

66043

SUBJECT: The President's Luncheon with Gorbachev

RELEASED IN FULL

TIME AND PLACE: December 7, 1988, 1:40 - 3:10 p.m.,
Commandant's Residence, Governor's
Island, New York

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.

USSR

The President
The Vice President
George P. Shultz
Colin Powell
Kenneth Duberstein
Rozanne L. Ridgway
Jack F. Matlock
Nelson Ledsky (notetaker)
Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
(notetaker)
Dimitri Zarechnak
(interpreter)

Chairman M.S. Gorbachev
Aleksandr Yakovlev
Eduard Shevardnadze
Anatoliy Chernayev
Anatoliy Dobrynin
Yuriy Dubinin
Viktor Sukhodrev
(notetaker)
Georgiy Mamedov
(notetaker)
Pavel Palazhchenko
(interpreter)



The President said they would again be facing five waves of press.

Gorbachev said he had just been told about the earthquake in Armenia. On the ferry over he had had a telephone conversation with Moscow. The earthquake had also affected Azerbaijan and Georgia. In Azerbaijan and Georgia, however, there had not been many casualties. But in Armenia there had been much destruction. It had registered 8.0. In Armenia Yerevan had not been hard-hit, but elsewhere there was lots of destruction, many losses of life, casualties. He had talked to Ryzhkov, who said one village had just disappeared. While he had been in the house on the island he had written a telegram to the people of Armenia. A government commission had been set up to assist people. Life was all things together, good and bad.

The President said that with tragedies like this you sometimes got the feeling you were being warned. We had recently had an earthquake in California. The Vice President asked if there were any estimates of lives lost. Gorbachev said there were not any yet, but they had heard they went at least into the hundreds. Shevardnadze commented that if a whole village was destroyed there would be at least that many. The President asked if it were really true that a village had just disappeared into a hole in the earth. Gorbachev said it was. They would begin relief work with the military forces that were already there. The whole medical service would be used; eventually all services would be involved.

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A media representative asked the President what he thought of Gorbachev's troop cut proposal. The President replied that it was not a proposal, but a decision. The same representative asked again what he thought of it. The President replied that he heartily approved of it. Another representative asked if the President would be doing the same thing. The President said some adjustments might be called for if what Gorbachev had announced left us with superiority, since we do not seek superiority.

A media representative asked the Vice President for his view. The Vice President said he supported what the President had said. Amid laughter, Gorbachev said that was one of the best answers of the year. The press had left, and the Vice President commented that at least they had gone away. In the quiet that followed, Gorbachev said that the press would probably say the company was not very talkative. It observed everything.

The Vice President commented that he had seen Gorbachev's speech on TV, and he seemed to have had a full house, with every seat filled. Secretary Shultz said those in the seats had been very attentive. Gorbachev said he had also noticed that when he was speaking, and asked himself whether it was a good or a bad thing. It was an unusual situation for him to have quiet when he talked. In the years of perestroika he had gotten used to having a response to everything he said.

The President said he had had the same experience recently, and then remembered that people were listening through earphones. He had asked himself whether they were really listening or not. Gorbachev replied that he had thought the same thing during his address. The Secretary commented that when he had finished the burst of applause was genuine.

Gorbachev said he wanted to stress that he was committed to what he had said at the UN and in front of the house they were in. If we had succeeded in moving forward in these last three years, it was only through common efforts, and that was the only way for the future too.

The media had now departed, and Dobrynin commented jovially that probably meant that dinner was over.

The President reported to the table that in the private meeting in the other room they had discussed some of the things that had gone into the changes of recent years. He and the Vice President had made it plain that they approved of those changes. What had taken place since 1985 in our relations had also improved relationships around the world. And there was more to come. He was pleased at the prospects for making more progress in all areas of our agenda. And, he noted, he had not said "dovieray no provieray" once.

Gorbachev replied that when people came to study the President's time in office, someone would try to count up how many Russian proverbs the President knew. Those he had heard from the President showed he had selected them very carefully.

Gorbachev went on to say that in the Soviet Union people were so busy that they had no time to analyze things, but in a larger context the President deserved some kind of merit award for his knowledge of Russian proverbs. People in the Soviet Union remembered the President's visit to their country very well. The President said he remembered it too; he had only warm feelings for the reception he had gotten from Gorbachev's people.

Turning to regional issues, the President said the Soviet Union's role was important, and we welcomed the role it had played in the process of achieving Namibian independence and the removal of foreign troops from Angola. He hoped we could work on other regional issues in the same way.

Gorbachev replied that it might be important for him to recall a conversation he had had with Shultz. They had been meeting on the eve of one of Shultz' visits to the Middle East with his plan. They had exchanged views, and he had said to Shultz that it was good the U.S. had come to the conclusion that the Middle East problem could not be solved without the participation of the Soviet Union. Now that the U.S. had reached that conclusion, the Soviets would make a constructive contribution in the Middle East. They were for constructive cooperation on all problems, including regional problems.

He wanted to make another general point, Gorbachev went on. He wanted the U.S. not to be suspicious about the Soviet Union on regional issues, -suspicious that the Soviet Union was intriguing against the U.S. It was a good moment to make that point, with the Vice President there. When the Soviets talked about Asia and the Pacific, or did something there, it was not to harm the U.S. If they did something in Europe, it was not to create difficulties for the U.S., to weaken its links with Western Europe. His thought was that if both sides just continued as they had for decades, working against the other side, nothing good would come of it.

Perhaps the President had the impression he thought he was some kind of saint, Gorbachev continued. That was not the case; there were real contradictions between the two countries. But they had real interests in common as well. The problem was what to do, what conclusions to draw in this situation. His conclusion was that the two sides should continue along the same track. The Soviets saw no advantage to themselves in weakening U.S. security. They saw no advantage in causing an upheaval in the

world economy. That would be bad for the U.S., but it would be bad for them too. Let us therefore move beyond the subject matter and the conditions of the 1940's and 1950's, Gorbachev said. We had been able to achieve something. And looking at both the President and the Vice President, he could say that continuity was the name of the game today. He was not building castles in the area. He was not operating on the basis of illusions, but of real policy.

We should therefore be able to work together on all regional problems in a constructive way, Gorbachev continued. If the next President had studies underway, and had some remarks or suggestions on these issues, he would like to hear from him. He might respond with some remarks or suggestions of his own. He especially supported the remark in favor of the tradition that Shevardnadze and Shultz had been able to establish. He hoped no one would be offended if he said that the tradition he wanted Baker to establish with Shevardnadze was one that bureaucrats by themselves were not up to. All the forces we have at our disposal should be deployed to improving Soviet-American relations. He understood what the Vice President had said to mean that the Vice President understood the importance of the relationship between the two countries.

The President noted that there were still differences between them. Krasnoyarsk, for instance, was unresolved. At the same time, he thought they agreed on the need to wipe out chemical weapons in the future.

Gorbachev replied that he thought he had put an end to the Krasnoyarsk problem. It had been transferred from the military to the scientists. The task was to make things easier for the new President. ~~Shultz had spent so much time on this problem, and as a result they had given it to the scientists.~~

The Secretary said he had listened to the portion of Gorbachev's address concerning Krasnoyarsk, and noted that the word Gorbachev had used had been translated as "dismantle." Gorbachev replied with a smile that he bet the Secretary had written that down. He said he could confirm the translation. It was another victory for the Secretary. The important thing was to make life easier for the next President.

The Vice President interjected that there were other areas he could do that for, if that was what he had in mind. Gorbachev responded jocularly that the Vice President was probably thinking what else he could ask for. The Secretary suggested helping end the budget deficit. Gorbachev said the Soviets could not solve our budget deficit problem, and we could not solve theirs, but working together could help with both.

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