

Memorandum for Gorbachev “To the Analysis of the Fact of the Visit of Prominent American Political Leaders to the USSR (Kissinger, Vance, Kirkpatrick, Brown, and others), circa December 1986 [Excerpt]

Therefore, [we are facing] the task of incessant and effective political pressure on the United States with the objective of countering Reagan’s course and of providing support for those forces within the U.S. ruling class who stand against this course.

It appears that the most effective step here in the present circumstances could be to “untie the package” that was proposed at the summit in Reykjavik, and to redefine the relationships between its constituent parts. Tactically, such “untying” could be either a one-time event, presented in some “dramatic” form, or more extended in time; either instantly and fully open and public, or containing both public and diplomatic forms. It would be most preferable to do it as a transformation of the “package” into a concept for a “framework agreement” on the 1974 Vladivostok model.

A) The presentation of the “package” in Reykjavik was precise, right, and necessary. We needed a powerful initiative, which would have captured the public opinion, conducted an assertive “reconnaissance by fighting” of the positions of the administration, would have illuminated those positions, and would become a means of putting pressure on those. And a powerful initiative should have had a reliable insurance. Our initiative have fulfilled all those functions with distinction:

- a) Reagan’s positions as a proponent of a military-force line were revealed to the fullest extent;
- b) In term of domestic support, the SDI is now weaker in the U.S. than it was before Reykjavik—it is not an accident that Weinberger and the far right are rushing with the decision to deploy [SDI]; in the Congress, the mood is predominantly against the full-scale SDI, also because of the financial considerations;
- c) The administration is weaker in terms of foreign policy: the Irangate became possible only after and due to Reykjavik, it is a retribution to Reagan for Reykjavik (simultaneously with several sides);
- d) A deep split occurred in the public opinion of the West as a whole, which now is getting multiple channels to all aspects of relations between the East and the West, as well as within NATO. This split is even more effective due to the fact that it came as a full surprise to the West;
- e) The ideas expressed in the “package” are still at work now, almost half a year after Reykjavik, as a factor of mobilization of the elements of the new political thinking worldwide, of counteraction to the line of the Reagan administration. But it is precisely the ideas, not the “package” as such.

In short, we have created an extremely important and effective beachhead for our offensive against Reagan. Today, without losing any time, we should expand it, turn it into a beachhead of an offensive against the positions of the far right forces, of the active proponents of the arms race in general, while at the same time

ensuring opportunities for cooperation in this sphere with moderately conservative and liberal groups in the U.S. and Western Europe.

Objective opportunities for this do exist. The Reagan administration stumbled backwards after Reykjavik. Having [now] taken the positions on the SDI, which are even more aggressive than [those presented] during the summit itself, Washington, judging by everything, is now trying to exclude any possibility of positive shifts on any of the issues of our “package” beforehand, even while they state just the opposite publicly. It turns the “package” into a dead end.

The White House, it seems, is deeply convinced that the “a package” represents our final position. The responses to your latest statements show that they were waiting for some new proposals or concessions from us. Not having received them, they must be thinking now in Washington that any serious progress in the Soviet position is unlikely. In these conditions, “untying the package” would become one more action finally unmasking the genuine essence of the U.S. position on the issues of limitation and reduction of armaments.

B) We should not let the next U.S. trick go unanswered. For us, the “package” as such is not a goal, but a means. The Soviet side should not allow Washington to sow doubts about our intentions, shift the responsibility for the absence of progress in the negotiations to the USSR, [or] capture the political initiative by painting a perspective of “fully realistic” 50% cuts for the public opinion, and so on.

There is no guarantee that if we untie the “package,” the U.S. side would agree to balanced agreements with us. The facts suggest a completely different tendency in the development of Reagan’s position. But another point is equally true—in the atmosphere of stagnation, one notices a dilution of borders in the Western European public opinion, and partially even in the American [public opinion]: both superpowers are being perceived as incapable to respond positively to the aspirations of the masses.

In politics, the maximum freedom of maneuver is always valuable. The “package” in its present form only ties our hands. We don’t have likely grounds to expect that everything will work out on its own, that Reagan will have an epiphany—in Reykjavik, he missed his best change to go down in history not as a clown (litsedei), but as a statesman. For that, Reagan is not intelligent enough, and too limited in his freedom of choice.

In [our] analysis of the situation, we should take one more aspect into account. Under the current correlation of forces, the USSR is confronting the USA not only in the international arena, but also inside the U.S. itself. Of course, we cannot elect a “good” President for ourselves, we cannot persuade him to make “good” policy for us. However, we can protect ourselves from the worst. Today it would mean: to increase pressure on Reagan and the circles standing behind him. Adding more flexibility and dynamism to the Soviet approach would strengthen such pressure.

C) Are agreements on separate issues in our interest? I think yes. We never formulated the issue as “all or nothing.” We are not presenting it in such a form now either: we are not linking the “package” with nuclear testing, [or] chemical weapons. What kind of agreements are possible in principle?

1. INF, with a simultaneous discussion about tactical missiles. For us it would be tantamount to a removal of a very serious threat. [It] would raise our reputation in Europe. In the end, [it] would make our relations with China easier.

In any case, it is unlikely that we would have to penetrate SDI, if it is ever built, with intermediate-range missiles. Untying the “package” makes this agreement obtainable; preserving the “package” blocks it. Here the benefit of the untying is obvious.

2. 50% reduction of strategic weapons, with a simultaneous emphasis on our readiness to proceed to full nuclear disarmament. If it was possible, the benefit of such a reduction would be unquestionable in all respects: political, economic, moral, and military. Building up strategic offensive weapons would make sense only in order to penetrate the SDI, but we still have to undertake a comprehensive analysis of this issue.

3. The following model of settlement also deserves consideration—a 50% reduction of strategic weapons (the number of delivery vehicles and the number of warheads would be decreased by half in real terms, while each side would have the right to decide what would be the relative proportion of ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers), a simultaneous decrease by 50% of the U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range missiles in the European zone, and reduction of the U.S. forward-based system by 50%. If the U.S. agrees to adequately reduce its forward-based systems in Japan and South Korea, [we should agree] to bring the number of [our] intermediate-range missiles in Asia (and respectively in the U.S. territory) down to 100 (in warheads).

At the same time, we take into account that the United States links the implementation of measures on INF in Europe with a strict control. Consequently, the U.S. territory as such, would be left outside of the control, while inspections in England, the FRG, and other countries would require complicated procedures of coordination with the national governments.

Will the U.S. go for such decisions? It is already clear that not under Reagan! In these conditions, our readiness for an agreement outside the “package” would have the following pluses for us:

---[it would] uncover the true positions of the U.S., become a powerful and long-term instrument of pressure on the Americans, and their course;

---[it would] play a role of a stimulus to limit appropriations for the SDI in the American Congress; a stimulus even more effective if we could preserve the existing limits and cut at least some armaments, at least the IMF. The political and psychological effect of such a step would be very significant, especially taking into account the U.S. growing financial difficulties.

4. SDI proper. At this point, the Soviet Union stands by the position of a complete rejection of all military technologies that constitute the basis of this American program. If we want to be logical and persuasive in our struggle with the SDI on this platform, we have to be ready to put forth the idea of not just limitation, but of a full renunciation of ABM systems, i.e. of a toughening of the requirements of the 1972 ABM treaty. Any limitation is always misleading, it leaves loopholes for circumvention and misunderstandings.

A ban on ABM [systems] would mean very little real change for us, because during the last decade systems have emerged, against which there exist no effective counter-systems so far, and the quantitative limitations under the treaty are very poorly linked with the actual scale of possible massive strikes. Consequently, the Moscow ABM district has a significance only as a research and testing grounds for the contingency if the question arises about deploying a system of defense of the national territory.

It appears that the U.S.—at least up to the point of actual testing of the developing technologies on real targets—are not going to engage in negotiations with us on the subject of turning the treaty of ABM limitation into a treaty of banning the ABM. The latter would become possible only in the case if testing in the framework of SDI would turn disappointing results, or if the systems themselves would turn out to be so complicated and so expensive that Washington would prefer to curtail the system. However, testing outside the framework of the existing treaty would mean the end of its existence, unless, understandably, the sides would agree to something else before such testing.

The issue of making a concession to the Americans in terms of the “wide interpretation” of the ABM Treaty could be practically raised only if there was an appropriate compensation on Washington’s part. For example, finding an agreed upon modus on the legal status of space. Further, development of regulations on certain kinds of activities in space, and even better—in relation to space objects. Finally, formulation of objective criteria to distinguish between the defensive and non-defensive character of systems allowed to be deployed in space, and methodology of control over implementation of the agreed upon obligations.

What is the point of putting forth this kind of considerations? First of all, it would not be expedient to retrospectively give our opponents a pretext to allege that the USSR made success in Reykjavik impossible by linking nuclear disarmament with the SDI. Secondly, by providing details of our approach (explaining the terms, like what is laboratory research and so on.) we would demonstrate that such a development was possible already in Reykjavik, if the United States was seeking to bring our positions closer [to each other]. Thirdly, raising a number of questions for discussion would allow us to weaken the link between the ABM and the SDI without any damage to our reputation, and to accept the principle of parallel negotiations.

In general, partial agreements—both on the issues of SDI and on all other issues—are in our interests

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