all the questions related to memorializing K. U. Chernenko's legacy. Let us entrust comrades Ligachev and Zimyanin to work these issues through. At the same time, we should make decisions on all the issues regarding material support for K. U. Chernenko's family. We already have a draft of this decision. Today, the flow of condolences in connection with the death of Konstantin Ustinovich continues, and many of these condolences have important content.

The people and the party as a whole received the decisions of the March Plenum of the CC CPSU with high approval. Responses and greetings are coming from all parts of the country and from abroad.

DOLGIKH. Very positive responses.

GORBACHEV. People support the party's policy, express their satisfaction with the unanimity that was exhibited at the Politburo session and the CC CPSU Plenum. This undermines completely the slanderous allegations of the Western press, which in recent months has expended rivers of ink to prove that there was a rivalry, a struggle for power, and so on, within the Soviet leadership.

ZIMYANIN. Now they have bitten their tongues.

GORBACHEV. The overall reaction of working people to the decisions of the Plenum is positive. The Soviet people support actively the thoughts expressed at the Plenum about the need to concentrate on practical work, on discipline and order, and on the continuation of our Leninist party line.

ZIMYANIN. Yesterday, the scholars, who took part in the session of the USSR Academy of Sciences, were talking about it very actively.

GORBACHEV. Such support of the working people gives us strength and places many obligations upon us.

As far as the international resonance to the decisions of the Plenum is concerned, I felt it especially during conversations with the foreign leaders who arrived for Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko's funeral. Almost all of them tried to meet with our leadership and spoke about the need to develop contacts and cooperation.

The meeting of the leaders of the member-states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization took place in an exceptionally warm, comradely, and business-like atmosphere.

ROMANOV. Comrade Kádár spoke very positively about that meeting and its business-like, constructive character.

GORBACHEV. Kádár was the first to speak at the meeting. He made a very good, I would say

internationalist, speech. Honecker supported him actively. Comrade Husák's speech at the meeting was exceptionally important.

RUSAKOV. Husák's speech was the best.

GORBACHEV. Leaders of all the fraternal countries spoke about the need to hold regular meetings at the level of first secretaries of communist and workers' parties of the socialist commonwealth. Comrade Jaruzelski said directly that we should meet much more often, maybe even without preparing for such meetings, without reading speeches in front of one another.

As a whole, the meeting was conducted in a spirit of great unity and mutual understanding. Comrade Husák, touching upon the question of the renewal of the Warsaw Treaty, proposed to renew this Treaty up to the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> [*sic*] anniversary of the victory over Hitler Germany. Other leaders of the fraternal countries supported him. When it came to Ceausescu's turn, he started vacillating, stating that the term for which we renew the Treaty was not all that important. He said that we could renew it for 10 years, not for 20 years. Therefore, we had to respond to him quite decisively, saying that we were all united on the issue of signing the protocol of the Warsaw Treaty's renewal, and that it was our common point of view. One has to say that Ceausescu swallowed those words and stayed silent.

RUSAKOV. However, upon leaving the room, he said after all that this issue would be decided finally after the conversations Chairman of the Romanian Council of Ministers Deselescu will have in Moscow.

GORBACHEV. But in general, I responded to him quite firmly. Summing up the results of this conference of the fraternal countries, I believe the time has come to think seriously about how we can develop a system of meetings with the leadership of the states of the socialist commonwealth. We have to think through this issue really well.

If one were to sum up the conversations that took place with the leaders of other countries, one could say that they were varied.

President of France [Francois] Mitterrand looked ill, he had difficulty speaking. Addressing the French President, we stated directly that the Soviet Union and France stood at the roots of détente in the 1970s, and that in the present international situation the need for such cooperation increases even more. At the same time, the Soviet Union is ready to undertake new joint steps in the interest of developing dialog, in search of such realistic decisions which would decrease tensions in the world, help to find ways not to allow an arms race in space, and to stop it on earth. One has to say that Mitterrand agreed with our opinion as on the whole.

Federal Chancellor of the FRG [Helmut] Kohl was very eager to have a meeting with us. One could feel that he was very concerned about the present situation in which Britain, France, Italy, and other NATO countries are actively pushing ahead of the FRG in their effort to develop cooperation with the Soviet Union. We had to speak directly to Kohl about many of the things that have accumulated lately in Soviet-West German relations. At the same time, we emphasized that we are following carefully the developments in West Germany, and drawing our own conclusions regarding the formulation of the course of USSR foreign policy. We especially drew Kohl's attention to the fact that we were very concerned by the transformation of the FRG's former, generally positive position with regard to American plans for the militarization of outer space in the direction of unequivocal support [of those plans].

The conversation with Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan was difficult. One must say that he began the conversation almost immediately with territorial claims against the USSR. We replied to those designs in a most decisive way, and showed him, on our part, where the Japanese leadership was slowly drifting toward, and how it was getting pulled more and more into military cooperation with the United States. We proposed to the Japanese to conclude a series of agreements on political,

cultural, and economic issues.

One has to say that Nakasone responded to a number of questions in a non-committal way, and then stated that agreements on economic cooperation should be concluded separately on every issue. Then I told him that we had a planned economy, and if we plan everything out for the five-year period, then there might be no space left for economic ties with Japan.

RYZHKOV. Right.

PONOMAREV. In general, Nakasone has moved Japan significantly toward America.

GORBACHEV. It should be noted that our conversation with the Prime Minister of England, Margaret Thatcher, had a somewhat different character. She spoke quite decisively in favor of expanding bilateral economic, scientific, and cultural ties between our countries. Thatcher also stated that she was in favor of energizing the dialog aimed at establishing better trust between member-states of the Warsaw Treaty and members of NATO.

We had the longest conversation(almost two hours) with U.S. Vice-President [George] Bush and Secretary of State [George] Shultz. The general impression that the American delegation left is, I tell you honestly, quite mediocre. This is not a very serious team. Of course, they rely on the great economic potential of the United States, but they do not always act seriously. When I touched upon questions that were outside of the text Bush had, he got lost. The only issue the Americans kept pushing was that President [Ronald] Reagan wishes to meet with the Soviet leadership, wishes to conduct negotiations. However, the message from the U.S. President is quite amorphous and general. And here we have to weigh everything carefully in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the government, and in the Central Committee of the party.

One thing is clear to me—that all the Westerners as a whole are hoping for the success of the negotiations in Geneva, and they believe that some solution can be found there.

ROMANOV. They think that in the area of armaments, they have certain things that we don't.

DOLGIKH. At the same time, one can feel the differences between the NATO partners regarding a number of questions related to the negotiations in Geneva.

GORBACHEV. We told the NATO countries openly that the Americans, apparently, want to prolong the negotiations in Geneva indefinitely, thus calming the anxiety of the peoples, and undermining the unity of the peace movement. Of course, we cannot allow that to happen. Therefore, the European direction of our diplomatic, political and other actions is extremely important for us. Here we have to be much more consistent and flexible.

I would like to speak separately about the conversation with President of Pakistan Zia Ul Haq. He is one cunning politician. He constantly wanted to assure us of his friendly feelings, his good neighborliness, and that he himself was a victim of a situation where there are about three million so-called Afghan refugees in Pakistan. In general, it was pure demagoguery with a perversion of facts. Therefore, we had to tell Zia Ul Haq directly that since we are neighboring countries, one should also conduct oneself in a neighborly fashion because we cannot close our eyes to the fact that it is precisely from those camps located inside Pakistan, from Pakistani territory, that the main war is being waged against those Afghan people friendly to us, as well as against the limited contingent of Soviet troops. It is natural that this would cause great damage to Soviet- Pakistani relations.

We pointed out to the President of Pakistan that somebody would like this bleeding wound to remain [open] for long years to come. But then the question emerges: in what kind of situation would Pakistan and its leadership find itself then? (And we had information that Zia Ul Haq complained to Bush that the tensions in Pakistan caused by the war against Afghanistan had

reached dangerous levels). I told Zia Ul Haq directly: You, Mr. President, want to persuade us that you do not participate in anything, that you are not arming any bandits, and that all in all you are just a victim of circumstance.

However, you are a military man yourself, and you understand very well that we know in the most precise way what is going on in Pakistan right now, where and what kind of camps are functioning that train the *dushman*, who is arming the bandits, and who is supplying them with money and all other necessities. Thus, overall, we put quite serious pressure on Zia Ul Haq, and he left the room clearly unhappy.

All in all, the negotiations, in my view, were very useful.

These meetings are also good because now for a certain period of time there will be no need for us to meet with the leadership of foreign countries, and we will be able to focus on other issues. I think that in the nearest future, before June, we can meet in the Soviet Union only with Rajiv Gandhi, who will visit us on the eve of his trip to the United States. Other international meetings could be postponed.

Therefore, we have an opportunity to concentrate primarily on domestic issues, focus our attention on fulfilling plan objectives, conducting economic experiments, and introducing scientific and technological achievements into the industrial process.

A question has emerged here about whether we should develop a plan of actions in connection with the elaboration of my speech at the April Plenum of the CC CPSU. I think that we do not need to develop this kind of actions at all, either now or in the future. The speech was published, it has reached the party organizations, and the local comrades know themselves what to do in this connection.

Victor Vasilievich Grishin called me today. He said that they planned to hold a conference of party activists in Moscow in connection with implementing the decisions of the CC CPSU Plenum and the instructions and conclusions presented by the General Secretary of the CC CPSU. It seems to me that we should not mention the instructions and the conclusions of the General Secretary in the agendas of our Plenums. These conclusions and instructions constitute a part of the Plenum materials, an integral part of our collective decisions. Therefore, they should be presented to the communists as such.

ZIMYANIN. But this will cause a chain reaction. This is how they will name the agendas of plenums and conferences of party activists in other party organizations then.

GORBACHEV. Very well then. The more references to collective decisions rather than to the instructions of one person, the better.

LIGACHEV. Now the majority of *oblast* party organizations will hold plenums on issues of our personnel policy. That is where, at those plenums, we should put to active use the materials of the March CC CPSU Plenum.

ROMANOV. That's right.

GORBACHEV. I also got a call from Zia Nurievich Nuriev. He is going to the Estonian SSR to award the republic the traveling Red Banner, and asked me to send my regards to the participants of the special meeting. I told him that he should not send my regards, and that in general, in the future, we should put an end to all these regards, which have stuck in everybody's throats for a long time now.

DOLGIKH. That's right.

ZIMYANIN. But we should never say never. Maybe in some situations we will still need to send regards.

GORBACHEV. It should not be done in principle. If something like this will be necessary, we will discuss such issues collectively.

LIGACHEV. I would support this formulation of the issue fully.

GORBACHEV. We have to devote special attention to fulfilling our plan objectives for this quarter. We have quite a large debt here. And we have to do everything possible to improve the situation.

DOLGIKH. Certain measures are being undertaken already.

RYZHKOV. Yes, we are doing everything possible to catch up on what we missed.

GORBACHEV. The Hungarian comrades told me that they hold the HSWP [Hungarian Socialist Workers Party] Politburo sessions twice a month, and twice a month between Politburo sessions they hold sessions of the CC Secretariat. Here we also had proposals not to hold the Politburo sessions every Thursday. However, I think we should not follow that. We should hold both the sessions of the Politburo and probably of the Secretariat regularly, every week.

DOLGIKH. Otherwise, it might not work well, taking into account the volume of issues we have to consider.

BOGOLYUBOV. Of course, when there are not enough issues to consider, we could miss one session of the Secretariat, but normally we have enough issues.

DOLGIKH. Maybe some operational issues could be solved by voting.

GORBACHEV. However, the most important, the [decisions on the] key issues should always be the result of our general discussion at the Secretariat sessions. The principle of collective decision-making remains our basic and unchangeable principle.

At the same time, we have to tighten control over the implementation of the decisions of the party's Central Committee, strengthen connections with the regions, visit the republics, *oblasts*, enterprises, and collective farms more frequently to monitor the implementation of decisions, and study the practice of economic and social life. By the way, I think that in recent years, at the initiative of Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov and Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko, we have already done quite a lot to perfect the style and methods of our work. I think that now it is important to move forward while relying on past achievements. In particular, it would be good to revive the [practice of] regular meetings with first secretaries of *krai* and *oblast* party committees. Many of them specifically asked me for that.

I would like to reiterate once again that as a whole, we received great and very important support from the people in connection with the March Plenum. This support forces us to work even better.

Now we have to concentrate above all on the preparation of the April CC CPSU Plenum. There the themes of the forthcoming Congress and the unfolding of the annual reports and electoral campaign will be the priority.

The second issue to be decided is the question of holding a session of the PCC [Political Consultative Committee] of the member-states of the Warsaw Treaty in Sofia, including a session devoted to the renewal of the Warsaw Treaty. We need to prepare appropriate proposals in the nearest future.

The third large event is the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory over Hitler's Fascism. Here it will be important to prepare a good, assertive report for the special session.

ZIMYANIN. A group of officials is already engaged in preparing this report.

GORBACHEV. An important part of this work should be the preparation of proposals in connection with the negotiations and conversations with foreign leaders which took place over the last two days. I think comrades Ponomarev and Rusakov should be in charge of that. Here it is important to discuss everything thoroughly and introduce appropriate proposals.

The trips of the Soviet leadership to congresses and anniversary events, which will be held in the fraternal socialist countries this year, will have substantial importance. I think that the [General] Department of the CC CPSU is already preparing the timetable for these trips.

I would like to stress once again that today we should emphasize domestic issues and solving the economic and social problems of our country's development. And in this respect, it is important for each CC CPSU Secretary to work actively in the sphere entrusted to him, to work persistently and independently, consulting with other comrades when necessary.

In particular, as far as the agro-industrial complex is concerned, and regarding the work of the Department of Agriculture and Food Industry, I would like to ask Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev to assume responsibility for monitoring the work of that department.

The questions of party organizational work and those of the development of agriculture are closely interrelated, especially now, when we are approaching the spring sowing campaign.

LIGACHEV. Thank you for your trust.

GORBACHEV. Overall, comrades, we have in front of us a very large volume of tasks, which demands [our] constant attention and active work.

I wish you success.