George Herbert Walker Bush (\*1924)

# The President's News Conference With Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow

given on July 31, 1991

President Gorbachev. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The basic part of the visit, the official visit of the President of the United States of America to the Soviet Union, is behind us. And there are many things that are important which are still ahead within the framework of this big political international event.

These days were full of very substantial dialog over a wide spectrum of issues. And I must say that it's kind of difficult 5 for me -- --

[At this point, President Bush's earphones for translation failed.]

I guess I'll have to repeat from the very beginning what I said in that case. [Laughter]

Q. Number two, Mr. President. [Laughter]

President Gorbachev. Now -- do you hear me now? Is everything okay? It's tolerable?

- 10 I already said, addressing the international press, that we see the official visit of the President of the United States to the Soviet Union as a big event in our relations -- really a global event. And I want to say that these days we have done a great deal of work which I think will create difficulties for me and the President in order to present it in condensed form. And nevertheless, this visit, to some extent, sums up the last stage of our cooperation at a very fundamental, dramatic time of development, of events in the world, when both the President of the United States of
  15 America and the Soviet Union were placed in very difficult circumstances, unusual ones, which demanded from them a great feeling of responsibility in taking very important decisions which have had consequences, and will have consequences in the further development of our cooperation and events in the world.
- And so, with the President, he and I did not lose time, and immediately at our first meeting we summarized the overall situation in a fast-changing world and tried from these positions to look upon our cooperation, evaluate our joint efforts, and trying to map out some contours, directions of development of this cooperation which would correspond to these changing conditions within which we have to act.
  - The President showed great interest in the events taking place in our country, our domestic processes. I tried to satisfy his interest and did this on my part with a great deal of satisfaction, since in his interest, I felt a desire to understand even more what is going on in our country, and moreover, I felt also a feeling of solidarity in this.
- We had an interesting, substantive discussion, and perhaps for the first time it covered the following in our bilateral cooperation. For the first time over the past period, we probably accented rather strongly what our economic relationship should be like, how we have to work together in this importance here so that -- or so that relationship in this area would be appropriate to the international dialog which we have reached in other areas.
- And here we have noted on the basis of mutual understanding -- if not, President Bush will say so -- that there must be movements in accommodation as well. Obviously, one can do a lot in the area of reform so that we can include ourselves in international economic ties. To play by the rules of the game -- I like this expression. I haven't invented any other one for the time being. That's why I use the term I'm familiar with. We have to do a great deal, and we have made our choice to continue reforms, democratic changes, and especially now, to move decisively forward towards a market relationship, a relationship of property, and so on.
- It's clear that our success in these internal affairs is tied to a great extent to the process of reform in the Federation. And I hope that I have satisfied the interest of the President about the state of this as of today. We both understand that this is very important for the success of our work, and thus, we must change, we must understand, and will understand here in the Soviet Union, that the basic responsibility for the fate of this country for reforms, for the making of decisions which are very important: is our prerogative, our responsibility.
- 40 And obviously, we are very interested in the more fruitful cooperation with the countries of the West. And in the light of continuing the discussion which we had in London, within the framework of my meeting at the G 7, we spoke also about this subject as well. And I tried to develop a thesis, which I expressed in London, that we hope to see accommodating movement of the Western countries because they, too, in their approaches in the sphere of economic



cooperation, must accommodate us.

45 We are talking about removing barriers which are connected with decisions taken during the cold war, during the arms race. This is a different time; different winds are blowing. And we must reevaluate all these decisions. I don't think they need to be preserved when our relationship is different now, and we want them not only to be preserved but to be more dynamic, to be based more firmly on trust.

Obviously, the question arose about the participation of the Soviet Union in international economic organizations, and I must say, for the first time we talked substantially about specific spheres of cooperation in implementing certain projects on the basis of bilateral cooperation. To speak about this briefly, we spoke about cooperating in the field of energy, especially in the area of conversion. We have great possibilities here, and specifically in the sphere in which we are very interested: that is the agricultural sphere, especially food distribution.

In this regard, I transmitted certain materials to the President as in a memoir; the same was done by the Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh -- gave it to the Secretary of State, Mr. Baker, in a memoir about those projects in which we could cooperate fruitfully. This is a very interesting and substantive project. We would want to act in such a way that in implementing these projects -- all of them -- to give a possibility to each other to earn money. In other words, the process goes forward, and there's benefit from it.

But there are spheres of cooperation where movement forward will not give us a chance because of additional production to make these calculations, like in the area of food production, for example. In the food area, here there could be interesting accomplishments, an interesting project, but what we get as the result we need -- we have problems in the food area, very acute ones. But we can't offer this to the United States. They have no interest now in buying food from us. So, we must implement other projects where we could earn hard currency and use this. And I've named such spheres, many such spheres.

- 65 We talked in general about continuing such works. Soon we will have competent groups of specialists, headed by important representatives of business circles, to realize these projects. And thus, I expanded this part, and the other parts will be shorter. For the first time, we discussed very substantially the sphere of bilateral relations, and not only with regard to disarmament, political dialog, and a resolution of world problems but had such a businesslike discussion and I greet this, I welcome it, and I hope that it will have positive consequences.
- 70 Then the President and I thought about the following, and what do we do next? We've signed the treaty and what's next? We've congratulated each other and our peoples and the world with the fact that such great progress has been accomplished as a result of almost a decade of work. And what's next?

And we did not want simply to be pragmatists here. We wanted to look at the problem of security, stability from the point of view of the present-day realities. Or should we simply continue the negotiations which already are taking place? And there are many problems which still need to be discussed. Or should we also look at the world from a somewhat different position from today's heights with the new reality which exists?

And I think that was the main item of our exchange because without understanding each other in this, it's hard to find the keys to resolution of specific issues. We agreed to continue discussion on this issue and even set up the mechanisms which must be implemented in order to do this.

Nevertheless, we also examined very many specific issues of disarmament without our -- we did not leave unattended problems of the Middle East. And I must say, and if the President considers it appropriate, he could name certain things. And if you have questions, we could discuss this. We have worked out a joint document on this. I have in mind our common position with regard to the Middle East. I think that this is a very important result of our joint work, and I think that the fact that this position will be publicly announced will have serious influence on this process. And we consider that it is in a decisive stage and we should not -- and here I want to use what our ministers use -- to have a window of opportunity in order to really achieve progress in this very sensitive area of international politics.

The President and I talked about the situation in Europe in the context of implementing the agreement -- the Helsinki Agreement, the Paris Charter, and especially with regard to the processes taking place in that region, and specifically noted the situation in Yugoslavia, and expressed our position, our understanding, our approach to the resolution of this 90 issue -- a very serious one which worries many of us. Also in a joint statement we expressed this.

I must say that we also moved forward and discussed other things. We tried to also look at many global processes, and in this regard, did not pass by many issues of international politics -- compared our points of view. In some issues we

reserved the opportunity to come back to this. We put off discussing this. In some cases, we required consultations on the U.S. side. In other cases, we needed time to study the issue. But that means that the process will continue. And in this case as well, we noted the necessity of cooperation and interaction in resolving those many international issues which exist and which must be resolved.

The atmosphere was a very warm one -- sincere, frank, open. And today we sense the representatives of the press -- said that the press didn't want to interfere with us somewhere out in a village to talk one-on-one and in an uninhibited manner. We did all of this. This is also important. It's very good.

100 One of the members of the delegation -- I asked the question: How do you feel? -- a very important person. And the answer was: Like at home. And that's the kind of atmosphere which we worked in.

I am satisfied with the fact that political dialog is developing in this way once in this hall. And there are many witnesses here; I want to repeat this -- I talked about this to the President, he knows this as well -- that I am convinced that without what we have today in our relationship, such a character of Soviet-American relations, we could hardly count on everything that has happened in the past year. And we could hardly have interacted in such a way when the world placed before us very serious problems.

If this had been in another time, if we had faced such problems in another time, it would be difficult to say what would have happened. But today we even understand better the value of our cooperation, the fact that this is necessary. So, perhaps this is not a question of a platonic love but a deep understanding of the fact that, as countries and states, we need each other today and tomorrow. And I feel and I know that our peoples welcome this direction of development of our relations between our countries.

And from this point of view, it moves ahead -- far ahead -- our cooperation. And thus, I want to ask the pardon of the President and the press. I am the host and I maybe, misused it, but perhaps I could listen to your comments as well that I'm speaking so much.

115 I understood that you almost agree with everything I have said. [Laughter]

President Bush. What I heard I liked. [Laughter]

Once again, this might be an appropriate time for Barbara and me to thank the President and Mrs. Gorbachev for this fantastic hospitality. And yes, I couldn't agree more about the productive nature of the talks, the enhancement of mutual understanding. This is not diplomatic language, in my view, this is fact.

120 You know my views on the START agreement. Indeed, it's the culmination of a long and historic negotiation. And I happen to believe that the winners on this are the young people, not just in the Soviet Union, not just in the United States but all around the world. And we are taking major steps in transforming our economic relations. President Gorbachev touched on some of this.

But we're going to send up the trade agreement to the U.S. Congress. We're going to grant most-favored-nation status now that the technicalities have been worked out. We have fulfilled thus our Malta goal, Mr. President, of normalizing our economic relationship. We agreed here to tackle the next challenge -- President Gorbachev talked about that -- furthering economic reform in the U.S.S.R., and seeking to integrate the Soviet economy into the international system. We're going forward with space cooperation, cooperation in the environment. And we have several joint projects in mind there.

130 Building on our historic cooperation during the Gulf crisis, we discussed -- the President and I discussed our partnership in resolving longstanding regional problems. As you mentioned, we're putting out statements on Yugoslavia, Central America. And, indeed, I want to comment now just briefly on the Middle East before taking your questions.

We did reaffirm our mutual commitment to promote peace and genuine reconciliation between the Arab States, Israel, and the Palestinians. And we believe there is an historic opportunity right now to launch a process that can lead to a just and enduring peace and to a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. We share the strong conviction that this historic opportunity must not be lost. And while recognizing that peace cannot be imposed, it can only result from direct negotiations between the parties, the United States and the Soviet Union pledge to do their utmost to promote and sustain the peacemaking process.



- And to that end, the United States and the Soviet Union, acting as cosponsors, are going to work to convene an October peace conference designed to launch bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Invitations to the conference will be issued at least 10 days prior to the date the conference is to convene. And in the interim, Secretary Baker and Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh will continue to work with the parties to prepare for this conference. And I am today asking Secretary of State Jim Baker to return to the Middle East to obtain Israel's answer to our proposal for peace.
- 145 And again, my thanks to you, and I'd be prepared to take questions along with you, sir.

## Yugoslavia

Q. One question to Comrade Gorbachev. You said that you talked with Mr. Bush about Yugoslavia. What is the essence of that conversation about Yugoslavia?

And, Mr. Bush, when you received me several years ago in the White House in your capacity at that time as Vice
150 President of the United States of America, you said to me that the relations between our two countries -- there's a
special relationship between Yugoslavia and the United States. Is that definition still valid? And whether the United
States is still supporting Yugoslavian territorial integrity? Thank you.

President Gorbachev. You asked about the essence of the conversation. I will then make use of the fact that I will relate the content of the U.S.-Soviet statement on Yugoslavia. This is the result of our conversation on this subject.

We, both countries, with a deep concern, have noted the dramatic development of events in Yugoslavia. And we have been against the use of force and call upon all sides to abide by the agreements on the cease-fire. We, the Soviet Union and the U.S., proceed from the premise that the resolution of issues must be found by the peoples of Yugoslavia, themselves, on the basis of democratic principles through peaceful negotiations and a constructive approach.

We emphasized the necessity of having all sides respect the basic principles indicated in the Helsinki Act and the Paris Charter. The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. support the efforts undertaken by the CSCE countries -- specifically the European Community steps to resolve the problem. This is the essence of the statement.

President Bush. I would only add, sir, that inasmuch as that was a joint statement, that expresses our continued position as well.

Middle East Peace Talks

165 Q. Mr. President, can I ask you, the fact that you're going ahead with this peace conference, does that mean that you have Israel's acceptance of the outlines of your conditions for a peace conference, or is there still a hangup, or have you got a commitment from Mr. Shamir?

President Bush. Well, I would wait and let Secretary Baker answer that question after this next meeting. And if I had to express a degree of optimism or pessimism, I'd say I'm a little more optimistic today. But the visit of Jim Baker now 170 is for what we said here, to obtain Israel's answer to our proposal for peace. And if I had the answer in my pocket -- or he did -- I'd expect that we would say so.

Soviet-U.S. Relations

Q. I have a question to both Presidents: You discussed many questions of international issues, bilateral issues. You signed a unique agreement today. What did you leave for the next meeting? And can we say when you're planning to have it?

President Gorbachev. I think that what we discussed today and what we have set in motion, both with regard to a political dialog and a continuation of the disarmament process and new subjects in the area of economic cooperation and trade, interaction in the resolution of important issues including regional conflicts, which, unfortunately, still take place, and especially since we have begun a significant discussion about the concept of future strategic stability, that means that we have many issues to discuss and many meetings ahead. So, I think that our contacts will continue.

But I would express myself in favor of the following: Perhaps not always can we go -- and this makes the positions of Presidents very specific -- but it's harder for them than for the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to travel and discuss issues of foreign affairs. But nevertheless, the President and I have developed a method of conversation. We exchange opinions by telephone. As soon as we have a need, concerns, or simply to exchange opinions about something important, we do this by telephone, and this takes place on a regular basis.



And secondly, we regularly exchange letters. And this exchange of opinions has not ceased even in recent days when we have already reached agreement with the President. We were expecting him here. So, we have many channels in order to support this very high level of cooperation which we have. And I think a great role will be given to our Departments -- the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, but other Departments as well because we have new areas of cooperation.

President Bush. I would only add to that, that though no date is set, it is my view -- and I haven't always held this view -- that a meeting without an agenda is a good idea from time to time between the Soviet President and the President of the United States. And with this -- President Gorbachev talked about arms control and regional problems and other problems -- but as this dynamic autonomy begins to move, a chance for a dynamic economy here, there's going to be much more to talk about on the economic side than we've ever had before -- cooperation, partnerships, joint ventures. The whole approach to economics that he has endorsed that is going to benefit, I believe, the Soviet Union, and I think there's enormous potential for the United States.

So, it is my view that we've got plenty to talk about. And I, for one, would be prepared to, as I've stated before, to have a meeting where there's not a crisis out there to be managed; rather we can be sure that we're not two ships passing in the night -- the analogy I used, I believe, in Malta -- appropriately. [Laughter] And I look forward to future meetings because you get a lot done where you can't put out -- sign a 3-point program or a 20-point protocol. But a lot is done just by the kinds of conversations we've had today.

#### Lithuania

Q. President Gorbachev, there was an ugly border incident in Lithuania last night in which a number of Lithuanian border guards were killed. I wonder if we could have your reaction and any explanation you might have of it?

Also, President Bush, any reaction from you, in light particularly of your call yesterday afternoon for freedom for the Baltic States?

President Gorbachev. You know, we received this information when we were talking outside the city. The first information was such that the incident was on the border between Lithuania and Byelorussia, and when one of the citizens of Byelorussia went in the direction of Lithuania and at the customs point where he was approaching, he saw two wounded people and four that died. He quickly related this information, and now the state security agency of Lithuania and Byelorussia -- the chairman of the state committee on security offered also to help in the cooperation. So, now we are investigating this.

I must say that, in addition to regret, we must simply sympathize with the families of the people that died. And I myself must say that we are doing everything in order not only to take actions but also to avoid such excesses, such conflicts on the basis of resolution of basic issues. And we have taken such basic mutual decisions with regard to issues -- concerning Armenia and Azerbaijan there's a dialog. And the faster and more productive the dialog is, the more efforts there are to break it down. Not everyone likes this process that is developed in such a direction. And it's hard for us to say what happened. We heard versions, the President and I, but these are versions. This is not important at any rate. I will be monitoring this, and we will tell you what it was that happened in reality.

Q. I just wanted to get your reaction, sir, to the incident in light of your call yesterday afternoon for freedom for the Baltic States.

President Bush. Well, I don't think there's a connection, but I do regret the violence. I listened to what President Gorbachev said about the discussion. We clearly favor negotiation -- he knows that -- that would lead to a reduction of cross-border violence from both sides. And obviously, I'd like to join in expressing my regrets to those families whose loved ones are lost.

But the President immediately got on this and said they're conducting an investigation. I think there's hope that the investigation will be cooperative between the Lithuanian side and Byelorussia's side. And so, we can't prejudge the incident, but I had an opportunity to express my views to President Gorbachev on the whole question of the Baltic States. I don't think it's fair to link a border incident before you know what happened to that question, however.

### Soviet Economic Integration

Q. Mr. President, how far did you go after London in moving ahead in the integration of the U.S.S.R. into the international economy? Was there progress reached in this area? To both Presidents.



President Gorbachev. Perhaps you can begin.

President Bush. Well, let me say that's a serious objective to start with. Secondly, I believe that active participation in these international financial institutions and the status that was deemed best by the G - 7 is the most important thing that the Soviets can do right now. I have freed up, as you heard today, certain trade benefits or normalizing the trade procedures that, in my view, will help. And we've done that since the meeting in London.

But the answer is, full participation -- full benefit of these international institutions require full knowledge and steps towards the privatization and toward convertability, all the things that I believe the Soviet Union wants.

So, work with the international organizations and then bilaterally do what we've done and other countries will be doing, too, I'm sure, to remove the underbrush, remove the barriers to bilateral economic cooperation. So, quite a bit has happened between us since Paris. And we look forward with our representatives in these international organizations to working very cooperatively with the Soviet leaders.

President Gorbachev. I understand that I'm supposed to comment on this as well since the question was to both Presidents. I will be brief since I have already expressed my opinion about this. London was the beginning of a very important process. This was the meaning of the London meeting, and one must judge about this in that light.

It's very important that after London there's a desire on both parts to work out a mechanism which would permit the shifting of this cooperation, given the political will of the leadership of the Western countries. In the Soviet Union, we think that we should have special structures which would keep tab of the cooperation between the Soviet Union and the G - 7 countries, and first of all, in the area of investment, so the process would be easier in the taking of decisions of mutual interest.

And it's good that the mechanism has started to be implemented, which we discussed in London, and the Minister of Finances of England is already here. We first talked about the fact that there would be visits of the Minister of Finance, the Secretary of the Treasury of the U.S., and the representative of the FRG. So, in other words, there would be the mechanism of implementing specific areas of cooperation. And this is very important that there be a mechanism for real interaction.

And finally, the President mentioned that, on the part of the U.S., an important decision will be taken to make trade between our countries easier. I would say that I mention this in passing, but we often discussed this with the President.

260 I asked, and we agreed, to study the question of COCOM restrictions today because many billion-dollar projects which are ready to go and even signed are not being implemented because of the fact that they have elements that come under COCOM restrictions.

And therefore, a very serious process has started and I think that this will continue and grow stronger, be more specific. It will give results. There is a will and a desire to do this. It's very important.

# 265 Nuclear Weapons

Q. I would ask both of you to think back to the 1986 Reykjavik summit when Ronald Reagan horrified quite a few American nuclear experts and almost all of the European leaders by giving serious consideration to your proposal, President Gorbachev, for a ban on all nuclear weapons. In the end, Reagan said no because of the belief that nuclear deterrence has, in fact, kept the peace. At that time, you had a massive conventional edge in Europe, though. Since then, we've had the CFE treaty. Why now are the two of you not saying we will now work towards a total nuclear ban? Do you still believe in the efficacy of nuclear deterrence in keeping the peace? Particularly, sir, I ask you, President Bush, given the fact that some of these breakaway Republics, they have nuclear weapons in there and who knows what would happen if they declare independence.

President Bush. The very fact that -- I wouldn't suggest that a breakaway Republic is going to use a nuclear weapon against the United States, but I would suggest that we have every reason in the world to be concerned about renegades -- not in these areas, perhaps; I hope not -- getting hold of nuclear weapons. And that's one of the reasons I strongly support our GPALS program that is being debated in the Senate right now.

But in my view, other countries do possess nuclear weapons. It's not just the Soviet Union and the United States. And I do believe that we are on the right path by the path that President Gorbachev has outlined today on following on existing agreements. So, rather than try to have a ethereal or a utopian answer, let's follow through practically, as he suggested. And then as far as the U.S. is concerned, I'd like us to go forward with a system that puts nobody at threat,

nobody at risk. The only thing at risk is an errant nuclear missile aiming at a country. And that's why I support the defensive approach, and that's why I think one of the lessons out of the Iraq war -- and maybe President Gorbachev reads this differently -- is that defenses work. And though we're talking about a different concept now, an expanded concept, a more high-tech concept, I think a lot of lives were saved by defense. So, that's my reply.

President Gorbachev. I will say a few words. I think that the argument which you want to ascribe to me, that in my policy I looked upon nuclear weapons as an element of deterrence, is not true. I have not said this. Yes, we got involved in the arms race in a very serious way. Thank God, as we say in Russian, that we stopped this and turned it back. And this is a great accomplishment since we understood where we were headed.

290 But it's hard to resolve all these issues which have piled up, and all these weapons that have piled up. And I think that there is still a lot that we have to do. We have mapped out a few things for the future, and then there will probably also be questions put to all members of the nuclear club, and they also have to think about what to do with nuclear weapons in the future.

And finally, we must very carefully act about having the mechanism which we have created and which seems has worked -- but apparently not effectively enough -- about nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. This was one of the important topics of our conversation with the President during these days. For if certain countries will lower their arms and disarm and head in the direction of a nonnuclear world, and at the same time, others will find ways to develop the process in order to have their own nuclear weapons, then we will have a situation which is absurd.

So, in continuing to support nuclear disarmament and within the framework of the negotiation process, which we 300 have, we have agreed to continue this. We have the question of truly improving the mechanism of nonproliferation nuclear technology in order -- missile technology -- in order to create an unsurmountable barrier in this area. I think this is one of the most important things we have to do today.

Q. What significance does the process of European integration have in your conversations with the President, for example, the postwar unification of Europe? What image of this is the most acceptable to you from the point of view of the Soviet Union? For example, the image of a General de Gaulle Europe of fatherlands, countries with decisions being made on a national level, or a united states of Europe, with common decision being made among them? Thank you.

# Europe

President Gorbachev. First of all, you can probably guess that everything that happens in Europe -- in the world -- we 100 have always looked towards Europe for everything that happens in Europe, in our areas -- I don't want to list them -- has a great importance for the developments in the world. So, undoubtedly, the President and I noted the positive developments which are taking place in Europe and we noted support of the documents aimed at creating a new Europe. And we see that the Soviet Union and the U.S. must participate very actively in building a new Europe. All of this has existed and continues to exist. And we feel a responsibility to do this.

315 But you asked the question about how. I think perhaps you are a little hasty because when we are creating a certain schematic and then try to impose it, then we get one result. When a process is being developed in a logical way within the Helsinki process, a political process of choice, then we find that new forms of cooperation and new institutes come into being.

Now I would say the following: We must, within the framework of the documents, the general path mapped out in the Helsinki and the Paris agreements, act in such a way that the old institutions be transformed in the interest of a new Europe so that they serve the interest of a single economic territory, a single security of Europe, a legal aspect. And so, this is what we must aim for. That means when the old institutions, when they change, we have to bear this in mind. But apparently, we will also have new institutions which will arise, which will serve this process.

And now if we have, for example, a common energy approach, there will be mechanisms of administering this and will have a great significance in the fate of Europe and the process to realize this. Thus, in going along this path without destroying the old institutions in creating new ones, we probably will find the forms gradually to resolve these issues. But if we declare a specific course, but will keep the old structures, institutions without changing them at all, then again, there can be a process of simply regrouping of forces in Europe. And there can be new confrontations which would come into being with a different distribution of forces.

330 I am not in favor of this, so I would more quickly go through the process of creation of new institutions and would



stimulate those tendencies which would move us towards a united Europe.

I don't think that here we need to have languages vanish; cultures, traditions vanish. I think this would be a mistake if we set ourselves such a goal. I think we should take into consideration those specific characteristics and traditions -- the histories of the people -- but also aim for their unification. I think this is compatible, although we see that there is also an explosion of nationalism, separatism, efforts to unravel everything. This is a dangerous process. I think that if we follow a path of chaotic development of such processes, then we'll get into a bad situation.

So, I am for the transformation of all institutions. I am for new institutions which would act in the interest of unification processes in Europe.

Mr. Fitzwater. We used our allotted time. Thank you very much. (5908 words)

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