

**November 8, 1990**

**Record of a Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev  
and the US Secretary of State, J. Baker in Moscow**

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**Summary:**

Baker and Gorbachev discuss public opinion of the recent improvement in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as Saddam Hussein's recent invasion of Kuwait.

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CONTENTS OF A CONVERSATION  
BETWEEN M.S. GORBACHEV AND US SECRETARY OF STATE, J. BAKER

Moscow, 8 November 1990

M.S. Gorbachev. Greetings to you, Mr. Secretary of State, friendly greetings. Of course, now we are deeply involved in our own affairs. I constantly think about our affairs and look for ways to solve our problems, ways which would be founded on the approach we have chosen, which would move us ahead rather than backwards. At the same time, I often catch myself constantly with great interest and attention following what is happening in the US, what President Bush and his closest associates are doing. We feel our complicity with you, I would say, even our responsibility for your administration's meeting with success. I will not develop this thought further; I hope that it has not surprised you.

We firmly intend, and I hope that you will be convinced of this, not only to preserve and maintain our relations with you, but to move them forward. Everything that we try to carry out in our country, of course, first and foremost fulfills our national interests, but, we are deeply convinced, also, of the national interests of the US. Rapprochement, closer cooperation between our countries, governments, and peoples in the interests of positive changes throughout the entire world - that is our contribution to world civilization. This idea lies at the basis of everything we are doing and will do in our relations with the US. You should have no doubts on that score. Whatever happens to you, we want to act and to agree in such a way as to be together with you, side by side with you. Perhaps, that is the most important choice we have made.

There is a small portion of our people who still have certain doubts about our line on cooperation with the US. Some people believe that two such giants as the USSR and the US will necessarily conflict. Even during the demonstration in Red Square, we say such slogans: in all the years of the Cold War, the United States did not manage to achieve what Gorbachev and his policy gave them over the last few years. For the breakdown of the Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe, the way, the West gave Gorbachev a Nobel prize. Here they are, so to speak, between the lines [cherez zapiatuiu] criticizing Shevardnadze too. But that is not the predominant view. On the whole, people are of another opinion. People are for cooperation with the US, and people are being drawn into that process more and more.

We are talking about a change of historical scope. We are not surprised that there are also different assessments in the US as well. Some people say that Gorbachev's time is passed, that everything possible has already been squeezed out of him, and that you should look at other people. Some people get nervous about what people say there, including supporters of reconstruction.

But I must tell you: these celebrations have given us much food for thought. They were observed everywhere in our country. And everywhere, the silent majority made a powerful statement, made a statement in favor of reconstruction. Before the celebrations, they were trying to scare us left and right with different dangers. But people took to the streets, and the majority made a statement for themselves. And the counter-demonstrations paled by comparison with the people's flood, which you saw in Kiev, Donetsk, and Kemerovo, and even in the Baltic republics. In Riga, 120 thousand people took to the streets - more than in the previous year.

The radicals tried to scare us by saying that if we kept the tradition of the parade, workers' demonstrations, we would set people against one another, and would not aid consensus. But people told us that we must stand strongly on the ground of our values, ideals, and traditions. And that, I think, demands serious thought.

In the months that remain until the end of the year, we will have to make major steps in the direction of the marked and a new union treaty. At the same time, people are demanding that we ensure compliance with the laws in this country, and many believe that the President is behaving in too democratic a manner. That does not surprise me. After all, in our country, it has always been simple: if a person had a different opinion than the leadership, he was eliminated politically, and sometimes in other senses as well. Society is not yet fully ready to accept genuine pluralism; there is still too much impatience in it. But for the first time, we are trying to effect a colossal change within the framework of the democratic process. And that is even more important than the transition to the market by itself. In the final analysis, the market also depends on whether we keep within a democratic framework.

We are convinced that everything must be done in order to take advantage of the chances which are afforded by reconstruction. To do that on a democratic basis. But democratization does not exclude order, responsibility, and discipline. It is possible that in order to support reconstruction, in order for it not to be sacrificed to some people's interests, some severe steps will also have to be taken. [Three pages omitted in the original]

[J. Baker.] We continue to hope for a peaceful, political settlement of this crisis. At the same time, we are convinced that the madman we are dealing with will withdraw from Kuwait only if he can be convinced that we are serious and decisive. We are not sure that time is on our side. Saddam Hussein manipulates public opinion skilfully and cruelly, and takes advantage of the visits of various emissaries to Baghdad, promising to free hostages. Now he is inviting some members of the US Congress, stating that he will free a certain quantity of people if the congressmen will come to Baghdad and give him the chance to have his photograph taken with them. His line consists of driving wedges.

M.S. Gorbachev. We have noted that in this situation you are not losing your cool. In contrast, for instance, to Mrs. Thatcher, who, in my opinion, is beginning to cross the line from the rational to the emotional.

J. Baker. The thing is that we know who will be the casualties in this conflict. We have thought a lot about this, and I am not carrying out my mission with a light heart.

We believe that there are definite chances for a settlement only if we cooperate in the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution in which in a general way, sanction would be given to use all means necessary to ensure the realization of the previously adopted UN resolutions, while a build-up of the forces of the US and of other countries in the region occurs at the same time. Only this will make it perfectly clear to S. Hussein that if he does not withdraw, we have enough will to resort to the option of using force.

Of course, I will understand the Soviet Union's position if you come to the conclusion that you cannot participate in our action. You are now carrying out very major changes, and the experience of Afghanistan is very fresh in your memory. Nevertheless, I cannot get rid of the thought that if it becomes necessary to use force, the picture of Americans and Russians fighting side by side (even if your participation is limited to a small sub-unit) would make a very strong impression. But regardless of whether you will be able to agree to that, we are hoping with all our heart that you will be able in any case to agree with the plan of action which I set out to Shevadnadze.

I have come here to visit you right now because only three weeks of our chairmanship in the UN Security Council are left. After this, Yemen, Cuba, and

Zimbabwe will chair, and then there is not much chance that we will be able to put through the proposed draft resolution, even if it is couched in very general terms. We think that if such a resolution is adopted, Saddam will withdraw his forces, leaving them in the Northern sector and on the island of Bubiyan. But we must keep in mind another possibility - that he will refuse to do so. In that case, we will have to reckon with the fact that after the first of February, the realization of the military opinion will become impossible because of the rainy season, Ramadan, and pilgrimages to holy sites. In that case, the opportunity will arise only in Autumn of 1991.

We will not be able to support a sufficient quantity of troops in the region for a long time. We will have to withdraw at least a portion of them, and then it will become clear to the whole world that the UN resolution is not being carried out, and that the aggressor is being rewarded for his aggression.

We are ready to give sanctions two months. Altogether, we will have given them more than five months. For that reason, it is clear that we are not proposing any sort of premature or precipitous actions. I must say that there are more than a few people in the American government who say that if you act in the framework of the UN, you will just get tied up in procedural arguments, and they will tie you up hand and foot. For that reason, they say, you must act on the basis of Article 51 of the UN Charter. We already had that argument in the government when the issue of how to ensure the enforcement of sanctions at sea was being discussed. I phoned Eduard [Shevardnadze] two or three times a day from Wyoming. At that time, the President was under a lot of pressure not to get involved with the UN, and to act on the basis of Article 51. But we did not go down that route, and the President considers that we acted correctly. For the same reason, he sent me on this trip with instructions to find out whether it is possible to go on acting within the framework of the UN.

The resolution we are proposing will not stipulate the automatic use of force. But I agree with E.A. Shevardnadze's observation that after the first of January, if Saddam does not withdraw from Kuwait, we will have to act, or otherwise we will lose respect. For that reason, we will continue to carry out a build-up of the US and other countries' forces in the region. We want very much to act in unity with the rest of the international community. But I want to inform you that the President is ready to assume responsibility for the dirtiest part of this of this operation, because we are convinced that an important principle is at issue here.

We are worried by the fact that time is going and people are beginning to forget that we are talking about occupation, atrocities, hostages, and the elimination of an entire country. That is why we must as soon as possible send a clear signal that Saddam has only one way out.

We will understand you if you do not consider it possible to take part in our operation, but we very much hope that you will not say no to the proposed resolution. I hope that have satisfactorily explained to you the time constraints that we are running up against, and why we must put the draft to a vote as soon as possible. At the same time, in essence, the resolution would begin to work after January 1 and only if Saddam continued to refuse to withdraw from Kuwait. I will tell you honestly: I do not see any other way if we really want to attain the implementation of the UN resolution.

I want to thank you again for agreeing to meet with me on your days off and in such a businesslike way.

E.A. Shevardnadze. Mr. Secretary of State, I think that it would be important for you to repeat the formulation which you are proposing to include in the resolution.

J. Baker. So far, we still do not have a written text. In general terms, I have said what we have in mind. The UN Security Council would adopt a resolution in which it would demand the implementation of all earlier resolutions, and would state that it permits the use of all necessary or appropriate means, if by the first of January or within some other period of time that was acceptable to the five permanent members of the Council, these resolutions were not fulfilled.

In the resolution, military action or the use of force would not be concretely mentioned, although in the course of the debate in the Security Council, we will say that it permits this.

M.S. Gorbachev. Does not exclude the use of force?

J. Baker. More than that; permits the use of force.

In that way, sanctions will be given five or six months. That is hardly a short time [Eto nemalyi srok].

This is what we have in mind. Of course, we do not have a lot of time, because we have to adopt a resolution while the US is chairing the Security Council, and there are another two resolutions on Israel on the Council's agenda, and we have to agree on how to resolve that issue from a procedural point of view, in order to have time enough to adopt the given resolution. The President asked me to take this trip right now, without waiting for our contacts in the [SBSE?? - Convention on Military Forces in Europe or something like that?]. Of course, we will meet with you in Paris, and also with the English and the French. We have grounds to think that some of the non-allied countries will support the proposed approach. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey have stated that they will fully support it. They will try to exert influence on Zaire, Ethiopia, and Malaysia, who are members of the Council. Yesterday, I spoke with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, who did not say yes or no, but it seems to me that if the other permanent members of the Security Council support our proposal, he will not dissent.

M.S. Gorbachev. It is good that you have kept us informed of your thoughts and plans. They are very serious plans. But so they must be in such a situation.

J. Baker. Quite right.

M.S. Gorbachev. We must think all of this over very seriously. Now I would like simply to think aloud. [Here there is a page omitted in the original]

M.S. Gorbachev. Another thought. We are now undergoing a very serious test. Are we ready to resolve the very difficult problems which have arisen on the basis of new approaches, differently than we did during the "Cold War," and in such a way that we not be accused of trying to be the global policeman, or not? I want to emphasize: we want to be side by side with you in any situation. We want decisions to be taken which will strengthen and not undermine the authority of the United States. For that reason, we must think it all through very carefully. In all cases, it is necessary that the United States not end up alone, without the support of the UN Security Council and without everyone's understanding.

Even earlier, we assumed that the military option existed. But we thought about the possible consequences. Not all of them can be foreseen at present, but they will be grave and dangerous. For that reason, I would like to assume that what you have said does not mean that we are altering our approach in principle - a preference for a political settlement, and striving for such a settlement at all levels up until the very

last moment. Along with this, obviously the settlement must be equitable, and one which re-establishes justice and international law, which has been flouted. I hope that in further steps within the UN Security Council, this very approach will be given paramount importance.

J. Baker. I can affirm that. We do not want a military solution, because it is we who will have to bear the greatest casualties. But there will only be the chance for a peaceful settlement if Saddam knows that the international community is determined.

If we say that all necessary means can be used after the first of January, that does not mean that force will absolutely have to be used. But E.A. Shevardnadze correctly noted that we will lose heavily in the eyes of the world if we turn out to be incapable of action if Saddam refuses to fulfill the UN resolution. For that reason, when we propose our approach, we are not doing so frivolously. We are convinced that time, unfortunately, is not working in our favor. A single chance remains for a political settlement: to let Saddam know firmly that if he does not withdraw, force will be used.

We agree that a political settlement should be given paramount importance. But there is a moment when we must show our will and readiness to cross the line and do what is necessary.

We are talking about a new international order which now can be created thanks to what we, the US and the USSR have already done together. And now we are encountering the first real crisis after the "Cold War." What is too bad is that we are encountering a person who does not recognize any moral norms, and such a person wins out over the will of the international community, then it will mean that we cannot create that new international order.

M.S. Gorbachev. Now, we will not allow that. A victory by Saddam will create a very bad precedent at the threshold of a new period in history. You should have no doubts as to our position. It will not chance. We want to take advantage of every opportunity for a political settlement. We do not want you to act on the basis of Article 51. We want the United States and us to be together, for us to be able to settle this crisis together. For that reason, we must use the potential of the UN Security Council, and we will cooperate with you in that.

[Subsequent pages omitted in the original.]