

THE SPEECH

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AT THE DINNER  
AT THE GREAT KREMLIN PALACE

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Madame Prime Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Comrades,

In expressing today our words of welcome to you, Mrs.Thatcher, we are welcoming a country with which the Soviet Union, Russia have a long record of relationship and interests. The peoples of our two countries have gained a great deal of useful experience from their 400-year long relationship since the time in the mid-16th century when Moscow and London first exchanged embassies. There were other developments too, including armed conflicts. But we also have on record our common struggle against fascism, a glorious page that will remain forever written into the book of history and that Soviet people will always cherish in their memory.

Today we are living through a new period of time which has raised new problems, concerns, and hopes. The Soviet-British dialogue is an integral and important part of contemporary European and world politics, for it is a dialogue between two great powers each of which has made a significant, irreplaceable contribution to world history. The two countries were among the original founders of the United Nations and are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. All these factors shape their international role and responsibility.

It is from this angle and in a spirit of realism, in an effort to grasp better the thinking of the other side that we approach our current talks.

Your visit to Moscow, Mrs. Thatcher, is taking place in a very exciting, highly critical and, in many respects, crucial period of time, which is bound to leave an imprint on our dialogue with you.

Today, we have spoken at length about the process of reorganization currently under way in our country. In this connection, I would like to repeat that from now on our foreign policy will stem, more than ever before, directly from our domestic policy. What we are saying frankly, loud and clear is that we need durable peace in order to concentrate on the effort to develop our society and to address the problem of improving the living standard of Soviet people.

The West is attempting to find in this frankly stated Soviet position some signs of our weakness. It is being claimed that the Russians are helplessly lagging behind, that their system does not work and that in general socialism as the ultimate goal has proved unattainable. Therefore, now is the time when one can supposedly extract any concessions from the Russians if one puts sufficient pressure on them. But this is a gross delusion.

Today, the Soviet Union is a country built as a result of huge, sweeping socio-economic reforms and transformations that its peoples have carried out over 70 years since the Revolution. True, there were difficulties, at times dramatic difficulties, there were many externally created obstacles. But what is absolutely clear is that through the efforts of its people the country has been built into a world power whose role in international affairs is well known and has been generally recognized. We have placed

Soviet economic potential, political prestige and the ability of our society to make even more powerful strides in our onward movement at the service of universal peace and progress.

On many occasions and in many areas, the socialist system has demonstrated the advantages it has over capitalism. These words are meant to sound not as self-glorification but as a statement of fact.

Its capabilities are far from having been fully tapped and put to use. The process of reorganization is bound to untap fully the potential of socialism, carry out across-the-board streamlining of the Soviet system, reveal its new qualities, and raise the level of material well-being and spiritual development of our people.

At the same time, this process implies an invitation socialism is extending to any other social system to embrace peaceful competition. It also implies something more than just an invitation--the willingness of socialism to participate on an equal footing in developing an appropriate mechanism for that competition, cooperation or even rivalry, if you will, provided it is a peaceful rivalry.

That mechanism should promote greater trust and the atmosphere of peaceful coexistence among States.

Such is one of the basic aspects of new political thinking. The contemporary world is in need of that thinking because without it the age that gave birth to nuclear arms would come to a speedy and spelling disaster to mankind.

It is a matter of concern that to this day some people in the West continue to assert that nuclear deterrence offers the only possible way of preventing war.

It is beyond our understanding how one can heap praise on nuclear arms given the fact that there exist already four tons of explosives per every human being on Earth, including children, and that detonating even an insignificant portion of the accumulated nuclear arsenals would threaten our survival. Neither for political nor for moral reasons can we accept that notion.

I would also like to recall that the Soviet Union has abandoned a first use of nuclear arms and will never use them against those countries that do not have nuclear weapons in their territory. It is our unshakable principle.

I have already had the occasion to speak of the evil inherent in the "nuclear deterrence" ideology and policy. At this point I would like to explain once again our position on this subject.

First, "nuclear deterrence" is not a fail-safe device. Over time, the risk of an unintentional outbreak of a nuclear conflict is bound to increase. In a way, "nuclear deterrence" is a safety fuse attached to an explosive device that is capable of annihilating our civilization.

Second, "deterrence" implies a policy of blackmail and threats; hence, it serves to feed constantly the arms race and mounting tensions.

Third, the logic behind "deterrence" is a logic of arms buildup and improvement, implying subordination of politics to the interests of militarism, with all the ensuing grave consequences for people's well-being and for democracy as such.

The old mentality relying on the force of arms as a means of attaining one's political objectives and on creating an "adversarial image" of other peoples, resulted in two world blood baths. It generated the cold war and also the current extremely dangerous situation, it has led the world to a point of unpredictable consequences.

A new thinking has manifested itself in our unilateral moratorium, the January 15, 1986, programme for a nuclear-free world, the Reykjavik meeting initiative, the Moscow forum "for a nuclear-weapon-free world, for the survival of mankind", and the latest proposal to deal separately with the problem of medium-range missiles in Europe. The basic parameters of an agreement on the subject were discussed in Reykjavik. It would seem that there are no serious obstacles standing in the way of rapid progress. If concluded, an agreement could have a major politico-military significance and introduce a psychological change in the situation. Until now all we have seen was a continuous arms buildup. Concluding an agreement would mark for the first time ever the start of the process of eliminating nuclear weapons.

But let us see now what reaction we are getting in response to our initiative.

What we see is a whole new package of additional conditions and demands being set before the Soviet Union concerning the problem of medium-range missiles. We see the NATO countries gradually slipping away from their own "zero option" position, going as far as to suggest that instead of reducing nuclear arsenals in Europe they should be built up further, and that US operational and tactical missiles should be "added" to those arsenals.

We also hear statements to the effect that the West would take on trust Soviet arms reduction proposals provided the Soviet Union changes its political system and accepts Western society as a model to copy. But this is just not serious.

It would simply be unrealistic to expect us ever to forgo our ideals.

The next few weeks will show whether NATO is indeed prepared to remove a whole class of nuclear weapons from European soil, as something the peoples are waiting for.

Or, perhaps, NATO is once again looking for a best possible way to camouflage its intention to retain and increase the number of Pershing and cruise missiles in Europe, or even to replace them with some more advanced weapon systems.

Against the background of thundering nuclear blasts in Nevada, we have been compelled to discontinue our 18-month long unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosions. But this does not imply that we have given up the idea of finding a solution to that key problem of nuclear disarmament.

The Soviet Union is prepared to resume its moratorium any day or month, as soon as the United States ends its nuclear testing.

I take this opportunity to remind Great Britain that it is one of the participants in the trilateral negotiations on the subject.

We hope that our extensive dialogue with Western countries, our positions and intentions which we frankly state and follow up with practical action, as well as your visit, Madame Prime Minister, our characteristically frank discussions with you will at long last become the subject of serious consideration and elicit reciprocity.

At this moment which is crucial for Europe we turn first and foremost to Great Britain and France, Europe's nuclear powers.

The world of today is witnessing an ongoing fight between reason and insanity, morality and barbarism, life and death. We have clearly and irreversibly defined our stand in that fight, taking the side of reason, morality and life.

Consequently, we stand for disarmament, above all nuclear disarmament, and the establishment of a universal security system. It offers the only possible road, following which mankind may once again attain immortality.

Force should give way to common human values, to equality in relations based on respect for the interests of all peoples and for their right to make an independent choice and to have their own identity.

It must be said that quite a few people in the West just love to talk about the freedom of choice. But what they mean by that is opting in favour of capitalism. When people in a given country, whether in Nicaragua or in Africa, in the Middle East or in Asia, effectively express their desire to look for a different option they believe would be more suitable for them, their search is most likely to be checked immediately by dollar pressure, missiles, or even mercenary action. It all starts with hypocrisy and ends up in bloodshed.

As a result, we are witnessing the seething "volcanoes" of regional conflicts. The "lava of discord" they disgorge is burning and blackening the fabric of the whole of international community. We have proposed that this problem too be addressed from

the angle of new thinking, and that we should be able to take into account the realities of concrete situations, and to see the true causes behind individual conflicts instead of trying in vain to uncover "the hand of Moscow" in every dispute that may emerge.

There may be different approaches to the settlement of disputes. An international conference on the Middle East, the activities of the Contadora Group, the efforts by the UN Secretary-General to end the war between Iran and Iraq, effective economic and political measures to combat the apartheid regime in southern Africa, joint action by the ASEAN and the Indochina countries to help promote the settlement of the problem around Kampuchea, as well as other possible methods and forms could contribute to eliminating the existing seats of conflict.

As far as the Afghan problem is concerned, we stand for its solution through political means, on the basis of ceasing outside interference. A programme of national reconciliation, announced by the Afghan Government, had evoked wide repercussions inside the country and throughout the world. It offers the only correct approach. The Soviet troop contingent came to Afghanistan at the request of its government, and it will be returned home in the framework of a political settlement. A process of national reconciliation and of the settlement of the situation around Afghanistan has already begun and is now in progress. What is essential is not to put spokes in the wheel of that process and to give up all outside interference in the affairs of sovereign Adghanistan which seeks a neutral, non-aligned status and is bound to attain it. We notice, however, that all some forces in the West aspire to is further intensification of the efforts designed to disrupt the process of normalization.

The cause of "humanizing" international relations is served by the continuation of the European process, initiated in Helsinki. The European process is an extraordinary university of political dialogue. It has taught us quite a few lessons of the difficult science of understanding, it teaches us to treat the other side as a partner rather than an enemy.

The document adopted at Stockholm demonstrates that the lesson has sunk in.

But we have to move on. We are patiently waiting for a reply to the Warsaw Treaty member countries' initiative concerning conventional arms and armed forces, and we are prepared to lower significantly the level of military confrontation between the two blocs in the zone extending from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Armaments should be reduced to the level of reasonable sufficiency, that is, to a level required to address exclusively the issue of defense. In our common European home every apartment is entitled to protection against burglars but when installing that protection we must be careful not to disturb our neighbours.

We are prepared to work toward agreement on a reliable and irreversible destruction of all chemical weapons.

In the area of non-nuclear weapons too we expect the West, especially Western Europe, to demonstrate the sense of responsibility and to meet us halfway.

A representative humanitarian forum, which Moscow is prepared to host, could effectively contribute to the European process. What strikes us, however, is that as soon as we proposed that we discuss human rights in a serious and businesslike manner, and compare in

an atmosphere of reciprocal openness the actual conditions of life in our country and in the capitalist countries, the West has seemingly begun to get nervous and is once again seeking to confine the examination of the whole problem to discussing just two or three personal cases, while shying away from looking into all the remaining issues.

We are also prepared to discuss in a humane spirit individual cases, but we are firm in our intention to deal with all these problems openly and publicly so that we can be heard by millions of unemployed and homeless people in the West who live in poverty and who are harrassed by the police and the courts; who see their civil rights and human dignity flagrantly denied to them because of the colour of their skin. We want our voice to be heard by the trade unions which are being denied the right to defend their members, and whose right to existence is thus being challenged. We want our voice to be heard by workers and other labourers who are being denied the chance of taking part in running the plant or factory that employs them and provides their only source of livelihood.

If we are to discuss human rights, let us talk about all human rights, especially those that concern millions of people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Comrades,

Face-to-face meetings offer the best possible way in our search of common ground, in our efforts to narrow down differences on specific issues. What is required to this end is that we should be able not only to talk to each other but also to listen to each other, not only to listen to each other but also to understand each other and to try to puzzle out jointly some of the most complex

problems of the contemporary world. It is in this way that we would like to develop our political dialogue with Great Britain.

The Soviet Union highly values the economic, scientific and technological ties it maintains with Great Britain. The government agencies of our two countries have come thoroughly prepared for the talks they are going to have on this subject, as you will be able to see for yourself tomorrow. But there will be no progress if the British side intends to persist in its reluctance to remove the barriers that are standing in the way and that either exclude from our exchanges the items we find highly attractive, impede the access of Soviet goods to your markets or make your companies' bids non-competitive. In other words, there should be reciprocity and accommodation of each other's interests.

Soviet people respect the commitment of the British people to their traditions. They are aware of the role your country has played in developing world trade and industrial production. They value the skill of your workers and the great contribution by British scientists, artists and writers have made to the spiritual treasure-house of civilization. We understand and share your awareness of your national "roots". A nation neglecting its history calls in question its own future. But it would be equally correct to say that those who fail to ponder over the future are making worthless some of the best things they have had in the past.

Let us approach the problems of today in a way that would enable people living in the 21st century to give due credit to the political thinking the leaders of the USSR and Great Britain displayed in this difficult and crucial period of time.

I express my wishes of good health and well-being to you, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, and to all our British Guests; and I would like to wish to the people of Great Britain peace and success in addressing all their problems.