

**June 12, 1989**

**Record of the First Conversations Between Mikhail Gorbachev and FRG President Richard von Weizsäcker**

**Citation:**

"Record of the First Conversations Between Mikhail Gorbachev and FRG President Richard von Weizsäcker", June 12, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Notes of A.S. Chernyaev. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/120809>

**Summary:**

Gorbachev and Weizsäcker discuss Soviet-American relations and the Bush administration.

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Record of the First Conversations Between Mikhail Gorbachev and FRG President Richard von Weizsäcker. Bonn, June 12, 1989.

Chancellor H. Kohl, Vice Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans Dietrich Genscher, State Secretary of the Department of the Federal President K. Blech, FRG Ambassador to the USSR A. Meyer-Landrut were present during the first part of the conversation. From the Soviet side attended: Eduard Shevardnadze, Alexander Yakovlev, Ivan Silayev, Yuly Kvitsinsky, Anatoly Chernyaev.

Weizsäcker. [...]Kissinger told me about your conversation, and he emphasized the importance of keeping up confidential contacts. Such conversations should be held not just between Gorbachev and Bush. They could be conducted by specially authorized representatives as well.

In any case, I can say that the atmosphere in the United States now is much less conservative than three months ago. And the numerous conversations that the Chancellor, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and other representatives of the FRG had with the American leadership made a significant contribution to the change in the atmosphere.

Gorbachev. Since we touched upon President Bush's line, I would like to emphasize that we enjoyed a confidential, positive atmosphere during our personal conversations. In order to preserve that atmosphere, even though the administration took such a long time to clarify its position regarding further development of Soviet-American relations, we pulled our patience together and did not criticize Bush and his government. We did not get pulled into the polemics even when the criticism about such a long pause began to grow exponentially among the public in the United States and Western Europe. Now we can see that we made the right decision.

Speaking about American foreign policy, I should point out that it has a number of inherent permanent weaknesses. First of all, when President Bush speaks one-on-one, he exhibits both pragmatism and the desire not to get stuck on ideological principles. However, when he makes public appearances, he makes statements that often sound like what we used to call "Reagan's crusade against communism." We believe that such returns to the past do not help to establish an atmosphere for a long period of peaceful interaction and cooperation, which we propose to the Bush administration. Those are some things that the American President needs to think about.

And secondly, the position of waiting out and taking their time in their approach to the issue of developing relations with the USSR is characteristic of the Bush administration as well as of its predecessors. Again and again they are making efforts to see if the Soviet Union, because of various difficulties that it is experiencing now, would move toward more concessionary positions, which would give an advantage to the United States. We repeatedly told them about the illusory nature of such an approach, and about the fact that one cannot build policy on the basis of misconceptions. But they still continue to cling to such an approach.