Record of Main Content of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and H. Kissinger. January 17, 1989.

Kissinger. In practical terms, as I understand, you implied to George Bush in your conversation on Governor's Island that you would like to establish a channel for a confidential exchange of ideas. He understands that on your end Anatoly Dobrynin would serve as the contact.

Gorbachev. Yes, that's correct.

Kissinger. President Bush is very interested in this method of communication. We have not worked out a specific mechanism yet, but it is clear that [Brent] Scowcroft will be an important figure on the President's side in such a dialogue.

We are ready to begin at any time convenient for you. In the end of February the President will visit Japan with a short stop in China. Maybe the beginning of March could be a convenient moment? It would be a good opportunity if Anatoly Dobrynin could be in the United States at the time, or maybe some other way.

This confidential channel could be used without any harm to our dialogue through all other existing channels. It will give us an opportunity to open up somewhat the course of our internal discussions of certain problems for you, so that when we introduce a proposal, you would know what ideas and goals are behind it.

George Bush would appreciate an opportunity to receive similar information from you.

[...]

Gorbachev. Of course, the problem of coordinating our economies, the search of forms of cooperation--is a very real problem, and both sides should think about it. However, already today, the steps we took in our foreign economic policy--the creation of legal and economic bases, strengthening guarantees for our foreign partners--should be supported on your side by a repeal of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. If you do not sweep it away with a broom, it would be difficult for us to enter your markets.

Kissinger. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment was directed against me in the first place, and only then--against the Soviet Union.

I agree with you. I always thought it was wrong, I believed that your emigration policy was your country's internal affair. One cannot make external demands about it. One could, probably, discuss it with you confidentially, but without pressing any demands.

Gorbachev. Those problems are now substantively resolved.

Kissinger.. Yes.

Gorbachev. We only fight against the brain drain. As far as the dissidents are concerned, let them all go to your country.

Kissinger. I always believed that dissidents are very difficult to deal with even for those countries that receive them.

[...]

Gorbachev. We are waiting for a signal from the administration.

Kissinger. You will hear positive statements from the President from the very beginning of his term. An exchange of opinions, on which we agreed, could begin in the first days of March, if it is convenient for you. Our people are ready.

I already told Anatoly Dobrynin, that I considered the first part of your UN speech exceptionally important. We should discuss how to implement those propositions in solving concrete problems. If we could do that, we would be able to harmonize our policy and to improve our bilateral cooperation.

As far as the mechanism of such communication, Anatoly Dobrynin already has Scowcroft's direct personal number, and on my part, I could help establish initial contact, so that it doesn't have to go through the apparatus.

Gorbachev. I would also like you to tell President Bush that I appreciate his letter, and the fact that he sent it at such an early stage, even before his inauguration. We assign special importance to contacts and to confidential exchange of opinions.

Please give my regards to President Bush, and tell him that he can count not only on understanding, but also on cooperation on my part. I think that in the context of this conversation, which I would also ask you to pass on to him, it would be clear to him what meaning I am putting in these words