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THE WHITE HOUSE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

REAGAN-GORBACHEV MEETINGS IN GENEVA
November, 1985

Dinner Hosted by the Gorbachevs

DATE: November 19, 1985
TIME: 8:00 P.M. - 10:30 P.M.
PLACE: Villa at Soviet Mission,
Geneva, Switzerland

PARTICIPANTS:

United States

President Reagan
Mrs. Reagan
Secretary of State George Shultz
Chief of Staff Donald Regan
Robert C. McFarlane, Assistant to the President for National
Security
Ambassador Arthur Hartman
Mrs. E. Arensbarger, Interpreter
William Hopkins, Interpreter

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

General Secretary Gorbachev
Mrs. Gorbacheva
Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze
First Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Korniyenko
Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin
Ambassador Andrei M. Aleksandrov-Agentov
Mr. P. Palazhchenko, Interpreter

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At the beginning of the dinner, General Secretary Gorbachev announced that he had invited President Reagan to come to the

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Soviet Union and President Reagan had extended an invitation to Gorbachev to come to the U.S.A. Both had accepted, but no definite time was set. At that point the ladies announced that they, too, had extended an invitation to each other to come to their respective countries. There was much joking to the effect that Mrs. Reagan could come alone if President Reagan could not make it.

When the caviar was served, President Reagan spoke of sturgeon in the Sacramento River and Gorbachev told Mrs. Reagan of the building of hydroelectric dams on the Volga, which had decimated much of the beluga in the Caspian Sea. They had made some mistakes, he said, but now they were rectified and the fish were thriving.

Mrs. Reagan asked Gorbachev about tourism in the Soviet Union, and he told her at length about the Soviet tourist industry, how it was being built up and expanded, and at the end joked about the fact that tourism not only builds international understanding, but brings foreign currency into the Soviet Union.

Addressing himself to Mrs. Reagan and Mr. McFarlane, Gorbachev spoke of Russian history, about the fact that Russia had acted as a buffer zone for Europe throughout the centuries. Russia itself was invaded by the Mongols of Central Asia and therefore, he said, "Scratch a Russian and find a Tartar." Because Russia had been Europe's buffer, he said, it had fallen behind. It had experienced many invasions, from the Mongols to Napoleon, not to mention two world wars. Nevertheless, Russia has always been able to recuperate from her wounds and build up her strength.

During the course of the dinner, perhaps to encourage his guests' appetite, Gorbachev quoted the Russian scientist Timiryazev, who said that food was the closest man could come to communing with nature.

Mrs. Gorbachev said that American playwrights were very popular in the Soviet Union, especially Tennessee Williams and Albee. The Gorbachevs had recently seen a Moscow production of Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf? and argued at the table about who had given the better portrayal -- Elizabeth Taylor or the Russian actress.

Mrs. Reagan asked about the Soviet film industry and was told by Gorbachev and Korniyenko about the many film studios in various parts of the country. Three of the largest are in Moscow.

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Mrs. Reagan asked about drug abuse in the Soviet Union and was told that the drug problem was very small in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev then told her that his anti-alcoholism campaign was a huge success and enjoyed great grass-roots support. Coffee shops and ice cream parlors are becoming profitable ventures because people appear to be enjoying them more than hard liquor. He said that he had thought at the beginning of the campaign that moonshine production would increase, however, they found that since the beginning of the campaign the consumption of sugar has actually gone down. He explained that large amounts of sugar were used in distilling a home brew. Apparently, such activity was not being indulged in.

Mrs. Reagan and Gorbachev spoke of their respective families and Gorbachev said it was his belief that the family was the foundation of society. He felt that there was a risk now of that foundation eroding. Too many people were living together without benefit of marriage, and there were too many single-parent families, especially among European Russians. This was not the case in Central Asia, he said, where the average family had 5-6 children and two and even three generations all live together in one house. He said that he meant to speak about family values at the next Party Congress.

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General Secretary Gorbachev's Remarks

General Secretary Gorbachev rose and remarked that he was happy to have everyone here together, and there would certainly be no speeches at this dinner. However, he said he wanted at this table this evening, where such a good atmosphere reigned, to welcome the President and Mrs. Reagan. (Mrs. Reagan remarked to the Soviet interpreter that the General Secretary had referred to her as "Nancy.") He welcomed President Reagan and his American colleagues to the Soviet Mission, on this "little bit of the Soviet Union."

He said that everyone present knew the reason why they were in Geneva. Yet, he said the fact that they had relaxed a little bit at this dinner did not mean that they would neglect the reasons why they had come here. He added that his purpose in rising to speak was not to bring up the seriousness of the reasons why they were in Geneva. He said that first, he simply wanted to greet his guests very cordially.

He said that speaking in human terms, he was happy to get acquainted with his guests and he expressed the hope that it would be possible to achieve the kind of understanding and spirit in which it would be possible to discuss "people" problems.

He noted that one day of the meetings had passed, and only one day was left. He said he wanted to recall a line from the Bible to express the Soviet side's desire as to how the meetings should go. The Biblical quotation was to the effect that there is a time to throw stones, and there is a time to gather them; now is the time to gather stones which have been cast in the past. The seven years in which there were no meetings between the Presidents of the United States and the General Secretaries of the Soviet Union were filled with considerable changes in the world. It would be possible to describe and explain what happened in the world during that time and much could be said by way of explanation. More important than that, however, is the lesson of those times, namely, that the President and the General Secretary must meet and talk about where the two countries are, and how they view each other, and how the two countries intend to build their relations in this many-faceted world of ours. He said that the current day was waning and in a positive atmosphere at that. He noted that the participants had laid out their positions on a broad range of problems of concern to the USSR and the U.S. and to all of the nations of the world. He said he had noticed the word "responsibility" used frequently in relation to this meeting. He said both the President and he understood that the frequent use of that word in itself emphasized the responsibility they bore as world leaders.

He continued that as far as the future is concerned, it can be built, if it is built by the two countries together. That can be done despite all of the countries' differences and the depth of those differences -- that had been visible even in the discussions held today -- because the process of moving toward each other through this method of meetings had begun, and it was necessary to continue the process of moving forward.

He said that it was true that one cartoonist had sent him a cartoon which showed him and President Reagan standing on the two sides of the abyss. On one side was President Reagan and on the other side was Gorbachev. Reagan calls to Gorbachev across the abyss "Gorby, I am prepared to go my part of the way," and "Gorby" says to Reagan, "Come ahead." Joking aside, he said, if the two leaders go their part of the way together, they will not end up in the abyss finally, but rather with a higher degree of

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understanding and trust that will be the basis of the long-term outlook of U.S.-Soviet relations.

He continued that there are certain questions without whose examination it would be difficult to leave Geneva, and he recalled the Nobel prize winner's letter saying that he and the President should stay in Geneva as long as necessary to resolve the questions of war and peace. (He said he thought at that rate they would be there until Christmas.) He added that, seriously, there were problems which would require thinking and an overall approach. If those questions are not addressed, it will be difficult to go on, and there will be more accusations and recrimination. It is evident that the people of the world are sick and tired of the mutual accusations and recriminations the U.S. and the USSR addressed at each other.

He said that he could not say for sure that the sides would reach agreement in the course of the current meetings, even if they worked all night. (He jokingly suggested that all the others ought to work all night.) He suggested that, jokes aside, he and the President should nevertheless continue to work to accomplish the necessary goals.

He said he wished to raise a toast to the President, to Nancy Reagan, and to the U.S. people, whom the Soviet people regard so highly; he wished to drink to the success of the current talks, to an improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations, and to the resolution of outstanding problems between the sides.

President Reagan's Response

In response to General Secretary Gorbachev's remarks, President Reagan said that the American delegation was pleased to be here in Geneva on this mission.

He said that while the General Secretary was speaking, he had been thinking of various problems being discussed at the talks. He said that previous to the General Secretary's remarks, he had been telling Foreign Minister Shevardnadze (who was seated to the President's right) that if the people of the world were to find out that there was some alien life form that was going to attack the Earth approaching on Halley's Comet, then that knowledge would unite all the peoples of the world.

Further, the President observed that General Secretary Gorbachev had cited a Biblical quotation, and the President, also alluding to the Bible, pointed out that Acts 16 refers to

the fact that "we are all of one blood regardless of where we live on the Earth," and we should never forget that.

The President quoted Theodore Roosevelt to the effect that the true goal of nations is peace with self respect. Theodore Roosevelt loved his people as the current U.S. President and General Secretary love theirs, and Roosevelt believed in peace and security for his people, although some of his detractors would construe that to mean that there was something militaristic in his attitude. Yet despite some such negative attitudes about him, he had been the first person to win the Nobel Prize for peace, and that was specifically for his efforts devoted to ending the Russo-Japanese War.

The President pointed out that there was something else significant about this particular time and this particular occasion. It was exactly 43 years ago on this date that the Soviet Army had begin the counterattack at Stalingrad which had actually turned the war around. The President suggested that this 43rd anniversary of that event could also be the beginning of yet another turning point for all mankind -- one that would make it possible to have a world of peace and freedom.

The President raised his glass to the General Secretary and Mrs. Gorbachev, to the Soviet people, to peace, freedom, to our great nations, and to the peoples of the world -- that they may have a world of peace and freedom.

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Gorbachev Family

The Gorbachevs have been married one year longer than the Reagans. Their daughter, a doctor, wrote her thesis in medical school on the effects of alcohol on the human system. Their son-in-law is a surgeon. Their daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter live with them. Gorbachev said that he was a man of conservative values when it came to keeping the family together. Their granddaughter, who will be six in January, knows all of the world leaders, he said. She watches the news broadcasts and periodically asks where Mrs. Thatcher is going now. Mrs. Gorbachev added that the granddaughter watches two TV programs: "Good Night, Children" and "Vremya," a news broadcast.

Gorbachev said that he and Mrs. Gorbachev had taken two, apparently private, vacations to Italy and France. They toured each country by car for 21 days.

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Gorbachev told Mrs. Reagan about a vacation to the Crimea that Mrs. Gorbachev had taken with her granddaughter. They visited the palace of an ancient khan, where they learned that the khan had 200 wives. Upon her return to Moscow, the granddaughter asked Gorbachev why the khan had 200 wives and he only had one. Gorbachev replied that the khan did not have a single philosopher among his wives, and he did not know what to do with the single one he had.

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