

October 23, 1987

**Minutes of a Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev
and the US Secretary of State G. Shultz**

Citation:

"Minutes of a Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and the US Secretary of State G. Shultz", October 23, 1987, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/120793>

Summary:

Gorbachev Shultz discuss the ABM treaty and Soviet-US relations.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

CONVERSATION

between M.S. Gorbachev and the Secretary of State of the USA

G. Shultz

23 October 1987

M.S. GORBACHEV. First of all, I want to welcome you warmly, Mr. Secretary of State. If you take account of the fact that you arrived here soon after your meeting with E.A. Shevardnadze in Washington, then, I think, you can say that our relations are becoming dynamic. We welcome that. Now the most important thing is content. And here, it seems to us, something is emerging.

G. SCHULTZ. We always want to focus our attention on content. At the same time, it is also true that the ever more active contacts at high levels help to move forward our work on the essence of important issues. In this way, there is a definite interconnection between the process of our cooperation and progress on concrete issues. I think that we can note significant progress on essential issues. In my toast during yesterday's breakfast, I said that in 10 years' time, history will demonstrate the fact that more was achieved at Reykjavik than at any of the previous meetings at a high level.

M.S. GORBACHEV. I agree with you. In Reykjavik, I would say, an intellectual breakthrough took place. Moreover, such a powerful one that it had a shock effect reminiscent of a reaction on the stock-market. And subsequently, when much has subsided and people have sorted things through, it has become generally recognized that Reykjavik opened a new, very important stage in the political dialog between our countries, particularly on the most important security issues.

[Seven pages omitted in original]

M.S. GORBACHEV. If you recall our Reykjavik marathon, the problem of space-based ABM defense has become the main impediment which we have not yet managed to overcome. Evidently, you have noticed, Mr. Secretary, that even now, space continues to remain a stumbling block. It must also be noted that at the same time that we introduced positive elements, elements of flexibility, into our position, the American side has continued to maintain its iron-clad [zhelezobetonnaia] position. And it is this very position that is blocking forward movement to an agreement on this central issue not only of Soviet-American relations, but also for the entire world. How are we going to proceed in the future?

E.A. SHEVARDNADZE. Yes, specifically after Reykjavik, elements that complicate the negotiations such as the demand for the elimination of all Soviet heavy missiles have appeared in the American position.

M.S. GORBACHEV. And incidentally, we would be ready to destroy them, but together with you, together with the destruction of all nuclear weapons.

E.A. SHEVARDNADZE. Quite right. But the American side is putting forward the demand that this issue be resolved on a purely unilateral basis. The issue of a ban on mobile ICBMs is also being raised, and it is proposed that medium bombers be counted in the number of strategic arms, at the same time that this issue was resolved back in 1979 when the SALT-2 Treaty was concluded. The American side is also not agreeing to resolve the issue of limiting the number of sea-based cruise missiles. As is known, in Reykjavik we agreed to resolve this issue separately, outside the framework of the basic strategic triad. However, it is clear that if sea-based cruise missiles are not limited, then this could open a new channel for the arms race and create the opportunity to circumvent the treaty.

The American side raised the issue of activating a discussion of the problems of verification. We assert that if the fundamental issues of a future agreement are solved, it will also be possible to find a solution to the problems of verification.

As for the ABM Treaty, yesterday I set out our position in detail. Its essence consists of the fact that if a retreat is made from the mutual understanding attained at Reykjavik on the necessity of a 10-year period of non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty along with strict compliance with its stipulations, it will make the achievement of an agreement on strategic offensive arms impossible. The American side knows that we have developed and elaborated our position on such issues as laboratory research,

research conducted at enterprises, [testing] ranges, and so on. The US also knows our most recent proposals on working out a list of prohibited devices in space and the concrete parameters that we have proposed for such devices.

It so happened that we did not have enough time for a sufficiently detailed discussion of this group of issues. But yesterday we reminded the American side that in order for a meeting at a high level to be fully valuable and fully broad in scope, it is very important to agree on the key positions on these issues.

As for the problems of chemical and conventional arms, they are being discussed in working groups. Today we will listen to their report on those issues. Regional issues were also discussed, in particular the situation in the Persian Gulf. Yesterday we sat up almost until midnight discussing those themes. The discussion was serious and sometimes pointed.

[Four pages omitted in original]

[G SCHULTZ] Yesterday we discussed this issue in detail. We discussed it from the point of view of the situation in the Security Council. In the near future, the General Secretary of the UN will present a new version of package resolutions on the implementation of the Security Council resolution for the examination of the sides. Iraq will accept the proposal. We discussed the issue of what we will do if toward the end of the month it becomes clear that Iran is continuing to play games. What should we do in the Security Council in such a case? We consider that it is necessary to follow through in the matter [dovesti delo do kontsa]. We cannot allow Iran to make a laughing-stock of the Security Council of the UN. The Council has defined its position, and it must follow through on it.

M.S. GORBACHEV. I do not want to get into a detailed discussion of this issue right now. But it is a serious, important issue. This problem can end up as a graveyard for many things [mozhet mnogoe pokhoronit'], including, unfortunately, for many things in our own relations. I just want to say: we hope that you will weigh all of this up. Do not be under the sway of some sorts of forces and emotions. The matter is a very serious one. It would be fraught with serious consequences. Let us continue the line which we have worked out jointly. Its potential has not yet been exhausted.

G. SHULTZ. I can agree with that. It is true that we must work with the framework of the UN. After all, something very important did really happen for us in the UN.

M.S. GORBACHEV. I want to return to what we were talking about earlier. It is true, we see that not only the tempi of the process of our cooperation are quickening. There is definite movement forward on the concrete aspects of the problems under discussion. I would say that if one were to look over the road from Geneva, through Reykjavik and up to the present day, it has been possible to elucidate many [issues] significantly. [Gap in the original text]

In search of a resolution, the sides took concrete steps toward each other's positions. I must say frankly: in our view, we took more of such steps. And a tendency to squeeze as much as possible from us can as before be traced on your part. But what of it; someone must do more, make that additional step, and we decided to agree to that. But that movement which started has given rise to huge expectations on the part of our peoples and in the entire world. For that reason, the expectation that the next stage of our relations must yield concrete results is completely natural.

[Concrete results] have been awaited for a long time. If this does not happen, then it will be a great loss both for the American administration and for us. We cannot fail to reckon with that.

It is from this very point of view that I am reacting to the news of the work that you have done with E.A. Shevardnadze. I get the impression that we can complete work soon on agreements on RSD and RMD. I agree that we must resolve the issues of principles here, in Moscow, having left only the technical, editorial issues to our delegations in Geneva.

I would even say: if we complete the work in this way, that will be important in and of itself. It will be a very important event in the eyes of the world's peoples. But then people will be right to ask the question: if we understand the necessity of an agreement and conclude the agreement in the near future, then why are we continuing activities in the area of production, testing, and deployment of RSD? For this reason, we would be right to introduce a joint moratorium on such activities. It

would be introduced as soon as 1 November. I repeat: if we agree in principle that we will sign a treaty, then a joint moratorium on deployment and any work in the area of RSD would be an important step which would reinforce this political resolution. It would show that even before we sign the agreement, it will be working de-facto. I think that this important step would display the degree of our agreement on this issue.

Now I will proceed on to the central issue - the issue of strategic offensive arms and space. You recalled my words in connection with this issue. I confirm those words. We consider that resolving the issues of strategic offensive arms in space would really have an extraordinarily important significance for the security of the USSR and the USA. After all, it is these very issues which define the strategic situation. For this reason, finding mutually acceptable solutions on the nuclear-space-based complex acquires particular urgency.

In Reykjavik, there was a serious exchange of opinions on these issues. After Reykjavik, we tried to do something to confirm our readiness to work through the complex of these problems. What was the essence of the mutual understanding attained in Reykjavik? The essence was in a 50% reduction in strategic offensive arms and a 10-year period of non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. And what is happening in Geneva? There, in essence, the brakes are being put on [idet torg]. For that reason, we have thought a lot about what more we can do in order to move forward a solution to this problem in Geneva. Many issues are being discussed there, and much is being said. But if all of that is left to one side, there are on the face of it two truly big issues. The first is the issue of ensuring strict compliance with the ABM Treaty, and the second is one of the optimal ratio between the elements of strategic forces, of the strategic triad.

As for the first problem, we propose that the United States not use the right to withdraw from the ABM Treaty for 10 years. We also proposed a second version, which is also tied with the idea of non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. In order to meet the USA's position halfway, we proposed to discuss which devices can be deployed in space and which cannot. We are waiting for a reaction from you.

As for the second problem - the problem of the optimal ration between the different elements of our strategic forces, we have once again attentively examined this issue. We propose a new formula, on the basis of which limits to the concentration of warheads on each of the elements of the triad would be established. Moreover, each side would have the opportunity of compensating a lesser number of launchers of one type by increasing the number of launchers of another type within the limits of the overall limit.

[One page omitted in original]

I think that we can deal with strategic offensive arms and space in their interrelationships fundamentally and in an essential way.

G. SHULTZ. Thank you. I would like to reply to the proposals which you have set out. Of course, any time you introduce proposals on important issues, we study and carefully analyze these proposals. Now I can state some thoughts based on our analysis.

First, I welcome what you have said on RSD, your words on your readiness to give an additional impulse to this work. We also want to incline representatives to the fact that the main issues have already been resolved in Moscow.

As for the ABM and related issues, among the others, we are trying to clarify what your proposal consists of. We believe that it is a definite move forward. I would like to be fully clear as to whether I understand the proposals you have set out. This does not mean that the President agrees with them. As you know, this is a very delicate, sensitive issue for him. I want to have the chance to express the factual side of your position to him as precisely as possible. And so, as I understand it, you advocate the stipulation of a 10-year period for non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty along with strict compliance with it in the form in which it was worked out.

M.S. GORBACHEV. As before 1983. Then there were no differences between us.

Moreover, that is not only our point of view. This is the point of view of the USA Congress. And Congress, I am convinced, is a very serious, important organ which

receives reports, including from departments which Mr. Carlucci worked in, from the National Security Council, which Mr. Matlock then worked in, and other detailed information. At that point, we had the same point of view as you.

G. SHULTZ. I want to make a clarification -you mean compliance with the Treaty in the

form that was set out, for instance, in the report of our Defense Department from March of 1985? I mention this very report, since your representatives mentioned it in negotiations.

M.S. GORBACHEV. In the way that the Treaty was understood and observed before 1983 by both sides.

G. SHULTZ. I would not like to get into side disputes now, since there are different opinions about how it was complied with and what was meant. Some of us, for instance, believe that the Soviet Union is insisting on a more narrow reading of the Treaty than even its narrow interpretation. I have named one document as a point of reference to which your representatives referred, in order better to understand your point of view.

M.S. GORBACHEV. I repeat: I am talking not only about that, but about how the Treaty was observed before 1983 and was observed in practice by both sides in the same way. If that now creates some difficulties for you, then, as I said to the President at Reykjavik, I am ready to help him out of the position which was created as a result of the announcement of the SDI program. Our proposal is that we should agree what can and what cannot be deployed in space in the conditions of non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty [and what] research it permits within the framework of SDI. In particular, the second version we have proposed provides for a specification of the concrete parameters of devices which are permitted in space. Naturally, by this we mean that there should be no weapons in space. And as for the orders you have already given to companies and scientific establishments, they can be carried out within the framework of these agreed parameters. This proposal represents a compromise step.

Besides this, we are going halfway to meet your demands as to levels. For instance, when I say that in the framework of an aggregate level of 6000 warheads there will be a level of 3000- 3300 ICBM warheads, that constitute 50%. That is what I promised the President. As you see, we keep our word.

G. SHULTZ. I would like to clarify some points. You must not interpret the fact that I am clarifying some issues related to space and ABM defense as my accepting your positions. I am not in position to do that. I can only report on them to the President. Do I correctly understand that for the 10-year period of non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, activities which correspond to the Treaty in its traditional understanding, as well as activities in space within the confines of the thresholds you are proposing, will be permitted? Along with that, this activity cannot include deployments prohibited by the ABM Treaty.

M.S. GORBACHEV. And also weapons tests in space. As for permitted activities, those can be discussed and specified together.

G. SHULTZ. I think that on this issue, enough has been said in the framework of what

can be said at the given stage. I repeat that I have been asking only questions of clarification which do not signify agreement with your proposals in the President's name. I consider that we must conduct our conversation directly and openly.

Now another side of the issue - how practically to implement the 50-percent cut in strategic arms. We consider that on this issue, significant progress has been achieved. I would like to present an alternative proposal for your examination... [Remaining pages omitted in original].