



Interview With Aleksey Venediktov of Ekho Moskvly Radio

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Moscow, Russia

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(11:20 a.m. Local)

QUESTION: (in Russian) 11:12, good morning. Today, our guest is U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Rice. You brought snow to this country. Is this a sign of cooling in the relations?

SECRETARY RICE: Nyet. I think that the relations between the United States and Russia are, indeed, very warm, unlike the weather. And the very good thing is that we have developed, over the years, the ability to talk to each other about everything and anything. We are able to talk about the most difficult subjects in a spirit of respect and cooperation, and this is very good for the relationship.



QUESTION: (in Russian) Do you think, Dr. Rice, that yesterday's dinner with the Minister of Defense was a success?

SECRETARY RICE: It was a very good dinner with Minister Ivanov. We have had a very good and long relationship. I believe that our military-to-military cooperation is perhaps the best that it has ever been. We have had joint exercises with the Russian military, something that I think would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. We have had excellent opportunities to share our burdens, for instance, in working together in the Tsunami relief. We have a very effective and, active now, NATO-Russia Council. So the military-to-military cooperation is really very good and the Minister and I did talk about the need to continue and deepen our cooperation on nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a very dangerous set of developments if these technologies get into the hands of terrorists.

QUESTION: (in Russian) In this connection with Russia, there is the opinion that after the meeting of President Bush and Putin in Bratislava that the United States wants to introduce control into the territory of Russia over Russian nuclear storage facilities to carry out inspections and they believe this is an infringement on our sovereignty. What response do you give?

SECRETARY RICE: Some of our most important work is the work that, for both of us, needs to be concerned about the control and verification of -- I would call it dismantling the legacy of the Cold War arsenals. We have a very good set of programs under the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. We do not consider, in any way, the inspections that need to take place, issues of sovereignty. These are issues of cooperation, because we all need to be concerned about what happens as we dismantle the old nuclear weapons arsenals. No one wants the materials or the weapons to fall into the hands of bad people. Both the United States and Russia have a history, a very unfortunate history with terrorism. We know what it would be like if the terrorists had, somehow, access to these weapons. And so, our goal is to cooperate together in a spirit of friendship and working on a very difficult but important problem.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Have you received a satisfactory answer from Mr. Ivanov? Did he agree to the plans?

SECRETARY RICE: We have, I think, made improvements in our access to these sites. We have work to do still. We have work to do on certain liability issues. And I do hope that at the time of the meeting of President Bush and President Putin, we could have even made more progress on these matters.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Why did the United States -- our listeners are asking, I have so many questions through the internet that I'm confused already -- why there is such interest towards Russian storage facilities? Why the same question is not raised, vis-à-vis storage facilities in India and Pakistan?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the United States and Russia are both major powers in international politics and we have concerns about all issues of international politics. Russia has very good relations with India. We have very good relations with India and with Pakistan. We are concerned about both their relationship and that it gets better. We are concerned about control of materials, nonproliferation issues with India and Pakistan. I had good discussions with Defense Minister Ivanov about India and Pakistan.

One thing that I would like the Russian people to understand is that Pakistan has come a long way as a country in the difficulties of trying to root out extremism. After the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan has had problems with terrorism being carried out from its territory into Afghanistan. And so, this is difficult. But I would hope that the Russian people would understand how much progress Pakistan has made.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Through the internet, we got a question from our listener -- and an interesting one, I believe. What do you think -- how many years can yet another country can appear which -- from the point of view of the United States...

SECRETARY RICE: Have the right to.

QUESTION: (in Russian) ...have the right to obtain nuclear weapons, right that you would recognize to possess nuclear weapons? How that might be...

SECRETARY RICE: I don't think so. (Laughter.) Look, this is a long process. Why don't we concentrate on what can be done here? And I think we and Russia have worked very well on these issues, but I don't think so within several years, no.

QUESTION: (in Russian) It is known that there are countries that either possess nuclear weapons already or have a potential, a great potential for that: India, Brazil, Israel, Pakistan. And maybe neither Russia nor the United States can hold this process. Maybe nonproliferation doesn't work at all, it's just impossible.

SECRETARY RICE: I know that the potential for nuclear weapons development exists in a lot of places. You have named some of them. We and Russia are both parties to the nonproliferation regime, which is a very good thing. And I think we are beginning to carry out our obligations under the

nonproliferation regime to try to reduce the levels of nuclear weapons that we, the United States and Russia, have. I would remind people -- it's sometimes now forgotten -- the Moscow Treaty cut American and Russian nuclear weapons quite substantially and we are now carrying that process out through 2012.

What we must do is to convince others that nuclear weapons are not necessary. I think we are working together rather well in some of these matters. I don't worry, for instance, that Brazil will seek a nuclear weapon; Brazil is seeking civilian nuclear power. In fact, we are probably going to have to find ways for countries to seek civilian nuclear power while making sure that they are not trying to build nuclear weapons.

QUESTION: (In Russian) Brazil, yes. Iran, no.

SECRETARY RICE: That's right. Because Iran has been hiding its activities. The Iranians say they want civilian nuclear power. They say that this is about peaceful uses of nuclear power. But then we learn that there are undeclared activities at the reactor at Natanz. We learn that the Iranians have been probably involved in activities with A.Q. Khan, who was carrying out this black market activity. And it does not inspire confidence in the international system about the Iranians.

On the other hand, countries like South Africa, Brazil -- South Africa having actually given up nuclear weapons at one point -- there is no reason that they should not have access to civilian nuclear energy.

Now, one of the problems is that as long as you have enrichment and reprocessing capability, there is the possibility of building nuclear weapons. And the President made a proposal at the National Defense University that there would be no reprocessing and enrichment capability, but that countries would have a reliable fuel supply for their civilian nuclear reactors. This is in some ways what Russia has done with Iran at Bushehr. So, there are ways to deal with this problem.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Did I understand you correctly that the United States and you personally agree what is now in Iran, in terms of a nuclear weapons program?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we made clear our views about the Iranian program. I think we have good cooperation with Russia on Iran right now and with the EU-3. Our concern -- this is not against Iran. This is because Iran is a country that is not living up to its international obligations -- that is the point. And we and Russia are working together.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Are you satisfied with what the Russian government is doing in Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: We think that what the Russians have done with Bushehr is helpful from a proliferation point of view.

QUESTION: (in Russian) I would like to remind you, live, Dr. Condoleezza Rice -- I think we are talking about weapons of mass destruction. It is known that the United States had not discovered weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Was it a mistake?

SECRETARY RICE: Obviously, there were problems with the intelligence concerning weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But the Iraqi regime retained the capability to make weapons of mass destruction. We know that Iraq had used weapons of mass destruction on its own people and on its neighbors. We know that Saddam Hussein was never going to give up his ambitions to have weapons of mass destruction. And so it's a question of when, not whether, Iraq was going to have weapons of mass destruction again.

I would also remind people that we had misestimated or had underestimated the Iraqi arsenal in 1991. They were much further along than we thought in 1991. But the point is -- and if I could use the question to move to a future issue -- this is really now about building an Iraq that is stable and democratic, that can be a force for peace and democracy in the Middle East.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Together with Russia or against Russia?

SECRETARY RICE: Nothing has to be a zero-sum game, here. It's not against Russia, no. Not against Russia, but together with Russia we should build -- (a word in Russian) -- we should build an Iraq that is a stable force in the Middle East. That is what we should do.

I know that Russia disagreed with our decision to bring down the regime of Saddam Hussein. President Putin was always extremely clear with President Bush that he disagreed with that decision. But now that it is done, now that there is a new government in Iraq, we should do everything that we can to support it, and we very much want to do it with Russia.

QUESTION: (in Russian) One more question on Iraq. Our listener, Sergei: every year more people die in Iraq than under Saddam and the concealed conflicts have surfaced. Wasn't it a mistake to remove Saddam?

SECRETARY RICE: Of course not; it was not a mistake to remove Saddam. Saddam Hussein was one of the most brutal dictators of modern times. This is a man who had rape rooms, who tortured people. He used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against his neighbors, chemical weapons.

You know, if you go to Halabja in Iraq, you will see the effects of the chemical weapons that he used on these people, where the incidence of cancer is very high, where people still have burns on their skin from the chemical weapons that he used.

Saddam Hussein invaded his neighbors twice. He refused to live up to the obligations that he undertook to the international community. You know, I would remind that Russia was a party to the resolution in 1991 that told Saddam Hussein to get out of Kuwait and then party to a series of resolutions that had demands on Saddam Hussein. So, it was a very important positive step for Saddam Hussein to be removed.

QUESTION: (in Russian) I would like to remind you we have Dr. Condoleezza Rice, live. Another question from our listeners through internet is: What is better -- to export democracy or to export socialist revolution? Do you know that in the beginning of last century, there was a concept of revolution exported by the Soviet Union and now the United States is the professes the export of democracy.

SECRETARY RICE: No. Because there is an important difference here, important difference historically and in practicality. You do not actually have to export democracy. People feel themselves that they want to have the freedoms that come from democratic development.

If you ask people: do you want to say what you think, do you want to worship as you please, do you want to educate your girls and your boys freely, do you want to be free from the knock of the secret police at night, people will always say, yes, that is the case. And so, you don't have to export democracy or impose democracy; you have to give people an opportunity to express themselves freely and they will choose democracy. And so, I think it's somewhat different than the old terminology about the export of socialist revolution.

QUESTION: (in Russian) But then what is the role of the United States in these processes that we witness under post-Soviet states? I mean, Georgia, Kirghizia and Ukraine -- the colored revolutions -- the role of the United States was there.

SECRETARY RICE: The role of the United States has been only to speak out for the fact that it is right that people have control of their own futures, that it is right that democracy develop around the world. In many places, the United States and others, like the European Union, have supported the development of civil society, of nongovernmental institutions. This has been true in Georgia, it's been true in Ukraine, it was true in Kyrgyzstan. But the people of these countries are taking steps toward freedom. This is a good thing. And I would hope that the Russian people would understand that the United States has no desire to see Russian influence in these areas diminished.

In fact, we see this as not a zero-sum game, but one in which everybody has much to gain, when there are prosperous, democratic countries in the area of the neighboring states around Russia. So, it is not a zero-sum game.

QUESTION: (in Russian) And there is a point of view that Ukraine and Georgia -- now Azerbaijan -- where you open military bases for some reason, are becoming a zone of confrontation of Russian and U.S. interests. The U.S. has come to the area where previously, the Soviet Union, Russia -- Russian empire -- had interests, and this is received as a challenge here.

SECRETARY RICE: I would like to distinguish between what I see as a 19th century view of this area and a 21st century view of this area. We know the long ties of history and culture and economic relations and political relations from the Soviet period and from before, as you said, going well back into the Russian Empire. But the modern way of states dealing with one another is on the basis of mutually beneficial ties, whether it is mutually beneficial trade ties, mutually beneficial economic ties, mutually beneficial political ties.

There is no reason for Russian influence in these areas to be less if it is based on transparent economic, trade, political ties. And, again, we do not see the United States as somehow supplanting Russian influence. The way that you described it, the way that people describe it it was once a zone of Russian influence. Now, is the United States trying to make it a zone of American influence? No. It should be a zone of freedom and economic development and trade relations for those countries. And the United States and Russia should have good relations with those countries. And I would just say that, given the geographic proximity of Russia to these countries, of course those ties will be very close with Russia.

QUESTION: (in Russian) I would like to remind you that we have Dr. Condoleezza Rice live. In three minutes, we are going to ask our listeners, are the United States rather a strategic ally of Russia or a strategic opponent? You will see the results on the screen.

Recently, the Chief of the Kremlin Administration, Mr. Medvedev, published an article where he said that there was a threat of territorial disintegration against Russia into a few smaller states.

SECRETARY RICE: I very well know Mr. Medvedev. We have talked on a number of occasions.

But could I go back to the broader question here, which you began to ask? How do we see development of U.S.-Russian relations? Is Russia a strategic partner? Russia is not a strategic enemy or we are not against Russia. It is a country with which we have developed excellent relations over a very long period of time now, really going back to the period of perestroika and the Soviet Union and continuing. And I think that President Bush and President Putin have gained a respect for each other and that they work very well together.

So we see Russia as a strategic partner moving forward. We see Russia as a strategic partner in the war on terrorism. We see Russia as a strategic partner in stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We see Russia as a strategic partner in solving regional issues, like the Balkans or the Middle East.

When I meet my colleague, Sergei Lavrov, I will talk with him about the prospects for peace between Israel and the Palestinians because we are both members of the Quartet, which is playing a very important role in that.

Now, when we get to internal affairs in Russia and the nature of the state, the nature of the apparatus in the Kremlin, the nature of relations in the Kremlin, we understand that Russia is finding its own way and we respect that. All that we are saying is that for U.S.-Russian relationships to really deepen, and for Russia to gain its full potential, there needs to be democratic development. There should not be so much concentration of power just in the presidency. There needs to be an independent media. It's wonderful to be on Ekho Moskvy. There needs to be more independent media outlets in Russia so that people can debate and decide together the democratic future of Russia.

QUESTION: (in Russian) I would like to address our listeners to come to the phones. We are going to vote and then the Secretary of State will comment on the results.

SECRETARY RICE: Twenty-second break? (In Russian.)

QUESTION: So, we're asking the question, do you believe that the United States is rather a strategic ally? Then you call 9958221, or strategic opponent or foe? Then the other telephone number. The voting has begun.

SECRETARY RICE: Nyet, nyet. I don't have five; I only have two.

QUESTION: (in Russian) The voting has begun. I want to ask you the following question, since we have very limited time: more than 100 people have voted already, but the Secretary wants to see the results. So, strategic ally or a strategic adversary? Three-hundred people. The result will be interesting. Are you afraid of the orange revolution in Russia?

SECRETARY RICE: I believe that Russia is a stable country, that it is a country that has the possibility of developing democratic processes and institutions in which people can express their aspirations and their views. It is not necessary to think of it as revolution, it's not necessary to think of it as anything to fear. It is important to recognize that Russia has been through a lot. I know that.

I know that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a very difficult time. I know, too, that the Russian people are still making adjustments to all of the new things that are happening around them, the market, the tremendous economic development. I know that there are hard tasks to be done outside of Moscow and outside of St. Petersburg.

So, I hope that the Russian people would know that America recognizes how much upheaval there has been in this country in the last several years. What we respect is the spirit of the Russian people, the entrepreneurial possibility of the Russian people, that this great culture and this great country has a very great future ahead of it. So we don't fear -- and I hope no one fears -- the future for Russia. I think the future for Russia can be very bright.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Thirty seconds, (inaudible). Why America attaches so much importance to the Yukos (inaudible)?

SECRETARY RICE: Everyone will be watching to see what the Yukos case says about the rule of law in Russia. It did raise concerns about what was going on in terms of the courts and the rule of law. I know that there will soon be a verdict and we, and investors, and the rest of the international community will hope that it is a process that inspires confidence that the rule of law obtains in Russia.

QUESTION: (in Russian) And the last question, a schoolgirl of 15 years old, of age, she is asking how should I live to repeat the career of Dr. Condoleezza Rice? What am I to do to become like Condoleezza Rice? What should I (inaudible)

SECRETARY RICE: It's too complicated to answer about myself. I don't want to talk about myself.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Well, she's waiting for an answer.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, look, I am 50 years old, which you nicely told everybody in Russia. (Laughter.) And I enjoy very much what I do now. I have great friends and family. It is an opportunity for me to come back to Russia, which is a place that I love very much. I love Russian culture, I love the Russian language. (In Russian) Maybe I will be able to give an interview in Russian, but it is very difficult without the practice. In your language you have these cases, they are so difficult. It's difficult to speak without mistakes, but thank you very much and thank you.

QUESTION: (in Russian) Thank you, Condoleezza Rice. I would like to show you the results of the vote. The voting continues. Strategic ally of Russia? We have 6,000 calls so far. Fifty-four percent believe that the United States is a strategic ally and 46 percent believe that it is adversary.

SECRETARY RICE: That is interesting.

QUESTION: (in Russian) So, to this 46 percent, I want you to say something who believe that the United States is an adversary.

SECRETARY RICE: I would say to people, the United States is not an enemy of Russia, it's not against Russian interests. What we want very much is to have a constructive and friendly relationship with Russia based on common values where we can solve common problems. Our Presidents get along very well. The United States and the American people respect the great culture of Russia, respect the great people of Russia, and we know that Russia has a very good future ahead of it. (in Russian) Thank you.

QUESTION: (in Russian) I would like to remind you, live, was Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. She's promised to speak Russian next time and we will try to give her an opportunity to keep that promise -- in the year 2008 she will run for presidency?

SECRETARY RICE: Nyet, nyet, nyet. (Laughter.) (inaudible) . . . secretary (inaudible), (laughter).

QUESTION: (in Russian) Thank you very much.

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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