MEMOIRS

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programmes? Despite public pressure, Western European governments were meekly following suit, with European politicians suddenly arguing that it would be unwise to remove the American missiles because of the Soviet Union's superiority in conventional weapons – despite our January statement offering reductions in conventional weapons and troops. West European governments and financial circles were becoming involved in a dangerous project and were becoming accomplices in a new, even more deadly spiral of the arms race, I said in my speech. Détente or even a simple warming in Soviet-American relations did not conform with the interests of certain people in the West, who would use any pretext to undermine the improvement in international relations initiated in Geneva. Nevertheless, I emphasized that we intended to stick to the course set at the XXVIIth CPSU Congress.

REYKJAVIK: THE CONCEPT

I received a letter from Reagan during my holiday in the Crimea in the summer of 1986. It looked to me like an attempt to uphold the pretence of a continuing dialogue, another tactical move in the 'double game' played by the Americans. Eduard Shevardnadze telephoned me to say that he had already sent a draft reply for approval, adding that we did not need to give a detailed reply since there were no significant proposals in Reagan's message. Still, we could not leave it unanswered.

On the next day, Anatoly Chernyaev (who had accompanied me to the Crimea) made his daily report and showed me Shevardnadze's draft reply to President Reagan's message. It was a short, routine statement, and as I was reading it, I suddenly realized that I was gradually being forced into accepting a logic that was alien to me – a logic that was in open contradiction to our new attitude, to the process we had started in Geneva and – most important – to the hopes of ordinary people. I said that I could not sign such a letter, and told Anatoly about the thoughts that had been haunting me for days. In the end, I decided to take a strong stand, suggesting an immediate summit meeting with President Reagan to unblock the strategic talks in Geneva, which were in danger of becoming an empty rite. A meeting was needed to discuss the situation and to give new impetus to the peace process. It could take place in England or Iceland.

I immediately telephoned Shevardnadze, Gromyko, Ryzhkov and Ligachev. They all agreed to my idea. We sent an urgent message to the American President. Reagan replied agreeing to the meeting, and suggested Reykjavik as equidistant from both our countries. We contacted the Icelandic government and received a positive reply. It was time to announce another Soviet-American summit meeting.

I had to ask myself why Reagan had been so quick to accept my proposal. In all likelihood, the Americans had reckoned with the possibility that we might have leaked the news had Reagan turned down our invitation. The Reagan administration would have been hard put to explain the refusal, and American presidents were known to be quite sensitive about these questions.

There seemed to be yet another important factor. Reagan might have been induced to believe that he could force me into making major concessions by sustaining his tough policy towards the Soviet Union. American political analysts maintained that the Soviet economy was exhausted and the Soviets desperate for a break in the arms race. According to them, the Soviet Union yearned for a respite to free the resources needed to attain the goals set by the new Soviet administration – and Gorbachev could, therefore, make important proposals in Reykjavik which would meet the interests of the United States.

I tried to put myself in Reagan's place. The more I reflected on the question, the more I was convinced that the American President had decided to carry a big enough basket to Reykjavik to 'gather the fruit Gorbachev would yield, squeezed out by US policy.' The Reykjavik meeting showed that I had been right. My partner was not quite prepared for detailed talks, although our task had been clearly defined – we had to give new impetus to the strategic arms negotiations.

There must have been an additional element in Reagan's logic. He did not like to see Gorbachev setting in motion the international peace process all by himself, without American participation.

The world was increasingly responding to our agenda, and Washington may have decided that it was better to join in this process.

At the Politburo meeting on 8 October, I said that we had to prepare bold but realistic proposals for Reykjavik. If the Americans accepted our initiatives, it would indeed mean a fresh start in disarmament and normalization in world politics. If they rejected them, it would show the true intentions of the Reagan administration. In either case, the stakes were high. The world was meanwhile buzzing with excitement at the forthcoming event. Political circles in the United States joined in the discussion, with the 'hawks' trying all known means to exert maximum pressure on the American President. But, in my view, President Reagan could hardly ignore worldwide hopes for a positive outcome. It was widely accepted that the first four years of 'Reaganomics' had stabilized the US economy and that the Reagan administration had contributed to the strengthening of the 'American spirit'. However, there was a tempting opportunity to go down in history as the 'President of peace' – and the elections were drawing nearer.

Everyone agreed at the Politburo meeting that Reykjavik would improve our image in the world, demonstrating our determination to prevent a new arms race. But our generals and even some people in the Foreign Ministry and in our

negotiating team in Geneva were doubtful. They were firmly stuck in a logic of antagonism, and the military sought to protect their corporate interests. The existing state of affairs seemed to suit some of our negotiators in Geneva, who enjoyed having their wages paid in hard currency, thinking 'the longer the negotiations, the better for us'.

Shevardnadze, Akhromeyev, Yakovlev, Dobrynin and Chernyaev accompanied me to Reykjavik. We also decided to fly in a group of journalists, public figures, scientists and experts. It was the first time that Pavel Ruslanovich Palazhchenko accompanied me as interpreter. He has since translated for me on various major occasions. In addition to his command of English, he is a professional diplomat and devoted to his work. I highly value the moral stand he took. He remained with me even after I had stepped down as President of the Soviet Union, working as tirelessly as ever.

THE DRAMA OF REYKJAVIK

We arrived in Iceland on the afternoon of 10 October 1986. An unknown world opened before us – no trace of vegetation, nothing but rocks and boulders. And every half an hour it would rain.

Reykjavik means something like 'smoking place'. It appeared indeed as in a fog, which turned out to be steam produced by geysers. Reykjavik is a major seaport and our entire delegation stayed on the *George Otts*, an ocean liner which had sailed from Tallinn for this occasion.

The meeting opened with a private conversation between the two leaders. Our initial exchange of views proved disappointing. The American President had little to say in answer to the arguments I advanced, in spite of the importance of the issues at stake – the growing tensions throughout the world, the setback after Geneva, the dangers we had to overcome. I outlined the proposals we had prepared in Moscow, through which we hoped to bring about a fundamental change in international politics.

Reagan reacted by consulting or reading his notes written on cards. I tried to discuss with him the points I had just outlined, but all my attempts failed. I decided to try specific questions, but still did not get any response. President Reagan was looking through his notes. The cards got mixed up and some of them fell to the floor. He started shuffling them, looking for the right answer to my arguments, but could not find it. There could be no right answer available – the American President and his aides had been preparing for a completely different conversation.

I sensed his nervousness and said: 'Well, we are talking about specific problems, so let us invite our Foreign Ministers to join the talks.' George Shultz and Eduard Shevardnadze came in, and I repeated in detail our proposals to

cut strategic nuclear arsenals, which boiled down to the following: negotiations were stuck in endless discussions, the argument was going round in circles and getting nowhere. What was needed was a new approach. Our strategic nuclear stockpiles consisted of three main groups: ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. Each country had its own armament structure to meet its specific requirements, but our overall strategic nuclear arsenals were approximately equal. We therefore suggested cutting each of these three groups by 50 per cent.

It was the first time that the Soviet Union had agreed to such a big reduction in its ground-based ICBM force. This was our most powerful strategic weapon and was considered a major threat by our 'potential enemy', as we used to call the Americans. But we would have agreed to this step to unlock the stalemate in the disarmament process, by now completely blocked by decades of fruitless talks. It was not meant as a one-sided offer, since the United States were supposed to cut by 50 per cent their major striking force – their nuclear submarines and their strategic bombers, in which they were superior to us.

The logic was simple: to reduce the arsenals which guaranteed nuclear deterrence to a much lower level. Our far-reaching proposals seemed to have caught President Reagan off guard; he appeared confused, although we had suggested something the United States had always wanted us to do, i.e. a radical cut in our intercontinental ballistic missiles. But since this proposal was part of a package, the American President apparently feared some sort of trick. His Secretary of State saved the day by saying that our approach was fundamentally acceptable. During the exchange of views that followed we managed to reach an agreement in principle on a 50-per-cent cut in strategic arms.

The American delegation was clearly not prepared for such a turn of events, and we often had to interrupt the talks for consultations within the teams. The breaks would occasionally last for quite a while, the White House experts obviously needing additional consultations. The American team kept a 'hot line' open to Washington for inquiries and consultations.

Since we had put forward the proposal, both our delegation and our experts' group under Marshal Akhromeyev had done their homework. Obviously a lot of additional questions arose in the process of working out the details of the agreement. Most of these questions were to be looked into at the talks in Geneva, but some aspects required immediate clarification. In order to remove some of these obstacles, we came out with a fallback proposal we had kept in reserve, removing the question of forward-based systems from the agenda, i.e. our demand that Western intermediate-range nuclear missiles be counted as strategic weapons.

Our second proposal aimed to find a solution to the problem of intermediate-range nuclear missiles. We decided to drop the link with the French and British nuclear arsenals and suggested returning to the American zero option,

dismantling all intermediate-range missiles based in Europe. At the same time, we offered to start talks on the missiles based in Asia and to freeze the number of missiles with a range of less than one thousand kilometres.

But, paradoxical as it might seem, the Americans would not accept their own zero option in Reykjavik. I think it was probably less for fear of a negative reaction from their European allies than because they were reluctant to harm the American arms industry. A compromise was finally found, not without difficulty. Alas, as it turned out, our greatest trials lay still ahead.

Both the negotiating teams and the media realized that this was a unique opportunity to break out of the vicious circle of the nuclear arms race. But the moment we had seemingly reached an agreement, some invisible force suddenly stayed the hand of the President of the United States.

In all the previous negotiations, the Americans had always viewed verification procedures as the most important factor. And suddenly they started manoeuvring on this issue. Our position was clear: if we were to begin dismantling nuclear weapons, we necessarily had to intensify inspection and verification to prevent either side from attaining military superiority. Hence, slackening existing arms control and verification mechanisms – and the ABM treaty in the first place – was out of the question. On the contrary, it would have been logical to reinforce the treaty, both sides committing themselves not to withdraw from the agreement over a period of ten years – the time needed to dismantle the nuclear arsenals.

We were aware of President Reagan's commitment to SDI and suggested allowing continued laboratory research and testing in this area. But the American President insisted that the United States had the right to conduct virtually any kind of tests within the framework of SDI, refusing to set any restrictions. Reykjavik became the site of a truly Shakespearean drama. We would interrupt the talks, get back together and break up again. Success was a mere step away, but SDI proved an insurmountable stumbling-block.[1]

The Reykjavik meeting was drawing to its end. We had not been able to overcome our differences. The talks had reached a stalemate and were becoming bizarre, with President Reagan starting to haggle – 'Meet me halfway and you'll feel the beneficial effects of American co-operation' – while I was desperately trying to get across to him that he was just one step away from going down in history as the 'peacemaker President'.

We left the house as it was getting dark. We stood by the car. Everyone was in a bad mood.

[1] At a February 1993 conference in Princeton, former ambassador Jack Matlock recounted a remark made by Robert McFarlane immediately after Reykjavik. The American President's former National Security Adviser had been taken aback by Ronald Reagan's refusal to accept our proposal, commenting that 'Gorbachev's offer in Reykjavik was quite consistent with our goals. Once we had reached an agreement to cut intercontinental ballistic missiles, we could have well accepted a ten-year delay [for SDI testing].'

Reagan reproached me: 'You planned from the start to come here and put me in this situation!'

'No, Mr President,' I replied. 'I'm ready to go right back into the house and sign a comprehensive document on all the issues agreed if you drop your plans to militarize space.'

'I am really sorry' was Reagan's reply. We made our farewells and he left in his car.

THAT FAMOUS PRESS CONFERENCE

Only forty-minutes remained before the press conference. Reagan had left for the American military base to take the aeroplane home. My first, overwhelming, intention had been to blow the unyielding American position to smithereens, carrying out the plan we had decided in Moscow: if the Americans rejected the agreement, a compromise in the name of peace, we would denounce the US administration and its dangerous policies as a threat to everyone throughout the world.

I walked from the building where the talks had been held. It was a distance of some 400 metres and I was feverishly collecting my thoughts. One thing preyed on my mind – had we not reached an agreement both on strategic and intermediate-range missiles, was it not an entirely new situation, and should it be sacrificed for the sake of a momentary propaganda advantage? My intuition was telling me that I should cool off and think it all over thoroughly. I had not yet made up my mind when I suddenly found myself in the enormous press-conference room. About a thousand journalists were waiting for us. When I came into the room, the merciless, often cynical and cheeky journalists stood up in silence. I sensed the anxiety in the air. I suddenly felt emotional, even shaken. These people standing in front of me seemed to represent mankind waiting for its fate to be decided.

At this moment I realized the true meaning of Reykjavik and knew what further course we had to follow.

My speech has been published in newspapers and commented on by scores of journalists, political scientists and politicians. I therefore do not quote it *in extenso*. The key phrase of the speech was: 'In spite of all its drama, Reykjavik is not a failure – it is a breakthrough, which allowed us for the first time to look over the horizon.' The audience came out of its state of shock, greeting the sentence with thunderous applause. One journalist wrote later in an article characterizing the mood of the press conference: 'When the General Secretary presented the failure of the Reykjavik meeting as a victory, Raisa Gorbachev was sitting in the conference-hall, looking with awe at her husband, with tears rolling down her face.'

On that day, we had sensed the public's prevailing mood, thus saving the process of worldwide change and restoring the hope that Reykjavik would be followed by further progress.

I soon received the information that George Shultz had characterized Reykjavik as a failure during a briefing he had given to journalists at the military base. Upon his return to the United States – and having read about my speech and the worldwide reaction to it – he was, however, quick to 're-adjust', speaking of a 'breakthrough', and of the work that lay ahead. One must give him his due – he was a man you could do business with.

Reykjavik showed that an agreement was possible and that the new Soviet Union was not into propaganda but wanted genuine disarmament. Political leaders were given the opportunity to see for themselves who Gorbachev was. It inspired hopes in some of them, while others appeared to be worried. Margaret Thatcher – more about her later – rushed her fences: 'We must not allow a second Reykjavik to happen.'

Reykjavik strengthened our conviction that we had chosen the right course.

THE DELHI DECLARATION

History has its own peculiar way of setting landmarks, and it often requires the distance of hindsight to perceive the logical pattern of events. When, after the summit meeting with President Reagan in Reykjavik, I flew to India to sign – together with Rajiv Gandhi – the Delhi declaration on the principles of a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world, many people could not see any connection between these two events.

The Soviet Union had established good relations with India in the late 1950s. Our nations have been traditionally friendly, and India welcomed Soviet support in consolidating its independence and maintaining peace in the region. Perestroika created new opportunities to strengthen ties between our nations. The Indian leadership welcomed the new thinking. I established a warm personal rapport with Rajiv Gandhi. We met on many occasions and regularly exchanged letters. Our thoughts went along the same lines, and our conversations ranged far beyond the agenda. I was deeply impressed by the way he organically combined the profound philosophic tradition of India and the East with a perfect knowledge and comprehension of European culture. He had great personal charm and was endowed with many human virtues. Rajiv was devoted to the cause of his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his mother, Indira Gandhi – his life's aim was the renaissance of India.

Over the years, the similarity in our views grew into mutual confidence. We did what we could to help India to defend its national interests and we could count on India's unfailing support for our international initiatives. But our

relations were no mere exchange of mutual aid. Far from it, they significantly contributed to the ideas which eventually formed the theoretical basis for the new world order, as reflected in the Delhi declaration Rajiv Gandhi and I signed on 27 November 1986, during my visit to India.

> In the nuclear age [the declaration reads] mankind must develop a new political thinking and a new concept of the world which provides sound guarantees for the survival of mankind.
>
> The world we have inherited belongs to present and future generations alike – hence we must give priority to universal human values.

We suggested a number of principles for the new world order:

> human life must be acknowledged as the supreme value . . .
> non-violence must become the basis of human co-existence . . .
> the right of every state to political and economic independence must be acknowledged and respected . . .
> the 'balance of fear' must be replaced by a global system of international security.

We declared that progress towards a world free of nuclear arms and violence demanded urgent disarmament measures: the total elimination of nuclear arsenals by the end of the century, the prevention of an arms race in space, a ban on nuclear weapon tests and the destruction of all existing chemical weapons, the reduction of conventional forces etc.

For the transitional period preceding the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union and India proposed an international convention which would ban the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons and which would take effect immediately.

It all began in May 1985, when Rajiv Gandhi came to Moscow on his first official trip abroad. It was some six months after he became Prime Minister and a little over two months after my election as General Secretary. The meeting marked the change of generations, this alone making it a major political event. We had to re-appraise the progress our countries had made in political, economic, cultural and military co-operation, smooth out problems that occurred from time to time, and discuss opportunities for a new level of co-operation. In spite of all the differences, our countries had much in common. Both the Soviet Union and India faced problems of modernization, renewal and radical reform.

Rajiv and I signed a number of agreements on the development of trade and economic, scientific and technological co-operation by 1990, and on joint ventures for the building of various industrial plants in India.