

**Record of the Main Content of the Conversation between I.P. Rybkin and Vice President of the United States A. Gore.**

**Moscow, December 14, 1994**

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I.P. Rybkin. I would like to draw your attention to one important issue. I was recently in Budapest as the vice-president of the CSCE Parliamentary Assembly. There was a great deal of tension over the question of NATO expansion. If it takes place, would it not be better to start the NATO expansion process from the Urals?

A. Gore. I would be personally very worried if the process of NATO expansion proceeded rapidly.

I.P. Rybkin. At one time, the leaders of our countries spoke about creating a kind of “belt of peace” in the northern hemisphere. Cooperation and the association of states should not be directed against someone.

A. Gore. I will respond to your question very seriously. I am aware of Russia’s concerns regarding NATO expansion plans. It is based on a misunderstanding, or the inability on our part to clearly convey to the Russian side what we are talking about. There is not a single official representing the U.S. or NATO who is authorized to speak in favor of a rapid NATO expansion. We are not considering that. The expansion process will not be rapid. On the contrary, it will be gradual, deliberate, absolutely open and transparent, without surprises. We plan to have full and frank discussions with Russia at every stage of this process. The goal of the U.S., as Bill Clinton told President Yeltsin at the meeting in September, is a stable and undivided Europe in which the U.S. and Russia will cooperate on all aspects.

I believe there really was a misunderstanding of what the NATO decision means. It is a decision to outline the process that will lead to eventual NATO expansion. I will use an analogy that is close to me. One of the projects we are discussing in the Commission is the Russian-American space station. To succeed, our spacecraft have to be maximally adjusted to each other. Then their docking becomes possible. No commander of our spacecraft would recommend to rush the docking process.

I.P. Rybkin. I like your analogy. But the original Russian-American framework must be stable if other objects are to be able to dock to the space station later.

A. Gore. Such a complex maneuver as docking in orbit is easier to accomplish when ship commanders do not raise their voices at each other.

I.P. Rybkin. There is a need for total mutual understanding.

A. Gore. That is what we have in mind, that the U.S. and Russia will remain in close contact, will consult with each other, will act absolutely openly, without surprises, and in a balanced way – for the sake of stability and peace. There has not been a decision in NATO on when the expansion will take place and which new members will be admitted. NATO will work

together with Russia on all issues of European security. The documents that were not signed by A.V. Kozyrev in Brussels provided for a partnership between Russia and NATO, which would have a special, unique character. But I do agree with you. This delicate issue must be handled very carefully.

The U.S. is interested in strengthening stability in Europe. We promise that there will be no surprises or hasty actions. On our part, there is only a desire to clearly indicate movements towards the goal I outlined.

I would like to touch upon one more question. One of the mechanisms that brings our countries closer is the START II Treaty. As START I enters into force, we would like START II to be ratified without delay, as our presidents discussed in Washington. This Treaty provides for unprecedented reductions in nuclear arsenals – two-thirds of their current level. The implementation of this Treaty would give our relations a new positive impulse. The U.S. administration will work actively with the Senate to bring the question of ratifying START II to the top of the list of legislative priorities. We hope the ratification process for this Treaty will be completed on schedule, so our presidents can exchange the instruments of ratification at the next summit in mid-1995. We expect that the Federal Assembly of Russia will also give priority to this issue. The ratification of START II by the legislative bodies of our countries will symbolize the fundamentally new nature of the relationship between Russia and the United States and will send an important positive signal to other countries in the year when the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is to be extended.

I.P. Rybkin. The State Duma is studying this issue very carefully. There were two rounds of parliamentary hearings on the Treaty, they were particularly brought to the attention of the Russian public. I must admit, a lot will depend on the general context of relations between Russia and the U.S. and NATO. The assurances you gave regarding NATO expansion are very important.

I would like to note that Russia contributed in every way to help Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Kazakhstan attain non-nuclear status. Despite the state of our economy, we decided to provide Ukraine with economic assistance worth \$700 million, to contribute, among other things, to resolving the nuclear issue.

A. Gore. Russia and the U.S. worked very constructively with Ukraine to make sure it made the only right decision to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear state.

To come back to the NATO issue, I have to say that we were surprised by the Russian side's comments in Budapest. To us it seemed that we stated our goals openly and broadly, the same way I did today in the conversation with you. I regret the misunderstanding that took place. But I am encouraged by the potential for our dialogue. Right now, there is a great opportunity to get back on a constructive course.

I.P. Rybkin. I wish you a successful visit and good results during the meeting of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission.

A. Gore. In view of the recent elections to the U.S. Congress, I think it would be beneficial for you to visit the United States. I invite you to visit soon.

I.P. Rybkin. Thank you for the invitation. I think such a visit is possible in early March of next year.

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