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NLRR FOI 714/5 #18634

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BY AD NARA DATE 11/29/07 THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE

October 22, 1986

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JOHN M. POINDEXTER 

SUBJECT: U.S.-Soviet Relations: Where Do We Go From Here?

As we review the results of your meeting with Gorbachev in Reykjavik and observe the Soviet commentary, we are convinced that we may have made some truly historic breakthroughs on a number of key issues. Furthermore, while they are unlikely to endorse a plan that explicitly legitimizes SDI deployments, the Soviet position on the issue of SDI research and testing may not be as rigid as Gorbachev came across in that final session with you. I would like to summarize some of our impressions about the Soviet attitude and make some broad suggestions regarding the stance we should take over the coming weeks.

Soviet Attitudes

If you strip away the rhetoric about the Soviets making all the constructive proposals and SDI development being the barrier to real arms reduction, it is striking that Gorbachev is saying essentially the same things about the Reykjavik meetings as we are: great progress was made on many issues; all proposals remain on the table; U.S. and Soviet positions are closer than they have ever been before; and the dialogue must be continued without walking away from any of the agreements reached in Reykjavik.

This public stance is reinforced by private messages we are receiving from Soviet officials. The most important was Dubinin's comments to George Shultz Tuesday, which indicated some clear "give" in the Soviet position on SDI. But, in addition to this, every senior Soviet official who has talked to our people this week has stressed that the Reykjavik meeting made great progress in Soviet eyes, and that they consider it essential to proceed from the base of the agreements reached there.

The Soviets have also made at least one gesture since Reykjavik which was probably intended to improve the atmosphere. That is, the release of Mr. and Mrs. Goldfarb. (You will recall that he was the Soviet citizen who refused to participate in a "set up" of Nick Daniloff a couple of years ago.) We had asked for him in exchange for Zakharov, but the Soviets refused. By releasing him now, after Reykjavik, the Soviets may be signalling that they

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21

want to put the Daniloff and Zakharov issues definitively behind us.

One important element in the Soviet propaganda treatment of Reykjavik is their claim that they made all the proposals, and that you came "with empty hands and empty pockets." Actually, of course, they either accepted our position or came very close to it in all the areas where there was agreement, and it is annoying to see them trying to get public credit for making our proposals.

However, this propaganda definitely has a bright side. The fact is that a Soviet leader cannot allow himself to be seen capitulating to foreign pressure. Therefore, when he in fact capitulates, he must claim that he made the proposal and forced it on the other side. This seems to be precisely the tactic Gorbachev is following publicly. In part it is doubtless designed to bolster his public image as a man of peace. But it also serves to make acceptable to the Soviet public, and the various Soviet interest groups, the compromises which he has made. Since he is pretending that he forced them on you, he cannot easily walk away from the points of agreement recorded.

On Saturday morning while you were meeting with Gorbachev, I spent two hours talking with Marshall Sergei Akhromeyev, the Chief of the Soviet General Staff. He is a remarkable man. Everybody who talked with him came away with the same feeling. It was most unusual that Gorbachev brought him and then placed him at the head of their working group. I came away from my discussion with him convinced that the Soviets want agreements and from a military viewpoint they do not have any concerns with SDI once ballistic missiles are eliminated. I think they are concerned with the transition from offense to defense and Gorbachev has a political problem with SDI since he has been so outspoken against it.

U.S. Strategy

Our first aim should be to "pocket" the concessions the Soviets made. We will be preparing instructions to our negotiators with this aim in mind.

We should also seek means to keep the pressure on the Soviets to hold to the agreements reached and continue constructive negotiation on the issues that remain. Aside from our negotiating posture, we should continue our public statements expressing our commitment to the agreements, and if the Soviets start backsliding, we should make a public issue of it.

24

We should attempt to maintain a constructive atmosphere so far as circumstances permit, by not gratuitously creating new public issues. However, we should not hesitate to take actions against Soviet interests if necessary and warranted. (For example, your decision to respond to their retaliation against our offices in the Soviet Union for the expulsion of the 25 intelligence officers at the UN is just right.)

We should also make a special effort to attract public attention to the non-arms control areas of our agenda. They have been rather overshadowed by the dramatic events in Reykjavik, and we must see to it that they stay up front in the public eye. (Several events are planned which will call attention to issues such as human rights and expanded contacts.)

We should also do what we can to minimize attention to the question of the date for Gorbachev's visit to the United States. It is possible that Gorbachev was under the false impression at Reykjavik that announcing a date before the November elections was important enough to you to give him leverage over issues of substance. If so, you certainly disabused him of that misperception. Nevertheless, it will be important to convey to the Soviets indirectly that the question of an early date is a matter of indifference to you.

I suspect that Gorbachev will soon find that pressures will build on him to arrange for an early meeting -- and thus validate his claim that much was achieved at Reykjavik. In any event, his delay in agreeing to a date gives us time to continue to press him on issues such as emigration and Afghanistan, as part of a summit "package."

Next Steps

I will be sending you shortly concrete recommendations for steps to take in the arms control field. Broadly speaking, however, I would see a desirable scenario of U.S. actions over the coming weeks as including the following:

1. Issue instructions to our negotiators in Geneva to nail down as quickly as possible the agreements in Reykjavik and proceed with detailed negotiations to work them out in concrete, specific terms.
2. Proceed with arrangements for talks or negotiations on the subjects other than arms control, as agreed at Reykjavik.

3. Possibly, send a letter from you to Gorbachev next week, which would summarize the agreements reached in Reykjavik as we understand them and suggest ways to resolve the remaining key issues.

4. Agree to a Shultz-Shevardnadze meeting in Vienna when they are both there for the opening of the CSCE review conference November 5-7. (If you had sent Gorbachev a letter with suggestions, this meeting would provide an opportunity for a Soviet reply.)

5. Throughout, keep our public relations efforts in high gear, in order to bolster public and Allied support for our positions.

Prepared by:
Jack F. Matlock

Chion

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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October 17, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

FROM: JACK MATLOCK *JM*

SUBJECT: Next Steps in U.S.-Soviet Relations

Attached is a Memorandum to the President which reviews the Soviet reaction to Reykjavik and suggests a stance for the U.S. to take in broad terms.

Bob Linhard has been working with the ACSG on specific arms control positions, and will be communicating with you separately on this. The attached paper addresses the U.S.-Soviet relationship in a broader context and indicates that specific recommendations regarding the separate issues will be forthcoming shortly.

^{pr} Peter Rodman, ^{uc} Bill Cockell, ^{RL} Bob Linhard and ^{SS} Steve Sestanovich concur.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the Memorandum to the President at Tab A.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Attachment:

Tab I Memorandum to the President

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BY CN NARA DATE 11/29/07

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