

## Main Content of the Conversation

**between A.N. Yakovlev and the U.S. Undersecretary of State Reginald Bartholomew**

October 8, 1991

I received R. Bartholomew at his request.

The conversation centered on issues related to the latest initiatives by the USSR and US to limit and reduce nuclear weapons.

R. Bartholomew emphasized that George Bush's initiatives, and M.S. Gorbachev's response to these initiatives, are creating a completely new situation both in U.S-Soviet relations and the world as a whole. These initiatives "were the result of an incredible act of will" for both sides. President Bush described the Soviet side's response as "very good news," which, according to Bartholomew, is a "very strong statement" in the U.S. The Undersecretary of State also emphasized that the initiative to take these steps came from President Bush personally. After the failed August coup in the USSR, President Bush told General Scowcroft that it is necessary to undertake a major initiative of this kind. Bartholomew believes that in the coming days, right-wing circles in the U.S. and other opponents of disarmament will begin a propaganda campaign against George Bush in this regard.

Bartholomew described the purpose of his visit to the USSR as follows: "not to hold official negotiations, but to explain the content of the President's initiatives and the motives behind them, as well as to better understand what the Soviet side has to offer in response."

Bartholomew was particularly interested in the positions of the Soviet Republics – especially Ukraine, but also, to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan, and even less the RSFSR – on their possession of nuclear weapons, and their participation in the formulation and implementation of the general Soviet national security policy.

Describing the U.S. Administration's position in this matter, Bartholomew said: "In our conversations here in Moscow with representatives of Ukraine and Kazakhstan I stressed, diplomatically but clearly and decisively, that the United States really does not want to see the emergence of several new nuclear powers. The U.S. would like to preserve and continue the situation that existed up to now both in Soviet-American relations, as well as the regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world. If anyone thinks that the possession of nuclear weapons will give them additional leverage in domestic affairs or relations with the U.S., then the result will be the opposite of their expectations, at least when it comes to relations with the United States."

The U.S. is not interested in meddling in relations between the center and the republics in these questions. It seems that the republics should have a voice in what happens with nuclear weapons that are located on their territory – but this is a question they can resolve only with Moscow. This question is fundamentally different from the issue of acquiring the status of newly independent nuclear states. According to Bartholomew, the representative of Ukraine said during their meeting that his republic wants to have a voice and representation when matters concerning the nuclear weapons located in Ukraine are decided. However, Ukraine does not claim

are beginning to make unprecedented cuts in nuclear weapons, it is very important not to get sidetracked from this main question;

---Regarding the production of fissile material, Bartholomew stressed that he was expressing a purely personal point of view but said that this question warrants a review. They will study it. This does not anticipate a decision, but they will study it in light of the new situation. In the past, one of the arguments had been the possibility of production of military fissile material at Soviet civilian reactors. But these kinds of materials could be created from the nuclear weapons scheduled for destruction. "Personally I would like to stop their production." A possible solution could be found within the framework of the Middle East settlement, which would ban "the production and import of materials for military purposes" at the international level and in the context of supporting George Bush's proposals on the Middle East;

---On nuclear testing: the number and scale of tests have already been reduced to a minimum. In the U.S. scientific and military circles the prevailing opinion is that some minimal testing is necessary in order to guarantee the maximum environmental safety of nuclear weapons as well as their reliability in storage – in other words, to make them as safe as possible in all respects during peacetime. "I am not making any predictions, but I think this point of view will continue to be influential."

R. Bartholomew said in conclusion that groups have been created in the U.S. on security issues in the context of the adopted initiatives. He is heading one of them; this group will work on arms reductions and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. By the way, he noted that the U.S. announced a contest for a new term instead of "arms control."

The second group will work on the concepts of deterrence, stability and mutual trust, suggesting high confidentiality of the consultations and discussions.

[Signed]

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) Fond 10063, Opis 1. Delo 278.  
Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive]