

M e m o r a n d u m D i c t a t e d b y R e a g a n : " G o r b a c h e v "

N o v e m b e r , 1 9 8 5

I believe Gorbachev is a highly intelligent leader totally dedicated to traditional Soviet goals. He will be a formidable negotiator and will try to make Soviet foreign and military policy more effective.

He is (as are all Soviet General Secretaries) dependent on the Soviet-Communist hierarchy and will be out to prove to them his strength and dedication to Soviet traditional goals.

If he really seeks an arms control agreement, it will only be because he wants to reduce the burden of defense spending that is stagnating the Soviet economy. This could contribute to his opposition to our SDI. He doesn't want to face the cost of competing with us. But another major reason is because the USSR's military planning differs from ours. We generalize and plan in a kind of defensive pattern--how must we be able to cope with various contingencies worldwide. On the other hand, our recent PFIAB study makes it plain the Soviets are planning a war. They would like to win without it and their chances of doing that depend on being so prepared we could be faced with a surrender or die ultimatum. Thus any new move on our

part, such as SDI forces them to revamp, and change their plan at great cost.

He doesn't want to undertake any new adventures but will be stubborn and tough about holding what he has. His major goal will continue to be weaning our European friends away from us. That means making us look like the threat to peace while he appears to be a reasonable man of peace out to reduce tensions between us. But if he has to make a choice, then he will opt for demonstrating to his own hierarchy that he is a strong leader.

In the world of P.R. we are faced with two domestic elements. One argues that no agreement with the Soviets is worth the time, trouble or paper it's written on so we should dig in our heels and say "nyet" to any concession. On the other side are those so hungry for an agreement of any kind that they would advise major concessions because a successful summit requires that.

My own view is that any agreement must be in the long-term interest of the United States. We'll sign no other kind. In a way, the Summit will be viewed generally as a success because we've met, shaken hands and been civil to each other. It can also be a success if we fail to arrive at an arms agreement because I stubbornly held out for what I believed was right for our country.

What are some of their needs and priorities? Well, I believe they hunger for some trade and technology transfers. There is no question but that we have a tremendous advantage on that front. Now I know some on our side don't like linking trade to political conduct; they believe peaceful trade is worthwhile all on its [sic] own. Well, I happen to think that trade is for us a major bargaining chip. We shouldn't give it away. But how about just hanging back until we get some of the things we want instead of giving consideration up front to what they want?

On another important subject for discussion and even negotiation, I'm sorry we are somewhat publicly on record about human rights. Front page stories that we are banging away at them on their human rights abuses will get us some cheers from the bleachers but it won't help those who are being abused. Indeed, it could wind up hurting them.

Let me quote a remark by Richard Nixon, talking about the 1972 Summit. He had been importuned by Jewish leaders before going to Moscow that he should get agreement on liberalizing Jewish immigration before making any agreements on trade, arms control or whatever. Here are his own words; "I did not follow this advice. After we had reached agreement on arms control and trade and other items they wanted, I took Brezhnev aside and told him that in

order to get Congressional approval for those agreements which required it, it would be very helpful if he could act positively on the Jewish emigration front. An indication of the success of this policy is that in 1968, the year before I took office, only 600 Jews were allowed to emigrate. In 1972 after our Summit meeting, the number rose to 35,000. In 1973, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was passed which made Jewish emigration a public condition for most favored nations treatment. That year; the number of Jews allowed to emigrate was cut in half and today the number is down to a trickle." Then he added a line pertinent to our upcoming Summit. He expressed optimism that I might accomplish what he did in 1972, but only if I didn't force Gorbachev to eat crow and embarrass him publicly. We must always remember our main goal and his need to show his strength to the Soviet gang back in the Kremlin. Let's not limit the area where he can do that to those things that have to do with aggression [sic] outside the Soviet Union.

To those who believe Arms Control must be the goal as an end in itself with no connection to regional issues, let us ask if Salt I in 1972 wasn't possible because the year before tensions in Central Europe were eased by the Berlin agreement? Conversely did Salt II fail of ratification on

it's [sic] own or did the invasion of Afghanistan have something to do with it?

They should be told in the coming meeting that Congressional approval on trade or arms control or whatever else they want will be difficult if not impossible to get if they continue to support their clients in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Those who think the Summit can be made to look successful if we get agreements on cultural exchanges, the consulate we want, fishing and trade matters are dealing with window dressing. Yes they can be useful but they must be viewed as just trimming for the main events which are the security issues like arms control, the regional areas of conflict and the prevalent suspicion and hostility between us. Indeed those trimmings could be harmful when used by some as evidence that all our concerns about national security were no longer pertinent. The target of their self-generated euphoria would, of course, be defense spending. So let me add here; another of our goals probably stated to Gorbachev in private should be that failure to come to a solid, verifiable arms reduction agreement will leave no alternative except an arms race and there is no way that we will allow them to win such a race.

Let us agree this is the first of meetings to follow. That in itself will give an aura of success. We will have set up a process to avoid war in settling our differences in the future. Maybe we should settle on early 1987 as the next meeting time and maybe we should discuss offering that it be in Moscow. He can come back here in 1988.

With regard to a communique that is more language than substance--a frank statement of where we agreed and where we disagree--is something for us to discuss. But let there be no talk of winners and losers. Even if we think we won, to say so would set us back in view of their inherent inferiority complex.

And so we take leave of historic Geneva and I get the hell out of there and head for the ranch.

Happy Thanksgiving Comrades!

[Source: Ronald Reagan Library, Jack Matlock Files, Box 27, File Folder: Important History Pre-1987 [material for Fritz Ermarth] 3/4. Released through FOIA E06-114/8.]