

Gorbachev Documents

N.B. All of these documents have been edited to make them more accessible. See bibliographic information for full texts.

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(May-November 1989)

“Europe as a Common Home”

Address given by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 6 July 1989)

Excerpts:

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the invitation to make an address here — in one of the epicenters of European politics and of the European Idea. This meeting could, perhaps, be viewed both as evidence of the fact that the pan-European process is a reality and of the fact that it continues to evolve....

The fact that the states of Europe belong to different social systems is a reality. The recognition of this historical fact and respect for the sovereign right of each people to choose their social system at their own discretion are the most important prerequisite for a normal European process. The social and political order in some particular countries did change in the past, and it can change in the future as well. But this is exclusively a matter for the peoples themselves and of their choice.

Any interference in internal affairs, any attempts to limit the sovereignty of states — whether of friends and allies or anybody else — are inadmissible. Differences between states cannot be eliminated. In fact, they are even salutary, as we have said on more than one occasion — provided, of course, that the competition between different types of society is aimed at creating better material and spiritual conditions of life for people.

Thanks to perestroika, the Soviet Union will be in a position to take full part in such an honest, equal and constructive competition. For all our present shortcomings and lagging behind, we know full well the strong points of our social system which follow from its essential characteristics. And, we are confident that we shall be able to make use of them both to the benefit of ourselves and of Europe.

It is time to consign to oblivion the cold war postulates when Europe was viewed as an arena of confrontation divided into “spheres of influence” and someone else’s “forward-based defenses”, as an object of military confrontation — namely a theatre of war.

In today’s interdependent world the geopolitical notions, brought forth by a different epoch, turn out to be just as helpless in real politics as the laws of classical mechanics in the quantum theory. In the meantime, it is precisely on the basis of the outmoded stereotypes that the Soviet Union continues — although less than in the past — to be suspected of hegemonistic designs and of the intention to decouple the United States from Europe.

There are even some people who are not unwilling to put the USSR outside of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals by confining it to the space “from Brest to Brest”. To them, the Soviet Union is ostensibly too big for joint living: the others will not feel very comfortable next to it, or so they say. The realities of today and the prospects for the foreseeable future are obvious: the Soviet Union and the United States are a natural part of the European international and political structure.

Their involvement in its evolution is not only justified, but also historically conditioned. No other approach is acceptable. In fact, it will even be counterproductive.

For centuries Europe has been making an indispensable contribution to world politics, economy, culture and to the development of the entire civilization. Its world historic role is recognized and respected everywhere. Let us not forget, however, that the metastases of colonial slavery spread around the world from Europe. It was here that fascism came into being. It was here that the most destructive wars started. At the same time Europe, which can take a legitimate pride in its accomplishments, is far

from having settled its debts to mankind. It is something that still has to be done. And it should be done by seeking to transform international relations in the spirit of humanism, equality and justice and by setting an example of democracy and social achievements in its own countries.

The Helsinki process has already commenced this important work of world-wide significance. Vienna and Stockholm brought it to fundamentally new frontiers. The documents adopted there are today's optimal expression of the political culture and moral traditions of European peoples. Now it is up to all of us, all the participants in the European process, to make the best possible use of the groundwork laid down through our common efforts. Our idea of a common European home serves the same purpose too. It was born out of our realization of new realities, of our realization of the fact that the linear continuation of the path, along which inter-European relations have developed until the last quarter of the twentieth century, is no longer consonant with these realities.

The idea is linked with our domestic, economic and political perestroika which called for new relations above all in that part of the world to which we, the Soviet Union, belong, and with which we have been tied most closely over the centuries.

We also realized that the colossal burden of armaments and the atmosphere of confrontation did not just obstruct Europe's normal development, but at the same time prevented our country — economically, politically and psychologically — from being integrated into the European process and had a deforming impact on our own development.

These were the motives which impelled us to decide to pursue much more vigorously our European policy which, incidentally, has always been important to us in and of itself. In our recent meetings with European leaders questions were raised about the architecture of our "common home", on how it should be built and even on how it should be "furnished"...

As part of the new thinking, we began with a critical reassessment of our perceptions of the military confrontation in Europe, of the dimensions of the external threat and of the factor of force in strengthening security.

This did not come easy, sometimes it was downright painful. But as a result, decisions were made that have made it possible to break the vicious circle of "action-reaction" in East-West relations.

No doubt, joint Soviet-US efforts in the area of nuclear disarmament played a major starting role in the process. The INF Treaty got something more than just approval from the Europeans. Many contributed to its conclusion. The Vienna talks opened a fundamentally new stage in the arms reduction process. Twenty-three states, rather than just two powers are participating in it. All the thirty-five participants in the CSCE process continue to work out military confidence-building measures. Although the two negotiating processes are going on in different rooms, they are closely interrelated.

There are no "bystanders", nor can there be any, in peace-building in Europe; all are equal partners here, and everyone, including neutral and non-aligned countries, bears his share of responsibility to his people and Europe. The philosophy of the concept of a common European home rules out the probability of an armed clash and the very possibility of the use or threat of force, above all military force, by an alliance against another alliance, inside alliances or wherever it may be. It suggests a doctrine of restraint to replace the doctrine of deterrence. This is not just a play on notions, but a logic of European development imposed by life itself.

Our objectives at the Vienna talks are well-known. We believe — and the US President has also spoken in favor of it — that substantial reductions within two or three years in the level of armaments in Europe can well be achieved, naturally, given the elimination of all asymmetries and imbalances. I

emphasize, all asymmetries and imbalances. No double standards are admissible there. We are convinced that it is high time talks on tactical nuclear systems were initiated among all interested countries. The ultimate objective is to completely eliminate those weapons. Only Europeans who have no intention of waging war against one another are threatened by those weapons. What are they for then and who needs them?

Are nuclear arsenals to be eliminated or retained at all costs? Does the strategy of nuclear deterrence enhance or undermine stability? On all these questions the positions of NATO and the Warsaw Pact appear to be diametrically opposed. We, however, are not dramatizing our differences. We are looking for solutions and invite our partners to join us in this quest.

After all, we see the elimination of nuclear weapons as a stage-by-stage process. Europeans can travel part of the distance separating us from complete destruction of nuclear weapons together, without backing away from their positions — with the USSR remaining faithful to its non-nuclear ideals, and the West to the concept of “minimum deterrence”.

However, there is merit in figuring out what lies behind the concept of “minimum” deterrence and where the limit is, beyond which nuclear retaliation capability is transformed into an attack capability. Here much remains unclear, and ambiguity breeds mistrust. Why shouldn't experts from the USSR, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, as well as from the states who have nuclear weapons on their territories, hold an in-depth discussion of those questions?

If they arrive at some common views, the problem would become simpler at the political level, too. If it becomes clear that NATO countries are ready to join us in negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons, we could, naturally after consulting our allies, carry out without delay further unilateral reductions in our tactical nuclear missiles in Europe. The Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries, notwithstanding the Vienna talks, are already unilaterally reducing their armed forces and armaments in Europe. Their posture and operational structure are changing in line with the defensive doctrine of reasonable sufficiency. That doctrine — both in terms of quantities of armaments and troops and in terms of their deployment, training and all military activities — makes it physically impossible to launch an attack or to conduct large-scale offensive operations.

In any case, as was declared at the USSR Supreme Soviet, we intend, if the situation permits, to cut sharply — by one and a half to two times — the share of our defense expenditure in national income by 1995. We have seriously addressed conversion of the military industry. All CSCE participating countries will come to face this problem one way or another. We are ready to exchange views and share experience. We think that the opportunities offered by the United Nations can also be used and, say, a joint working group can be set up within the Economic Commission for Europe to look into conversion problems.

Facing the European parliamentarians, and consequently the whole of Europe, I should like to say once again a few words about our straightforward and clear-cut positions on disarmament. These positions are the result of the new thinking and they were laid down on behalf of our entire people in the Resolution of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR according to which: we are in favor of a nuclear-free world and in favor of eliminating all nuclear weapons by the turn of the century; we are in favor of complete elimination of chemical arms at the earliest possible date, and we favor the destruction, once and for all, of the production base for the development of such arms; we are in favor of a radical reduction in conventional arms and armed forces down to a level of reasonable defense sufficiency that would rule out the use of military force against other countries for the purposes of attack; we are in favor of complete withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territories of other countries; we are absolutely opposed to the development of any space weapons; we are in favor of dismantling military blocs and launching immediately a political dialogue between them to that end; we are in favor of

creating an atmosphere of trust that would rule out any surprises; we are in favor of a deep, consistent and effective verification of all treaties and agreements that may be concluded with respect to disarmament issues.

I am convinced that it is high time the Europeans brought their policies and their conduct into line with a new common sense — not to prepare for war, not to intimidate one another, not to compete with one another either in improving weapons, or, especially, in attempts to offset the initiated reductions, but rather to learn to make peace together and to lay jointly a solid basis for it. If security is the foundation of a common European home, then all-round co-operation is its bearing frame. What is symbolic about the new situation in Europe and throughout the world in recent years, is an intensive inter-state dialogue, both bilateral and multilateral. The network of agreements, treaties and other accords has become considerably more extensive. Official consultations on various issues have become a rule.

For the first time contacts have been established between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, between the European Community and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), not to mention many political and public organizations in both parts of Europe. We are pleased with the decision of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to grant the Soviet Union the status of a special guest state. We are prepared to co-operate. But we think that we can go further than that.

We could accede to some of the international conventions of the Council of Europe that are open to other states — on the environment, culture, education, television broadcasting. We are prepared to cooperate with the specialized agencies of the Council of Europe. The Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament are situated in Strasbourg. Should our ties be expanded in the future and be put on a regular basis, we would open here, with the French Government's consent, of course, a Consulate General. Interparliamentary ties have major significance for making the European process more dynamic. An important step has already been made: late last year a first meeting of the parliamentary leaders of thirty-five countries was held in Warsaw.

We have duly appreciated the visit to the USSR of the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe headed by its President, Mr. Björck. The delegation could, I hope, feel directly the potent and energetic pulse of the Soviet perestroika. We regard as particularly important the recently initiated contacts with the European Parliament. Inter alia, we took note of its resolutions on military-political issues which are seen by the Parliament as the core of the Western European consensus in the area of security. In this connection I cannot but mention the plans for "the Western European defense". Of course, any state or any group of states have the right to take care of their security in the forms they consider most appropriate. It is important, though, that these forms are not in contradiction with the prevailing positive trends, that is, the trend towards a military détente, that they do not lead to the reappearance of confrontational tendencies in European politics and hence to a renewed arms race....

I think that the distinguished audience will agree that in our age segregating economic ties from scientific and technological ties is something less than normal. Yet, East-West relations have of late been bled white by COCOM. If one could justify such practices at the peak of the cold war, today many restrictions seem utterly ridiculous. Of course, we, too, are often excessively closed. However, we have begun to straighten this out. We have started to take down our "domestic COCOM" — the wall separating military and civilian production — in particular, in connection with conversion. So maybe experts and representatives of the respective governments could get together and break all these cold war log-jams,

bring secrecy down to reasonable limits which are indeed required for security, and give the green light to the normal two-way flow of scientific knowledge and technical art?

Ladies and gentlemen, Europeans can meet the challenges of the coming century only by pooling their efforts. We are convinced that what they need is one Europe — peaceful and democratic, a Europe that maintains all its diversity and common humanistic ideas, a prosperous Europe that extends its hand to the rest of the world. A Europe that confidently advances into the future.

It is in such a Europe that we visualize our own future. Perestroika, which seeks to radically renew Soviet society, determines our policy aimed at the development of Europe precisely in that direction. Perestroika is changing our country, advancing it to new horizons. That process will continue, extend and transform Soviet society in all dimensions: economic, social, political and spiritual, in all domestic affairs and human relations.

We have firmly and irreversibly embarked on that road. This was confirmed by the resolution passed by the Congress of People's Deputies on the "Basic guidelines of domestic and foreign policies of the USSR". That document confirmed in the name of the people our choice, our path of perestroika. I commend this resolution to your attention. It has a fundamental and revolutionary significance for the destinies of the country to which you yourselves refer as a superpower. As a result of its implementation, you and your governments, your parliaments and peoples will soon be dealing with a socialist nation totally different from what it has been up to now.

And this will have and cannot but have a favorable impact on the entire world process.

I thank you.

Soviet Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Egon Krenz

The new Secretary General of East Germany, Egon Krenz, traveled to Moscow on November 1, 1989 to meet in person with Gorbachev and assess the situation in East Germany and discuss possible paths forward. Throughout the lengthy meeting, Krenz and Gorbachev spoke openly about the challenges that now faced the GDR. Gorbachev, for the most part, remained hopeful that the new GDR leadership could instigate the necessary reforms that would save the GDR from complete collapse. Here, it is quite interesting to note just how steadfast Gorbachev remained in 1989 to the ideals of socialism and the necessity to defend those ideals against the magnetic appeal of capitalism. Also interesting is the personal nature of Gorbachev's observations about leaders in the East and West.

Egon Krenz was also straightforward in his assessment of the situation in the GDR. Like Gorbachev, Krenz remained optimistic that the GDR could withstand the hardships brought about by reform and emerge from the crisis in a better position. One might note that the German notes from this meeting are far longer and richer in detail than the Soviet notes and that these notes focus more on Gorbachev than Krenz.

Source: Mikhail Gorbachev, conversation with Egon Krenz, 1 November 1989, trans. Svetlana Savranskaya, Notes of A. S. Chernyaev, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Cold War International History Project, *Documents and Papers*, [CWIHP](http://cwihp.org) (accessed May 14, 2008).

Primary Source—Excerpt

Gorbachev: The Soviet people are very interested in everything that is going on now in the GDR. We hope to get the most recent information from you, although, of course, we know a lot. The situation in the GDR, judging by everything we see, is moving at an increasing speed. Is there a danger of getting left behind the reforms? Remember, we said in Berlin [2] that to be behind is always to lose. We know that from our own experience.

Krenz: We have already taken a number of steps. First of all, we gave orders to the border troops not to use weapons at the border, except in the cases of direct attacks on the soldiers. Secondly, we adopted a draft of Law on Foreign Travel at the Politburo. [3] We will present it for a public discussion, and we plan to pass it in the Volkskammer even before Christmas. [...]

Gorbachev: Kohl was visibly worried when I mentioned the perverse interpretation of some of our agreements with the FRG in my 8 October speech in Berlin. He immediately gave me a telephone call regarding that.

Krenz: Yes, he is worried; I noticed it in my conversation with him. He was even forgetting to finish phrases.

Gorbachev: Kohl, it seems, is not a big intellectual, but he enjoys certain popularity in his country, especially among the petit-bourgeois public.

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May 02, 1989
Excerpt from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev

Citation:

"Excerpt from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev," May 02, 1989, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Published in Anatoly Chernyaev, 1991: The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR (Moscow: TERRA, 1997)
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113035>

Summary:

Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary expressing worry at Gorbachev's lack of conception of the direction in which the Soviet Union is moving

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

- English Translation

Inside me, depression and alarm are growing, the sense of crisis of the Gorbachevian idea. He is prepared to go far. But what does it mean? His favorite catchword is “unpredictability.” And most likely we will come to a collapse of the state and something like chaos. He feels that he is losing the levers of power irreversibly, and this realization prevents him from “going far.” For this reason he holds to conventional methods but acts with “velvet gloves.” He has no concept of where we are going. His declaration about socialist values, the ideals of October, as he begins to tick them off, sound like irony to the cognoscenti. Behind them—emptiness.

[Source: Published in Anatoly Chernyaev, 1991: *The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR* (Moscow: TERRA, 1997). Translated by Vladislav Zubok (National Security Archive).]

**Excerpt From the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev
on German Reunification**

M.S. [Gorbachev] is flying to the GDR [to celebrate] its 40th anniversary. He is very reluctant. Called me two times. Today [he called and said]: I polished the text (of the speech) to the last letter—you know, they will scrutinize it under a microscope... I will not say a word in support of [East German leader Erich] Honecker. But I will support the Republic and the Revolution. Today in Dresden—20,000 demonstrate. Yesterday there was a demonstration in Leipzig. Information is coming in that in the presence of Gorbachev people will storm the Wall. Awful scenes when a special train [with East German refugees] passed from Prague to the GDR via Dresden. West German television shot everything and now is broadcasting this all over the GDR. All Western media are full of articles about German reunification. Tomorrow the congress of the H[ungarian] S[ocialist] W[orkers'] P[arty] will announce the self-liquidation of "socialist PRH" [People's Republic of Hungary]. Not to mention Poland: the P[olish] U[nited] W[orkers'] P[arty] not only lost power—it will hardly survive till its next congress in February. In a word, the total dismantling of socialism as a world phenomenon has been proceeding... Perhaps it is inevitable and good... For this is a reunification of mankind on the basis of common sense. And a common fellow from Stavropol [Gorbachev] set this process in motion.

Source: Anatoly Chernyaev, diary entry, 5 October 1989, trans. Vladislav Zubok, Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Cold War International History Project, *Documents and Papers*, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.home (accessed July 8, 2008).



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October 28, 1988
Excerpt from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev

Citation:

"Excerpt from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev," October 28, 1988, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Anatoly Chernyaev, 1991: The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112476>

Summary:

Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary discussing a meeting between Kohl and Gorbachev and praising Gorbachev's boldness for declaring a 'new thinking' and creating reforms

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

- English Translation

Kohl met one-on-one with Gorbachev (plus me and Horst Teltschik, assistant to the Chancellor). And when I saw this striving at the highest level to speak as one human being to another human being (mutually), I felt physically that we were entering a new world, where class struggle, ideology, and, in general, polarity and enmity are no longer decisive. And something all-human is taking the upper hand. And then I came to realize how brave and farsighted M.S [Gorbachev] is. He declared a "new thinking" "without any theoretical preparation" and began to act according to common sense. His ideas are: freedom of choice, mutual respect of each other's values, balance of interest, renunciation of force in politics, all-European house, liquidation of nuclear armaments etc. All this, each by itself, is not original or new. What is new is that a person—who came out of Soviet Marxism-Leninism, Soviet society conditioned from top to bottom by Stalinism— began to carry out these ideas with all earnestness and sincerity when he became the head of state. No wonder that the world is stunned and full of admiration. And our public still cannot appreciate that he has already transferred all of them from one state to another...

[Source: Anatoly Chernyaev, 1991: The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR (Moscow: TERRA, 1997). Translated from Russian by Vladislav Zubok (National Security Archive).]



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November 10, 1989 Excerpt from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev

Citation:

"Excerpt from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev," November 10, 1989, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev, the Gorbachev Foundation Archive, f. 2, op. 2. Translated by Vladislav Zubok (National Security Archive).
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111535>

Summary:

Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's diary following the fall of the Berlin Wall, praising Gorbachev's vision

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

- English Translation

The Berlin Wall has collapsed. This entire era in the history of the Socialist system is over. Following the [Polish United Socialist Party] PUWP and the [Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party] HSWP Honecker has left. Today we received messages about the "retirement" of [Chinese Communist Party leader] Deng Xiaopeng and [Bulgarian leader Todor] Zhivkov. Only our "best friends" [Cuban leader Fidel] Castro, [Romanian leader Nicolae] Ceausescu, [and North Korean leader] Kim Il Sung are still around— people who hate our guts.

But the main thing is the GDR, the Berlin Wall. For it has to do not only with "socialism" but with the shift in the world balance of forces. This is the end of Yalta...of the Stalinist legacy and the "defeat of Hitlerite Germany."

That is what Gorbachev has done. And he has indeed turned out to be a great leader. He has sensed the pace of history and helped history to find a natural channel.

A meeting with Bush is approaching. Will we witness a historic conversation? There are two main ideas in the instructions M.S. gave me to prepare materials: the role of two superpowers in leading the world to a civilized state and the balance of interests. But Bush might disregard our arguments... We do not really have anything to show except for the fear that we could return to totalitarianism.