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OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-first year

Letter dated 23 October 1986 from the Permanent Representative of
the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement made by
Mr. M. S. Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist
Party of the Soviet Union, on Soviet television.

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English

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I should be grateful if you would arrange for distribution of this text as an official document of the General Assembly under items 21, 47, 54, 55, 60, 62, 58, 126 and 141 of its agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. M. BELONOGOV
Deputy Head,
Delegation of the USSR
to the forty-first session of the
United Nations General Assembly

ANNEX

Statement made by the General Secretary of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on Soviet television
on 22 October 1986

Good evening Comrades.

We meet again, and again on the same topic: Reykjavik. This is a highly serious topic. The outcome of my meeting with the President of the United States shook the entire world. In the ensuing days many new matters requiring evaluation have emerged, and I would like to share them with you today.

At the press conference at Reykjavik I said, as you will recall, that we would be returning again and again to the meeting between the leaders of the USSR and the United States.

I am convinced that we have not yet grasped the full importance of what took place. We will, though - if not now, then later - understand the full significance of Reykjavik and pass proper judgement on both the achievements and advances and the wasted opportunities and losses.

With all the drama of the talks and their outcome, the meeting in Reykjavik - maybe for the first time in decades - actually carried us a long way towards nuclear disarmament.

It is still my belief that as a result of the meeting we have reached a higher plane, not only in analysing the situation but in defining the objectives and framework of possible accords on nuclear disarmament.

Finding ourselves a few steps away from practical agreement on such a difficult and vitally important problem, we are all immeasurably more aware of the danger the world is in and more keenly sensitive to the need for immediate answers. Most important of all, we now know that averting the nuclear threat is a real possibility.

I would point out that only very recently the Soviet programme for the eradication of nuclear weapons by the year 2000 was being described by many "pillars" of world politics as an illusion, an impossible dream.

Here, truly, is a case when past experience is not an advantage or a source of counsel, but a burden hampering the search for solutions.

But Reykjavik did not only engender hopes; it illuminated difficulties on the road to a nuclear-free world.

Without understanding that fact, the outcome of the Iceland meeting cannot be properly evaluated.

The forces opposing the trend towards disarmament are mighty. We sensed that at the meeting itself, we sense it now. A great deal is now being said about Reykjavik.

Realistically minded people regard the meeting in Iceland as a major political event.

They welcome the fact that, as a result, we have been able to carry the campaign against nuclear weapons into qualitatively different terrain. The outcome of Reykjavik, as the Soviet leadership sees it, is encouraging for anyone hoping for a breakthrough to better things.

Interesting assessments are being offered in Government, public and scientific circles in most countries. The opportunities revealed are being described as an answer to mankind's yearnings.

It is generally held that the meeting raised the Soviet-American dialogue and the East-West dialogue as a whole, to a new level.

The dialogue has moved forward from dull technical calculations and numerical comparisons to new parameters and measurements.

From this vantage we can see new prospects of resolution for the problems which, today, seem so intractable: security, nuclear disarmament, preventing further twists in the arms race, and arriving at a new understanding of the opportunities opening up before mankind.

Discussion around the world on the results of the meeting is, one might say, still in the early stages. I think - no, I am convinced - that it will grow. As we see it, general efforts by nations, politicians and the public to capitalize on the opportunities that opened up at the Reykjavik meeting will grow also.

The route to a settlement of the crucial problems on which the very fate of mankind depends was mapped out in Reykjavik.

But the time since Reykjavik has also brought other things to light.

The circles that have connections with militarism and earn profits from the arms race are clearly frightened. They are doing their utmost to come to grips with the new situation and, by co-ordinating their activities, to mislead people wherever possible: to get control of the mood in large sectors of the world community, stifle their yen for peace and prevent Governments from taking clear positions at this decisive, historic moment.

These circles have political power, economic levers and powerful information media at their disposal. We must not exaggerate their strength, but it must not be underestimated either. All the signs are that the battle will be hard fought.

A regrouping of forces has begun among those opposed to détente and disarmament, and feverish efforts are being made to throw up enough obstacles to derail the process begun in Reykjavik.

In the circumstances, I think we must go back to the issues which figure so prominently on the agenda as a result of the Iceland meeting.

Our point of view, which I described an hour after the meeting ended, has not changed. I think it necessary to say so not only to confirm the evaluations we made before; I do so to draw your attention to the leap-frogging and disarray we are observing. This may have been brought on by confusion and desperation or it may be a premeditated move to dupe ordinary people.

Various accounts are given of the goals set for the meeting. The first harsh denunciations of Reykjavik have quickly given way to rapture.

A frantic campaign has begun to claim credit for other peoples' proposals.

The main forces have been thrown into the defence of the SDI that was disgraced in Reykjavik. All in all, these are hectic days in Washington.

What is this: a pre-election gambit that depends on success at Reykjavik? Or is this the unpredictable policy for the years to come?

This matter must be seriously studied.

It has not escaped our attention that some political circles are trying to steer discussion on the outcome of the meeting in particular directions.

Of the main features of the campaign I will say only this. There is a desire to whitewash the disruptive position taken by the United States Administration, which went unprepared to the meeting - I still say, with old baggage - and, when there was no avoiding the issue and the situation demanded clear replies, threw away the opportunity to conclude the meeting with an accord.

There is a desire, in the new post-Reykjavik situation, to force the USSR back to the old approaches, back to fruitless numerical discussions, wandering round in circles with no way out.

Obviously there are a fair few politicians in the West who find that the Geneva talks suit them as a screen, but not as a forum for seeking accords.

What used to be carefully concealed is now becoming clearer: there are powerful forces in American and Western European ruling circles that are bent on undermining the nuclear disarmament process; one or two are back to asserting that nuclear weapons are almost a blessing.

A half-truth, they say, is the most dangerous kind of lie. It is very alarming that not only the right-wing information media but highly placed figures in the American Administration have begun to adopt such tactics - tactics of outright deception.

I have already had an opportunity to tell you how things went at Reykjavik. We went to the meeting with constructive proposals, the most radical in the history of Soviet-American negotiations, for reducing armaments. Those proposals take the interests of both sides into account.

I said so in Iceland, on the eve of the meeting, in a conversation with the leaders of that country. The proposals were handed to the United States President half-way through my first conversation with him.

Far-reaching and interrelated, they constitute a complete package and are based on our programme, announced on 15 January, for eradicating nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

First. Cut all strategic weapons, without exception, by half.

Second. Completely eliminate Soviet and American medium-range missiles in Europe and make an immediate start on negotiations on such missiles in Asia; also on missiles with a range of less than 1,000 kilometres, whose number we proposed to freeze forthwith.

Third. Harden the terms of the ABM Treaty and begin on full-scale negotiations for a complete ban on nuclear tests.

The discussions in Reykjavik evolved on the basis of the Soviet proposals, as I related in detail in my earlier statements.

After a hard struggle and bitter arguments there occurred an encouraging narrowing of our differences on two out of the three areas under discussion.

The logic of the negotiations led the sides to define specific periods for the eradication of strategic offensive weapons. President Reagan and I reached agreement that Soviet and American weapons of this kind can and should be completely eradicated by 1996.

We also reached accord on the complete eradication of American and Soviet medium-range missiles in Europe, and radical cuts in missiles of this type in Asia.

We regard these agreements between the USSR and the United States as being of pivotal importance: they showed that nuclear disarmament is possible.

That is the first half of the truth about Reykjavik. There is, however, the other half. That, as I said, is that the Americans threw away an historic agreement which seemed to be within arm's reach.

Now the United States Administration is doing its utmost to convince people that the opportunity to emerge triumphant with concrete agreements was missed owing to Soviet obstinacy over the "strategic defence initiative" programme.

It is even said that we led the President into a trap, putting forward "breathtaking" proposals for reductions in strategic offensive weapons and medium-range missiles and then, as an ultimatum, demanding a retreat from SDI.

The essence, though, of our position and proposals was this: we want to reduce and then completely abolish nuclear weapons, and are resolutely opposed to another phase in the arms race, taking weapons into space.

Hence we are against SDI and for a tougher ABM Treaty.

It is clear to every sober-minded person that if we start on deep cuts followed by the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, it is necessary to rule out any possibility for either the Soviet or the American side to gaining unilateral military superiority.

We see the main danger of SDI lying precisely in the transfer of the arms race to a new sphere and the desire to get into space with offensive weapons, thereby winning military superiority.

SDI has become the main obstacle to ending the arms race, eliminating nuclear weapons and progressing towards a nuclear-free world.

For Mr. Shultz, the United States Secretary of State, to tell the American people that SDI is a sort of "insurance policy" for America is, to say the least, an attempt to deceive the American people.

SDI in actual fact is not strengthening America's security; instead, by opening up a new stage in the arms race, it is destabilizing the military and political situation and thereby weakening the security of both the United States and everybody else.

The Americans must know this.

They must also know that the United States position on SDI announced in Reykjavik fundamentally contradicts the ABM Treaty. Article XV does indeed allow withdrawal from the treaty, but only under certain circumstances, namely if "extraordinary events have jeopardized its (a Party to the treaty's) supreme interests". There were no such circumstances and there are none now. Clearly, the elimination of nuclear weapons, if it began, would make the occurrence of such extraordinary events even less probable. This is logical.

Article XIII of the ABM Treaty makes another provision: the Parties must "consider, as appropriate, possible proposals for further increasing the viability of this Treaty". The United States, on the other hand, is seeking to vitiate the treaty and render it meaningless.

These are all quotations from a document signed by the supreme representative of the United States.

Many tales have been invented to enhance the prestige of SDI. One is that the Russians are terribly afraid of it. Another is that SDI was what brought the Russians to the Geneva talks and then to Reykjavik. A third is that SDI is America's only salvation from the "Soviet threat". A fourth is that SDI will give the United States a great technological lead over the Soviet Union and other countries, and so on and so forth.

Now, knowing the problem, I can say only one thing: the continuation of the SDI programme will draw the world into a new stage of the arms race and destabilize the strategic situation.

Everything else that is attributed to SDI is, by and large, extremely dubious - attractive packaging to sell this suspicious and dangerous item.

The President, defending the position which thwarted agreement in Reykjavik, asks rhetorical questions: "Why do the Russians so stubbornly demand that America forever remain vulnerable to a Soviet missile strike? Why does the Soviet Union insist that we remain defenceless forever?"

I confess, I am amazed by such questions. They seem to imply that the American President can make his country invulnerable, provide it with a sure defence against a nuclear strike.

But as long as nuclear weapons exist and the arms race continues, he does not have that ability. Nor, of course, do we.

If the President is relying on SDI, he is wasting his time. The system might be effective if all missiles are eliminated. But then, you ask, why have an anti-missile defence at all? Why build it? I leave aside the money squandered, the cost of the system - according to some estimates it will amount to several trillion dollars.

We are still trying to persuade America to abandon this dangerous course. We are trying to convince the American Administration to seek invulnerability and defence by other means - by completely eliminating nuclear weapons and setting up a comprehensive system of international security to rule out war of any kind, whether nuclear or conventional.

Up to now, however, the SDI programme remains an integral part of United States military doctrine.

The Defense Directive for 1984-1983 - still operative - which emerged from the Pentagon at the beginning of the Reagan presidency, calls openly for the development of space-based systems, including the means to destroy Soviet satellites, and accelerated work on anti-missile defence systems for the territory of the United States with the possible withdrawal of the country from the ABM Treaty.

The directive emphasizes the need to channel the military rivalry with the USSR into new areas, rendering all previous Soviet defence spending pointless and making all Soviet weapons obsolete. Again, as you can see, this is a ghost-hunt, as former President Nixon put it; a plan to exhaust the Soviet Union.

The current Administration is a slow learner.

Isn't this why they so stubbornly cling to SDI? The plans for "Star Wars" have become the main obstacle to an agreement eliminating the nuclear threat. It is useless for Washington now to make out that we are moving towards an agreement.

To eliminate nuclear weapons as a means of deterring American aggression and in exchange face a threat from outer space - only political simpletons could agree to that. There are no political simpletons in the Soviet leadership.

It is not easy to accept that, because of all this, a unique chance to spare mankind from the nuclear threat has been missed. With this specifically in mind, I said at the press conference in Reykjavik that we did not consider the dialogue finished and hoped that, when he got home, President Reagan would consult Congress and the American people and take the decisions which must logically follow from what was achieved in Reykjavik.

Something completely different has occurred. In addition to distorting the entire picture of the negotiations in Reykjavik - I will return to this point. The past few days have seen action taken which, to a normal human being, appears simply barbarous after such an important meeting between the top leadership of two countries.

I am referring to the expulsion from the United States of 55 more Soviet embassy and consulate employees. We, of course, will take countermeasures, very strong measures, you might say, as between equals. We do not intend to let this outrage pass. But something else interests me now.

What kind of Government is this; what can it be expected to do in other cases or in the international arena? How far does its unpredictability go?

Not only, it seems, does it have no constructive proposals on key disarmament questions, it does not even want to maintain the necessary atmosphere for a normal continuation of the dialogue. Washington turns out not to be ready in either case.

The conclusion seems obvious. It is confirmed by a good deal of experience. Every time there is a gleam of hope on the major issues in Soviet-American relations, issues which affect the interests of all mankind, we get a provocative incident designed to thwart the possibility of a positive outcome and poison the atmosphere.

So which is the true face of the American Administration? Is it in favour of results and solutions, or does it ultimately want to destroy anything that can serve as a basis for making headway and deliberately rule out any kind of normalization?

A very unattractive picture is emerging of the Administration of a great country: one that is quick to carry out disruptive and destructive acts. Either the President cannot handle his entourage, which literally breathes hatred towards the Soviet Union and anything that might bring international affairs into calmer waters, or this is what he himself wants. In any case, no one is controlling the hawks in the White House. And that is very dangerous.

As for informing the Americans about Reykjavik, what has happened - in exactly the same vein as what I have already mentioned - is that the facts have been hidden from them. The Americans have been told the half-truth I spoke of earlier. The

accounts suggest that the United States, acting from a position of strength, almost forced the Soviet Union into agreement on American terms.

The day is not far off, so they say, when the United States will get its own way: it only has to keep up the pace of the military build-up, forge ahead with the "Star Wars" programme and step up the pressure in all directions.

The past few days have seen a great cause drowning in petty politicking, as the United States sacrifices the vital interests of its people, its allies and international security as a whole to the arms manufacturers.

What a lot has been said about the openness of American society, freedom of information, diversity of opinion, and the way everyone can see and hear what he likes.

Pointing out the differences between our systems in Reykjavik, the President said to me: "We recognize the freedom of the press and the right to listen to any point of view." Those were his exact words. But what are things like in reality?

Here's the very latest fact.

I am told that our Novosti Press Agency put out English versions of my press conference in Reykjavik and my statement on Soviet television and sent them to many countries, including the United States.

Well, the leaflet containing those texts has been held up for several days now in American Customs. It is being kept away from the American reader. So much for the "right to hear any point of view"!

Then again, on the subject of humanitarian issues, I said to the President - take the cinema, for example. A great many American films are shown on Soviet screens. Through them, Soviet people can get an idea of the American way of life and how Americans think.

But practically no Soviet films are screened in "free America". The President avoided the issue and, as usual in such cases, took cover behind private enterprise, which as he put it, could do as it liked.

I also talked about American books published in our country and Soviet books published in the United States: the ratio is about 20 to 1.

I brought up the question of radio broadcasts with the President. Here, too I said, we are at a disadvantage. You have the Soviet Union surrounded with a network of transmitters and from other countries you relay anything that comes into your head, 24 hours a day, in many of the languages spoken in the Soviet Union. America, on the other hand, uses the fact that we are not close neighbours to fence itself off from our medium-wave broadcasts - all their radios are that sort. The President had no answer to that either.

Then I suggested: What about this - we stop jamming the "Voice of America", and you give us the chance to lay on radio broadcasts to the United States from your territory or somewhere nearby, so that they reach your population? The President promised to think about it.

In the same way as the United States is becoming an increasingly closed society, people there are being craftily but effectively cut off from objective information. That is a dangerous development.

The American people need to know the truth about what is happening in the Soviet Union, the real essence of Soviet foreign policy and our real intentions, not to mention the truth about the world situation as a whole.

I would call this exceptionally important in the present state of affairs.

And now for how the outcome of Reykjavik is being presented in the United States. It took only a few hours, or at most days, for everything discussed at Reykjavik to start being enveloped in a cloud of fictions and fantasies. People are trying to destroy the seeds of trust before they germinate.

The President stated a day or two ago that only ballistic missiles had been the subject of an agreement, and his aides said outright that bombers and all cruise missiles were unaffected.

The Secretary of State gave a different account, namely that the understanding involved all strategic weapons. Incidentally, he attended my talks with the President, as did our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shevardnadze.

A spokesman for the White House, Mr. Speakes, said that Ronald Reagan had perhaps been misunderstood and had never agreed to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

There have even been straight forward distortions.

For example, it is being asserted that the United States President did not agree at the meeting to the Soviet proposal for the complete destruction of all Soviet and American strategic offensive weapons by 1996 - as if it had not been possible to reach a common view on our proposal.

With all solemnity, as a participant in the talks, I affirm that the President did agree, though without any great enthusiasm, to the elimination of all strategic offensive weapons - and I emphasize all, not just some individual categories. And they were to be eliminated precisely in 10 years, in two stages.

The interpretations offered of the discussions on nuclear tests are also far from the truth. The unilateral approach of the United States to this question is being presented as if the Soviet Union was in complete agreement. That was not and could not have been the case.

The problem of eliminating medium-range missiles in Europe is also being incorrectly presented. People are not satisfied with removing it from the package proposed by the Soviet side.

They are beginning to portray our agreement to freeze the number of missiles with a range of less than 1,000 kilometres as "recognition" by the Soviet Union of the "right" of the United States to deploy that category of American missiles in Western Europe.

When you see such interpretations, you begin to doubt, yourself, what we were talking about in Reykjavik. Was it really about averting the nuclear threat and reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons, or was it about increasing the threat still further, diversifying nuclear arsenals and turning not just the planet but outer space, the universe, into a theatre for military confrontation? But you see, comrades, that is how it has turned out.

The prospect of a possible Soviet-American understanding has scared some people so much that they have promptly set about raising quite impossible obstacles and inventing "prior conditions".

One of the President's aides has gone so far as to say that before agreeing to nuclear disarmament, the United States "must see changes in the political climate in the Soviet Union".

This is all irresponsible, extremely irresponsible.

When such presumptuous demands were made 70 or 40 years ago, they could still be taken for thoughtlessness or blindness to history, but now they indicate a complete failure to understand reality.

The problem of conventional armaments is also described as a "prior condition". It is serious enough in itself.

The assertion that the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact States have a "lead" in conventional arms is still common currency in the West. That, allegedly, is why the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) constantly has to build up its nuclear potential.

Of course, there is no such imbalance. After Reykjavik, Mr. Shultz and Mr. Reagan publicly admitted the fact for the first time. But the essence of the problem is not simply to maintain parity. We do not want the arms race to shift from the nuclear sphere to conventional armaments.

I would remind you that our January proposal for the elimination of nuclear weapons by the end of the century also included provisions for the destruction of chemical weapons and deep cuts in conventional arms.

We have reverted to this question several times since January. The proposals of the Warsaw Treaty countries were set out in their most detailed form this summer in Budapest. We transmitted them to the other side, that is to the members of NATO.

To date, there has been no reply.

Every day since Reykjavik shows clearly that the meeting in Iceland was the touchstone for the true purpose of politicians' words and declarations.

What a lot has been said about the need to free ourselves from the nuclear nightmare and how easy it would be to breathe in a nuclear-free world, if only the USSR and USA would break the deadlock!

But all it took was a ray of hope, and many who only yesterday were cursing nuclear weapons and swearing their commitment to the idea of a nuclear-free world scattered into the bushes.

Voices in Western Europe can even be heard saying that it will be hard to give up American nuclear weapons and missiles.

The problem is, obviously, that those who make policy in the West do not think of nuclear weapons as a defensive matter at all. Otherwise, it is hard to explain why they are now looking for reasons to keep the missiles, or why support is being voiced for the SDI programme at government level.

Both we and the West European public have food for thought there.

More refined manoeuvres are being staged alongside the frontal attacks. Is it not possible, people ask, to take up the more advantageous proposals from the negotiating table, ignoring those which, for various reasons, are not to their taste?

They say that the difficulties in Reykjavik arose because we, the Soviet side, put our fundamental proposals forward as a package. But a package is a balance of interests and concessions, a balanced easing of anxieties, an interdependent combination of security interests. It is as if everything were on one pair of scales - the two dishes have to be made to balance.

That is probably why people in the West want to take this fair, logically sound presentation of an overall understanding to bits, without doing anything to re-establish the balance of concessions.

All the proposals that we made in Reykjavik are objectively related to central strategic weapons systems. Our concessions are also part of the package. If there is no package deal, there will be no concessions either.

This is the reality of our national security. But such an approach safeguards the security both of the USA and of all other countries.

That is why we attach such importance to strengthening the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. No attempt to infringe it is being made on our part. On the contrary, we are against revising, amplifying or doing anything else to it, never mind substituting something different, as the President said - perhaps by mistake - in Reykjavik.

I have to admit, I was startled when he set out during the meeting to persuade the Soviet side, and me personally not to treat the ABM Treaty as "holy writ". How would you have us treat treaties? Like scraps of paper?

International order and basic stability cannot be safeguarded without strict adherence to treaties, especially such a fundamental one. Otherwise, the world will be dominated by caprice and chaos.

I will say it once again: if people choose SDI over nuclear disarmament, only one conclusion is possible - they are trying to use this military programme to invalidate the axiom of modern international relations that was contained in the clear, simple words to which the President of the USA and I put our signatures last year. The words were these: a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

In conclusion I will say this: the Soviet Union put the greatest good will into its proposals. We are not, we are not withdrawing those proposals; everything that we have said in substantiating and elaborating them remains valid.
