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PERSPECTIVE

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[The following is a transcript of a Politburo meeting of August 29, 1985. The text originally was published in *Rossiiskie vesti*, October 3, 1992, p. 3, under the heading, "Secrets of the Politburo."]

Top Secret

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Transcript (working record) of session of the CPSU TsK Politburo, August 29, 1985.

In the chair: Comrade M.S. Gorbachev

Present: Comrades G.A. Aliev, V.I. Vorotnikov, N.I. Ryzhkov, V.M. Chebrikov, E.A. Shevardnadze, P.N. Demichev, V.I. Dolgikh, V.V. Kuznetsov, S.L. Sokolov, B.N. Yel'tsin, L.N. Zaikov, M.V. Zimyanin, I.V. Kapitonov, V. P. Nikonov

Gorbachev: Now a few words on a different subject. At the end of July I received a letter from the famous [Andrei] Sakharov. He requested that authorization be given for his wife [Yelena] Bonner to travel abroad for medical treatment and [to] see relatives.

Chebrikov: This is an old story. It's been going on for 20 years. Over this period different situations arose at various times. The appropriate measures were taken with respect to Sakharov himself as well as Bonner. But during all these years no actions were committed that were in violation of the law. This is a very important aspect that needs to be stressed.

Sakharov is now 65 years old, and Bonner is 63. Sakharov is not exactly in the best of health. Right now he is undergoing tests for a possible cancer condition, since he's started to lose weight.

As far as Sakharov is concerned, he's virtually lost all significance as a political figure and recently he's been saying nothing new. Possibly we ought to let Bonner go abroad for three months. According to the law in force, it is possible to interrupt a term of exile for a specific period of time--and Bonner, of course, is in exile. Naturally, once she's in the West, she may make statements, or be given an award, and so on. It's also not excluded that since she's going to be in Italy for medical treatment she may go from there to the U.S. If Bonner were given authorization to travel abroad it would look like a humane step.

In the future, she may behave in one of two different ways. One--she goes back to Gor'ky. Two--she remains abroad and starts to raise the issue of reuniting her family, i.e., Sakharov's being authorized to emigrate. In the latter case, the result may be that government figures in Western countries make appeals, some representatives of communist parties may do so too. But we can't let Sakharov go abroad. The Medium Machine Building Ministry [responsible for nuclear programs] is opposed to this--it's against it since Sakharov has a detailed knowledge of the entire development of our nuclear weapons.

The experts believe that if Sakharov were given a laboratory, he would be able to continue his military research. Sakharov's behavior reflects Bonner's influence.

Gorbachev: There's Zionism for you.

Chebrikov: Bonner has a 100 percent influence on him. We are relying on the fact that without her his behavior may change. He has two daughters and a son from his first marriage. They are behaving well and they may have a definite influence on their father.

Gorbachev: Couldn't we arrange for Sakharov to write a letter saying that he understands that he cannot go abroad? Can't we get a statement to this effect from him?

Chebrikov: It seems to me that we need to decide this question right now. If we make a decision either just before or else following your meetings with Mitterand and Reagan, it will be interpreted as a concession on our part, which would be undesirable.

Gorbachev: Yes, we need to make a decision.

Zimyanin: There's no doubt that Bonner will be used against us in the West. But a rebuff to her attempts to cite the issue of reuniting her family can be given by means of our scientists, who could make appropriate statements. Comrade Slavsky is right--we can't let Sakharov go abroad, while we can't expect any decency on Bonner's part. She's a wild animal in a skirt (*zveryuga v yubke*), an imperialist stooge.

Gorbachev: What is going to involve greater cost--authorizing Bonner to go abroad, or not permitting it?

Shevardnadze: Of course, there are serious doubts about authorizing Bonner to go abroad. Nonetheless we would profit from it politically. We need to make a decision right now.

Dolgikh: Can't we exercise influence on Sakharov?

Ryzhkov: I am in favor of letting Bonner go abroad. It would be a humanitarian step to take. If she remains over there, naturally there'll be a lot of publicity (*shum*). But at the same time we would also be able to influence Sakharov. After all, at the moment he's taking refuge in the hospital in order to feel freer.

Sokolov (USSR Defense Minister): I think it's an action we should take--it won't make things worse.

Kuznetsov: It's a complicated case. If we don't authorize Bonner to go for treatment, it may be used for propaganda against us.

Aliev: It's difficult to give an unambiguous answer to this question. At the moment Bonner is under supervision. [During the] last few years, she's become even more embittered. When she gets to the West she'll give vent to it all. Bourgeois propaganda will have a suitable figure for holding all sorts of press conferences and other anti-Soviet actions. The situation will become more complicated if Sakharov raises the issue of going abroad to join his wife. So there's an element of risk. But let's risk it.

Demichev: I'm thinking above all of the meetings Comrade M.S. Gorbachev will be having with Mitterand and Reagan. If we let Bonner go abroad before they take place, a major anti-Soviet campaign will be organized. So probably it would be better to do it after these official visits.

Kapitonov: If we let Bonner out, the business will drag on for quite a while. She'll raise the issue of reuniting her family.

Gorbachev: Perhaps we'll take the following action. We'll acknowledge receipt of the letter [from Sakharov], say that it has been reviewed and follow-up instructions have been given. We should indicate that we may be forthcoming with respect to the request for Bonner to be allowed to go abroad, but everything will depend on how Sakharov himself behaves, and also on what Bonner does while she's abroad. For the time being it makes sense to limit ourselves to this.

[Facsimile signature of A. Luk'yanov]

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