

## **Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes**

### **Gorbachev's thoughts on Reykjavik (views expressed on the return flight, and upon arrival in Moscow), October 12, 1986.**

I regularly read foreign press, and I can feel a sense of the broad resonance that information about the Reykjavik summit has triggered. And the speculations started right away – who won over whom there. But that was not our goal going to Reykjavik. We had quite a significant reason for our initiative. The fact is that Geneva had reached a deadlock. We felt that a major breakthrough was needed, for time is working against the interests of humankind.

And now Reykjavik has gone by. As it turned out, it was quite easy to reach an understanding over the first and second points of our platform – the strategic weapons and the intermediate range missiles. That alone has given us enormous experience. We understood the President's problems, understood, that he was not free in making his decisions. We did not make a tragedy out of the fact that the SDI problem prevented Reykjavik from becoming a total success. We thought, let the President think everything over, let him seek counsel from the Congress. Perhaps we will need one more try to step over [the boundary], which still divides us. We can wait. We do not take back the proposals we brought to Reykjavik.

We need not fall into despair; Reykjavik led us to the most important stage of understanding of where we stand. Everybody saw that agreement is possible. From Reykjavik, we drew the conclusion that the necessity for dialogue has increased even more. That is why I am even more of an optimist after Reykjavik.

People ask whether the world has become safer after Reykjavik. In this question one needs precision of thought, no primitivism. In no sense would I call Reykjavik a failure. It is a step in a complicated and difficult dialogue, in a search for solutions. We must seek these solutions on a grand scale. We proposed to cut the whole "triad," each part by 50 percent. And that already would have been a major achievement.

Some have tried to present the drama of Reykjavik (the situation was taking quite a dramatic shape) as if everything rested on one word, as if everything fell apart because of one word. No, it is a matter of principle. We made great concessions; but we cannot agree to a concession that would jeopardize the security of our state. I have already spoken twice about the results of

Reykjavik, and not only in order to restore the truth, which was becoming distorted, but first and foremost in order to determine what to do from now on. I said it then and I am convinced of it now: the absence of success in Reykjavik is related to two major misconceptions, strategic in nature, characteristic of certain circles in the West.

The first is the thinking that the Russians are afraid of the SDI and therefore will be ready for any concessions. And the second is the thinking that we are interested in disarmament more than the United States is. These attitudes affected the Reykjavik talks as well. I sensed very soon what was expected of me – that I lay precisely these cards on the table. Meanwhile, the President came without a specific program, merely to pick the fruit [and put it] into his basket. That is why the American partners so persistently pulled us towards the outcomes, which our delegations in Geneva spent so much time discussing fruitlessly. But we were in a decisive mood. We wanted to give a real practical expression to those things, on which we in principle agreed on with Reagan in Geneva during our talks at the highest level. In other words – to give an impetus to the process of elimination of nuclear weapons. Really, before that, the conversation was only about limiting nuclear arms. Now it is about reduction and liquidation [of those]. Since that is the case, we needed to close off all the roundabout ways that would allow one to rise to superiority. That is why the adherence to the ABM treaty became the key point. The American side's position on this question clearly indicated that it has not renounced the goal of superiority. That is why they did not have enough character, responsibility, courage, or political decisiveness to step over this threshold. Because that would have meant freeing themselves from the dependency on the military-industrial complex.

Nevertheless, we are not giving it up as a lost cause. We proceeded from the assumption that Reykjavik would open more opportunities for everyone to understand what is going on: for the Europeans, the Americans, and for ourselves as well. It became quite clear to us that since the ABM and SDI are instruments for securing superiority, then we need a “package,” then everything is interconnected (*and we should not yet move the INF missiles out of the strategic nuclear weapons talks. A. C.*). And let us not make pretences: with this package we want to show the whole world – and in the first place the Europeans – that it is the SDI that is the main obstacle to an agreement on nuclear disarmament.

*Source: The Gorbachev Foundation Archive  
Translated by Anna Melyakova and Svetlana Savranskaya  
For the National Security Archive.*