

NO 145-074/243  
BY HST NARA DATE 4/6/00 THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

SYSTEM 12  
91791

SECRET

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS

PARTICIPANTS: Sergel Vishnevsky, Pravda Columnist  
Jack F. Mallock

DATE, TIME: October 11, 1983; 12:30-1:45 P.M.;  
AND PLACE: "The Buck Stops Here" Cafeteria

Background: Vishnevsky, whom I had met during my tours in Moscow, telephoned October 7 to say that he was in the U.S. for a few weeks (ostensibly to replace temporarily the Pravda correspondent in New York, who has terminal cancer) and would like a meeting, completely off the record. After consulting Judge Clark, I agreed to meet with him for lunch on October 11.

Vishnevsky's Comments: Though his presentation was rather disjointed, he made the following points of possible interest, presenting everything as his "personal view:"

-- The state of U.S.-Soviet relations has deteriorated to a dangerous point. Many in the Soviet public are asking if war is imminent. He himself is worried and personally uncomfortable because now he must write nothing but propaganda about the U.S. rather than the more objective stories he prefers, and was permitted to write in the mid-70's.

-- The Soviet Union is now run by a triumvirate of Andropov, Ustinov and Gromyko. They have been in the leadership so long that they tend to be rigid about basic policy issues. (In this regard, he observed, "President Reagan is mentally and physically ten years younger than his age; our leaders are ten years older.") But the Soviet leaders recognize that they need a decrease in tension to concentrate on economic reform (he spoke of the economy as being "a total mess, and getting worse"), but are frustrated because they feel beleaguered and simply don't know how to proceed.

-- Andropov's statement of September 28 was virtually unprecedented and is a reflection of the leadership's current frustration. It was intended primarily for the Soviet audience (to warn them that they could not expect an easing of tensions with the U.S. and had to be prepared to tighten their belts) and to "our friends in Europe" (the anti-nuclear movement). But the leadership is convinced that the Reagan Administration is out to bring their system down and will give no quarter; therefore they have no choice but to hunker down and fight back.

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-- Expect a Soviet stonewall for about nine months, but do not conclude from this that we cannot do business at all in 1984.

-- There are still powerful incentives in Moscow to deal realistically with us, but these may not be evident in the months ahead because of the psychological and prestige factors cited.

-- Andropov is not in complete control: he shares power with Ustinov (the military) and Gromyko (a stalwart of traditional Soviet foreign policy with a large personal stake in it). Changing policies will not come easy.

If this was the intended message, then it may well be essentially accurate, since there is much corroborative evidence. And if this is the case, it means that we are on the right track and must make sure we stay the course, while keeping channels of communication open.

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