

Anatoly Chernyaev

Notes from the Politburo Session

September 22, 1986

Conference with Members of the Politburo and Assistants in the Secretariat Room.

Shevardnadze informed the participants about his meeting with Reagan in Washington. Shultz said on September 20 that Reagan agreed to a meeting in Reykjavik if [Nicholas] Daniloff issue was resolved and if there was a positive response to the list [of names of dissidents] with [Andrei Sakharov] at the top of the list.

GORBACHEV: If we succeed to pull off Reykjavik—that would be very useful ... And for the United States of America too. They will get Daniloff. ... As far as the list, we have swallowed the list with 25 persons, which was sent to us from the UN. On Daniloff-Sakharov, we should stand firm, not to lose face. Let [Yuri] Orlov go in a month. As far as the 25 are concerned—we will respond, but when and who exactly will be on that list—is another matter.

Let's announce that we will not be purchasing any more grain. [Anatoly] Dobrynin is trying to convince us that only the United States will benefit from the summit in Reykjavik. But bear in mind—if they are not interested, nothing, of course, will come out of this meeting. Nobody can accuse us of absence of constructive approach. Therefore, we should not agree to more than Daniloff and Orlov in one month. The people will not understand us. We also have our limits. We have to turn on some propaganda in connection with this pressure on us. For example, [let's hold] a press conference about 150 "bugs," which we pulled out of the building of our new Embassy in Washington. Or maybe we should make a statement regarding the "25" right away. We should create a leak about Reykjavik: let's say, it became known that the Soviet Union was expressing some initiative in this direction, that there were rumors about it in the Moscow circles, and so on. Let our prominent journalists have a vent. Let them say what they think. Let them develop these ideas. Don't we have some brains?

Look at them: Kondrashov, Ovchinnikov, Bovin, Borovik. Why cannot scientists, academics come fourth with their own opinion regarding nuclear weapons, the arms race? Why don't they publish their wishes for the Soviet government? This is what democracy is. And at the same time, these will be the trial steps before we make our decision. In that case, we will have a greater freedom of maneuver. We will know the responses to our particular ideas beforehand. We should not be afraid.

I am convinced—we can speak about it now—that in the U.S. governing circles they do not want to allow a relaxation of tensions, a slowing down of the arms race. This is most important for them now. Not to allow us to expand our plans. Not to let us increase the dynamism of our system. Not to let us strengthen our democracy. We are only in the process of declaring our new policy, and it has already made a great impression on the outside world. And if we start implementing it now, the results will come. ... This is what scares the Americans, inspires them to try to undermine our plans. To sow mistrust by the arms race, including [mistrust] among our population, a disillusionment in our policy. Therefore, comrades, nobody is going to come to our help.

In short, we must make a firm judgment about their policy. And our efforts to summon them for one more summit are also a demonstration of our new policy. What [Anatoly] Kovalev sent to me to the South as draft of our response to Reagan is no good at all. It does not correspond to our goal—to achieve progress in our contacts with the U.S. That is why I did not agree with that draft. I made our response more dramatic, and named specific issues, with which I would be ready to go to a summit with Reagan. Whether Reagan would agree on them or not is another matter. But we cannot make offers to the Americans, which we know beforehand they would not accept. This is not a policy.

Source: The Gorbachev Foundation Archive

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For the National Security Archive.