

October 26, 1990

**Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev
and the Chairman of the Spanish Government,
Felipe
Gonza**

lez in Madrid

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Summary:

Gorbachev and Gonzalez discuss the positive improvement of East-West relations and the changes happening in the Soviet republics.

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CONVERSATION

between M.S. Gorbachev and the Chairman of the Spanish government,
Felipe Gonzalez

Madrid, 26 October 1990

□F. GONZALEZ. Permit me, Mr. President, again to welcome you to Spain.

□Insofar as the Moncloa palace, where the meeting took place, is located next to the university city, the conversation started on this theme.

□

□Mr. President, at present we are conducting a reform of the system of university education. We are introducing 57 new specialties into the natural sciences in keeping with the demands of the national economy. This will be a new model of higher education which is accepted in the European community. It provides for a narrower specialization. Earlier in Spain, the system of preparation provided for the release of broad-profile engineers, for instance, in the area of information as the whole, ferrous metallurgy, and so on. If there are more than 300 engineering-technical specialties by which cadres are being prepared in the US, then in Spain there are still not more than 40.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. We know about this problem. Not too long ago, we had a conference of chemists. On the eve [of the conference,] abstracts with the theses of the basic reports were distributed. The group of major authorities in the field of chemistry was supposed to assess the quality of the reports which had been presented. And so, because of extremely narrow specialization, the group could not even cope with its task of giving a qualified assessment.

□The problem of the technological revolution raises the issue that super-specialization must be compensated by the level of general education...

[Four pages omitted in the original.]

[M.S. GORBACHEV.] The generation of politicians who are currently in power in the leading countries of the world has been able to understand one another, to pick up on historical impulses toward a new qualitative level in international relations. The colossal changes around which the world is orbiting are to a significant degree linked with their ability to use common sense.

□Not long ago at all, it was entirely impossible to imagine that such a sincere and frank dialog in all areas could take place between the USSR and the US. Moreover, not only between the presidents and the representatives of foreign-policy departments. Business people and the widest social circles are also taking part in that dialog.

□Amazing changes!

□Before, we could exchange opinions confidentially only with you, Mr. Gonzalez, - then, you already understood a lot; with several details of the West as well. Today, there is such a dialog with the majority of politicians, and, especially essentially, with a wide stratum of political leaders in the USA.

□At present, there is no more important task than maintaining the positive direction in the evolution of international relations. The Persian Gulf, disarmament in Europe, the transition from the Vienna-I to the Vienna-II negotiations, the upcoming, all-European Paris summit meeting - all of this confirms whether we, including with the help of new

institutes, will be able to strengthen and continue the historical change for the better which has begun.

□The central point here is what will happen with the USSR? I want to emphasize: that is our common problem. Not long ago in Helsinki, I had the chance to say to Bush: "If you think (now I am on an informal basis with him [na 'ty']), that reconstruction is only our internal affair, there could be no deeper mistake." I must frankly say that within a short period, George Bush has gone a huge way in conceptualizing contemporary...

[Four pages omitted in the original.]

□We agreed to set up a currency committee in which the leaders of the republican governments are supposed to participate; the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR will head the committee. This committee will be instructed to examine all currency issues connected with the supply of currency from exports, spending on imports, and the assignment of currency credits received from the West. There is a whole series of directives coming up which are supposed to ensure the stabilization of the financial system and the consumer market and to assist in the introduction of market institutions and market relations.

□Today is a time of important decisions. If procrastination is permitted on our part and on the part of the West, we will not get by without serious negative consequences. We are hoping for a practical decision from you. Moreover, we are talking precisely about credits and not about any irrevocable dates. We have to make a turnaround [‘obernut’sia] in the next two to three years.

□There is one other aspect of this whole problem, which should concern first and foremost representatives of a socialist tendency. Pierre Morua expressed a serious concern in his letters to me: whether I remain a socialist or not. I replied to him in detail.

□I also respond to all of my critics inside the country in this way: if we are talking about a socialism which is in fact a barrack-like, totalitarian regime, where man, the individual [lichnost'] turns into a "little screw" [‘vintik’], then we are, without a doubt, moving away from such a socialism. For me, socialism is a movement toward freedom, the development of democracy, the creation of the conditions for a better life for the people; it is an elevation of the human person [chelovecheskaia lichnost']...

[Eight pages omitted in the original.]

□[F. GONZALEZ.] Considering the confidential character of our conversation, I will confide to you that in the course of preparing the agreements which will be signed during the days of your visit, some substantial [nemalye] doubts arose for us.

□We, as the central authority, did not feel very confident when preparing these documents, since it turned out that on your side, some aspects of them would be implemented by the relevant republics within their competency. But after all, we are dealing with you, with the central government. Similar problems and issues have arisen for me before. I tried to set them out in my last letter to you. Perhaps in that letter, I was not able to be reserved enough. I hope that you will not judge me badly for that.

□M.S. GORBACHEV. In our relations, the level of confidentiality is such that there we should not be artificially reserved.

□F. GONZALEZ. As before, I will speak extremely frankly. I am not under the same pressure as you from autonomous communities - the Catalonians, Basques, and others. However, some analogies can be discerned. The issue should not be couched in terms of the difficulties of implementing the powers of the central government, but in terms of what the extent of these powers is and of how those powers should be distributed between it and the autonomous governments. Speaking extremely frankly, I will say that there is not one political leader in the world who will permit his nation's territory to fall apart. It is impossible to imagine a worse situation for all of us if that happens in the Soviet Union. That would mean that we would have to coordinate our interests, which as it is are very difficult to coordinate and very diverse, not only with a single state, but with eight or with fourteen partners. Such a situation would lead to the complete destruction of the existing infrastructure of East-West relations, to the dissolution of the new world order which is taking shape.

[Subsequent text omitted in the original.]