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SECRET/SENSITIVEGorbachev's Goals and Tactics at Reykjavik

We go into Reykjavik next week with very little knowledge of how Gorbachev intends to use the meeting. The same was true of Geneva of course, but the uncertainty is perhaps greater this time around.

Gorbachev's long-term goals are clear enough: to unravel the Western consensus behind tougher policies toward the Soviet Union, to stabilize US-Soviet relations in a way that gives him greater latitude in his domestic policies, and over time to regain a more favorable position in the global balance of power. Arms control negotiations play a central role in this strategy, as Soviet proposals all year long have made clear. Given all this, how is he likely to play his hand at Reykjavik?

Gorbachev's letter to you called this a preparatory meeting for the Washington summit, saying that he hoped enough agreement could be reached that would make it possible for the two of you to sign 2-3 documents during his visit. We can't yet know the thinking that lies behind this statement but see three broad possibilities:

-- Despite his coyness, Gorbachev may already have made the basic decision to come. He may consider the Iceland prep session a way of protecting himself politically, by seeming to test what your views really are on key issues. Or he may see it as an opportunity to claim personal credit for getting concessions from the US. Whatever his motives, he may believe that his basic criteria have been met by, for example, the convergence of US and Soviet positions on INF, on risk reduction centers, and so forth. If so, the purpose of next week's meeting will be mainly to seal the deal.

-- Alternatively, Gorbachev may be genuinely undecided, even skeptical. He could calculate that progress made so far is not enough to protect him from charges that you are wearing him down, or from an international perception of growing Soviet weakness. If so, he may come to Reykjavik eager to listen but determined to win a major breakthrough on his primary concerns. In this case, you would find him ready to say at the end (with a heavy heart, of course) that a summit has not yet been adequately prepared. He could thus claim that he had given us a chance and was not responsible for breaking the agreement he made at Geneva.

-- A final possibility is that Gorbachev is ready to make a decision to come, but only if he can get a little bit more in the way of concessions and assurances next week. If so, he will be strongly inclined to respond favorably to what he hears, and will not necessarily insist on movement in the areas he has harped on most loudly (SDI, testing). What he would insist (for domestic reasons but also to strengthen his international reputation) is that he have something more in hand when he leaves than when he arrived.

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There is no agreement within the government on which of these readings is correct. It is perhaps fair to say that the second possibility has the least, but still quite significant, support among our analysts; the third probably has the most, but even those who hold to it are not sure exactly what Gorbachev would regard as enough progress to meet his criteria. Also unclear is whether Gorbachev will be ready to make his own concessions for the sake of agreement, and how significant they will be. His letter to you of last month and Shultz's talks with Shevardnadze don't settle these matters at all.

On the issue of SDI, for example, the letter adopted a tough tone -- saying that the Soviet Union had no intention of helping the US into space, as Gorbachev put it. On the other hand, since mid-summer the Soviet line on strategic defense has apparently begun to waver just a bit, with the shift from demanding a total ban to a more outwardly negotiable extension of the ABM treaty for 15 years.

Similarly, we can't be sure how Gorbachev will relate these arms control issues to other items on his and our agendas. Will he be less demanding on these questions if he thinks there is a chance of winning Soviet participation in a Middle East conference? Will he offer significantly increased Jewish emigration if he thinks this will induce you to budge on the remaining unresolved issues of an INF agreement?

It is conceivable that between now and Reykjavik we may see some Soviet probes that begin to tip their hand, and to indicate which of these routes Gorbachev will follow. More likely, however, is that you will have to smoke him out during your discussions. If Gorbachev has already settled on coming, he may well open the meeting by simply proposing a date. Such a bold stroke to create a good atmosphere, and to encourage us to reciprocate his show of good faith, would be quite consistent with his style (though not with traditional Soviet negotiating tactics). Equally consistent, however, would be to toy with the question until the end, particularly if he is working from a short list of "must-have's." And he may combine these approaches -- announcing that he would like to come on a specific date, but then setting out a series of conditions that he hopes can be met before the Reykjavik meeting is over.

Between now and your departure for Reykjavik, we will present you more detailed thinking on these matters, and in particular on the kinds of tactics you should consider.

Prepared by:  
Stephen Sestanovich

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October 4, 1986

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Cat. C - Caption and custody  
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Reviewed by: *Eckey*

Date: 10/20/93

*George*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HONORABLE GEORGE P. SHULTZ  
The Secretary of State

SUBJECT: Materials on the President's Meeting in Reykjavik (C)

Attached are three papers which you may find useful reading in  
preparation for the President's meeting in Reykjavik. (C)

*John*

John M. Poindexter

Attachments:

- Tab A CIA Paper "How Gorbachev Thinks"
- Tab B CIA Paper "Gorbachev's Position On the Eve of the Summit"
- Tab C NSC Paper "Gorbachev's Goals and Tactics at Reykjavik"

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