

Anatoly Chernyaev's Memorandum for Gorbachev

December 16, 1987

Ideas for Gorbachev's speech on Point 1
of the Politburo Session of December 17, 1987

Results of Visit to the U.S

We used the effect of Reykjavik very well. Our adherence to principles and consistency, and readiness for solutions without one-sided concessions has brought the needed results. The Americans wanted the treaty mostly for internal considerations--the coming presidential elections. But also because without it we could not begin with START, and that issue is of immediate concern to the Americans.

(...) 3. The tactics of negotiating with Reagan, his incompetence. The real power rests with the group of Bush, Carlucci, and others around them.

Principles for conducting negotiations: to deal with real policy, politely, but persistently preventing squabbles, demagoguery, bragging, pretenses for lecturing, and the like. We have managed to do it; however, Reagan, who started the conversation as the host, spoke about human rights first of all. He had to show off in front of his own people.

In the end, still, 90% of the time was devoted to the main issues--the problems of disarmament.

There was a critical moment in the morning of December 10, when we had to make a choice. Phone call to Moscow to speak with [Secretary of the CC CPSU Yegor] Ligachev. There was a danger that the real results of the visit would be limited to the signing of the INF Treaty. With all the importance of this Treaty, it was necessary to make it a new step in the further development of the disarmament process following our program of January 15, 1986.

We found solutions to difficult problems (ABM--1972; number of warheads on strategic missiles; sea-launched cruise missiles). The Americans agreed after some hesitation. But we had to work on them. The decisions that we made ensured the future progress. It is not in the administration's interest to procrastinate with the agreement on START. Time pushes them; the presidential campaign begins this spring. The same factor is involved as during the preparation of the INF Treaty—Reagan needs to bring something substantial from Moscow (from confidential conversation about the dates of his visit).

The danger of NATO's "compensation" by chemical and conventional weapons—would lead to devaluation of the INF Treaty.

From the point of view of Soviet-American relations, and through them—of world politics—direct contact with the American society, through its most influential figures, is probably the most important issue right now.

There has been a break in the curtain with which the American mass media covers American society from us.

On our part we found that we underestimated the willingness that has accumulated in America to move in our direction, to accommodate us. Before the visit, we were concerned that hostility, enmity, and provocations would prevail.

It seems that they are beginning to understand in America that they will have to deal with the great Soviet power, as it is now, and which would become even more respected as a result of perestroika, and that there is little hope for turning the USSR into something similar to the West.

[Follow up] No euphoria, just reason, appropriate responses to concrete attacks on or distortions of the character or results of the visit, but at the same time—respectful treatment of America and of the Americans. (...)

In our routine internal propaganda we should act without delay. Questions are being raised. Already there are signals that there is some demagoguery, and genuine lack of understanding on the part of our people (I attach questions that were asked during the “roundtable” on December 14 in the Central House of Writers. This is a source of great concern).

...To explain that we did not give in in terms of our security, that the Treaty is really equitable. We have to take into account that our people are also just beginning to learn new thinking. It is not easy to liberate oneself from the complex of the “besieged fortress”. Psychologically, it is a difficult process.

[Fund for the Survival of Mankind] can become a big factor in public opinion and in the political elite of the United States.

M.S. Gorbachev’s meeting with them would be desirable.

We should work on the question of Jewish emigration. Let us look once again at the rejections on the basis of access to sensitive information, were there any false reasons, or efforts to play too safe.

The principle: to send there everybody who is dying to get “there,” except those who really know the secrets. To announce this, and to close the issue. This is, by the way, necessary in order to improve the atmosphere (on “this point”) domestically.

8. But while working on American issues in the spirit of the visit, we should not slide to “Americanism”. Such shifts are common with us. We should actively, even exaggerating sometimes, demonstrate our attention to Europe, Japan, and Latin America

9. Give special attention to regional conflicts. During the negotiations in Washington, we were unable to agree on joint action on either Afghanistan, or the Persian Gulf, or Nicaragua. Even more so, we should demonstrate that we can “do without them” (without the U.S.) at the level of international diplomacy (with Gandhi, Mugabe, Zia ul-Haq, Assad, Hussein, and so on, the United Nations), and at the level of public opinion.

The main and decisive conclusion from the visit: everything depends on the success of perestroika. Perestroika is the major strike factor, the main force that can prevent war, and the turn the entire global development toward peace and progress.

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[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive]