

“The Highest Stakes Poker Game Ever Played”: Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Reykjavik Summit of 1986

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Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Honors in History

April 2010

On the basis of this thesis
defended by the candidate on
4/28/10 we, the
undersigned, recommend that the
candidate be awarded
High Honors
in History:

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To my parents,
Patrick and Lynn Freeman,
for letting me dream “way out there in the blue.”
Thank you for your unfailing love and support.
I never would have made it this far without you.

Table of Contents

Introduction

4

Chapter 1

“A Bolt Out of the Blue”: The Lead-Up to the Reykjavik Summit of October 1986

14

Chapter 2

“The Highest Stakes Poker Game Ever Played”: The Reykjavik Summit Sessions

49

Chapter 3

“You Could Have Said Yes,” So Why Didn’t You?: Analyzing the Breakdown and Aftermath of the Reykjavik Summit

80

Conclusion

110

Appendix: List of Acronyms

126

Bibliography

127

Introduction

On October 12, 1986, the two most powerful leaders in the world, U.S. President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, sat in a small room in Hofdi House in Reykjavik, Iceland, and discussed ending the struggle between their two nations for nuclear dominance that had defined the post-World War II world. The way in which they hoped to do this was to implement a plan to abolish all of their nuclear weapons in 10 years. Under this plan, all types of ballistic and cruise missiles along with their nuclear warheads, gravity bombs, and even nuclear shells and torpedoes would be eliminated by the year 1996. It was at this time, Reagan mused, that “he and Gorbachev would come to Iceland and each of them would bring the last nuclear missile from each country with them...He would be very old by then and Gorbachev would not recognize him. The President would say, ‘Hello Mikhail.’ And Gorbachev would say, ‘Ron, is it you?’ And then they would destroy the last missiles” and “give a tremendous party for the whole world.”¹

However, an agreement was not to be had that day in Reykjavik. This occurred despite the fact that both Reagan and Gorbachev had previously expressed a desire to abolish nuclear weapons, with Reagan asking his advisers in the early years of his presidency to develop a plan to eliminate nuclear weapons and Gorbachev setting forth a concrete declaration just ten months earlier, on January 15, 1986, about how to abolish nuclear weapons by the year 2000.² This failure to reach an agreement also occurred in spite of the fact that both men made it clear at Reykjavik that their desire for a nuclear-free world was not merely an abstract principle in which

¹ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Final Meeting. 12 October 1986, 3:25 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. – 6:50 p.m., 5. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document15.pdf>.

² Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005), 60-61; “Statement by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee,” January 15, 1986, in Mikhail Gorbachev, *For a Nuclear-Free World* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1987), 10.

they believed but a concrete goal that they each hoped to realize, as they both set forth and evaluated specific proposals to eliminate nuclear weapons. Clearly, when viewed in light of the fact that both Reagan and Gorbachev had the desire and willingness to rid the world of nuclear weapons, the fact that the two leaders walked away from the Reykjavik Summit without an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons requires explanation. Thus, this thesis seeks to answer the question of why Reagan and Gorbachev, who both clearly had the desire and willingness to abolish nuclear weapons, were unable to formalize an agreement to do so when they had the opportunity at the Reykjavik Summit in 1986.

It is important to note that despite the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev were unable to reach an arms reduction agreement in Iceland, the Reykjavik Summit is still an important part of the larger story of the winding down of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. A sort of *détente*, reminiscent of the kind that existed during the Nixon and Ford administrations in the 1970s, followed the Reagan-Gorbachev meeting in Iceland, with no significant confrontations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union occurring after the summit at Reykjavik concluded. In fact, the Cold War actually ended in 1991, less than a decade after the war scare of 1983, during which the Soviets seriously feared the outbreak of nuclear war with the U.S. This crisis was prompted by a series of American psychological warfare operations against the Soviet Union, Reagan's announcement of his desire to build strategic defenses to protect the U.S. from nuclear attack, and the Able Archer 83 exercises that simulated the launching of nuclear weapons towards the Soviet Union.³ Thus, the question naturally arises as to whether there is any causal link between the Reykjavik Summit and the declining hostility between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

³ Benjamin B. Fischer, "A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare," *Center for the Study of Intelligence*, Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/a-cold-war-conundrum/source.htm#HEADING1-13>.

In examining the Reykjavik Summit and its place in the broader context of American-Soviet relations, one is forced to consider the nature of Reagan's attitudes towards the Soviet Union. Reagan's actions during his first term suggest that he held contradictory views of the USSR, as he modernized and increased U.S. weapons and military forces in an effort to gain superiority over the Soviet Union, yet desperately sought to hold an arms control summit with each of the Soviet leaders of the period. He publicly referred to the USSR as "an evil empire" that will be left "on the ash-heap of history," yet personally wrote letters to Soviet leaders in which he expressed a desire for peace between their two countries.⁴ Reagan clearly assumed two very different personas towards the Soviet Union during his first term, that of the hard-liner and that of the nuclear abolitionist, making one wonder how these two attitudes fit together and which one constituted Reagan's true position. During his second term in office, however, Reagan almost exclusively assumed the role of peacemaker with the Soviets, as he actively negotiated not simply arms limitation, but arms reduction treaties with them. This leads one to wonder what caused the relatively abrupt change in his attitudes.

It could be argued that Reagan always wanted to be a peacemaker with the Soviet Union, which he ultimately became in his second term, but often played the part of a hard-liner in his first term in order to please his domestic political constituency. In the 1980 presidential campaign, Reagan ran on a Republican Party platform that stated that the Soviet Union had achieved superiority over the U.S. in terms of the number and quality of its nuclear weapons and consequently urged the U.S. to increase and modernize its arsenal of strategic weapons in order

⁴ "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida." March 8, 1983. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/30883b.htm> (accessed 15 November 2009); "Address to Members of the British Parliament." June 8, 1982. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/60882a.htm> (accessed 15 November 2009).

to combat Soviet military supremacy.⁵ Since Reagan had won on this platform of strengthening America's defenses, it makes sense that he would have publicly presented himself as a hard-liner on issues relating to American-Soviet relations in his first term and only quietly have sought the improved relations with Soviet leaders that he actually desired. This effort by Reagan to play both ends against the middle was probably a bit confusing to the three Soviet leaders, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko, with whom he endeavored to build a relationship. Consequently, Reagan's private efforts in his first term to foster a good working relationship with a Soviet leader, while publicly denouncing the Soviet Union and building up American defenses, were unsuccessful. However, the 1984 Republican Party platform, on which Reagan ran and won a 49 state landslide, actually advocated the negotiation of arms reduction agreements with the Soviets, thereby providing Reagan with the domestic political cover to both publicly and privately assume the role of peacemaker with the Soviet Union.⁶

In fact, in studying Reagan and Gorbachev's inability to conclude an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons at Reykjavik, one is frequently prompted to consider this link that existed between foreign and domestic policy in both the U.S. and the Soviet Union at the time. As this thesis will illustrate, the behavior of both Reagan and Gorbachev at Reykjavik was significantly influenced by their respective domestic political situations. In Gorbachev's case, his goal for the Reykjavik Summit, which was the conclusion of an agreement that would abolish nuclear weapons, was motivated partly by domestic concerns. His inability to achieve such an agreement with Reagan, however, was partially the result of the President's fear that concluding

⁵ "Republican Party Platform of 1980," *Political Party Platforms*, The American Presidency Project at the University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25844>.

⁶ "Republican Party Platform of 1984," *Political Party Platforms*, The American Presidency Project at the University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25845>.

such an agreement would have negative political consequences for him and the Republican Party in the U.S.

This topic also forces one to consider the nature and effects of summit diplomacy, whereby world leaders meet to conduct negotiations. By virtue of the fact that it is the individuals with the greatest authority in foreign policymaking who are the key participants in summits, these events typically become highly publicized and the public generally develops and expresses high expectations for these meetings. As a result of this publicity and anticipation, summits generally become rather dramatic affairs, as leaders feel pressured to reach an agreement so as not to disappoint public expectations. It is important to consider the effect that this pressure may have had on the substance of Reagan and Gorbachev's discussions at the Reykjavik Summit in 1986. Another important facet of summit diplomacy is that it disengages leaders from the advice of their aides and provides them with no real "escape route" during summit sessions, as world leaders, who have the ultimate authority in foreign affairs in their respective countries, would lose face if they pleaded the need to take a break from negotiations to consult with their subordinates on the substance of the proposals being discussed.⁷ However, this was not the case at the Reykjavik Summit, so it will be important to consider this departure from the norm.

The historiography of the Reykjavik Summit is relatively limited, as the summit is typically the focus of only a single chapter in a larger book on the Cold War or the nuclear arms race. In fact, this thesis may actually be the longest piece of writing on the Reykjavik Summit to date. The question of why Reagan and Gorbachev were unable to reach an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons at Reykjavik is generally only accorded a few lines or neglected altogether. Nevertheless, some answers to the question of why the two leaders failed to conclude an

⁷ Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., "Reagan's Turn on Summit Diplomacy," *SAIS Review* 8, no. 2 (1988): 71.

agreement in Iceland that would eliminate nuclear weapons have been set forth and need to be evaluated.

The first major school of thought on why the two leaders could not agree at Reykjavik to abolish their nuclear weapons is that Reagan and Gorbachev were not being serious in their discussion of eliminating nuclear weapons. Thus, it was no real wonder that they were unable to reach an agreement on the subject, as neither leader intended for his proposal on the abolition of nuclear weapons to be taken seriously. This line of argument is most clearly articulated by P. Edward Haley in the article “‘You Could Have Said Yes’: Lessons from Reykjavik” and Frances Fitzgerald in the book *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*. According to this argument, Gorbachev only proposed the elimination of nuclear weapons at Reykjavik because he did not like Reagan’s proposal to eliminate all offensive ballistic missiles, as the Soviets had an edge over the Americans in this type of weapon. Gorbachev thought that Reagan would reject this proposal of nuclear abolitionism upon hearing it, allowing him to break up the summit on the pretence that Reagan was unreceptive to his proposal. Even when Reagan did accept Gorbachev’s proposal to abolish nuclear weapons, Gorbachev was confident in the knowledge that the American Congress would never ratify a treaty that eliminated nuclear weapons. For his part, the argument states, Reagan knew that even if he accepted Gorbachev’s offer to rid the world of nuclear weapons, Gorbachev would ultimately not want to follow through with this proposal. Thus, Reagan planned to gain concessions from Gorbachev in return for abandoning the issue of eliminating nuclear weapons.⁸

The present study completely rejects this argument that Reagan and Gorbachev were not being serious in their discussion of the abolition of nuclear weapons. First of all, neither Haley

⁸ To read these arguments in full, please see P. Edward Haley, “‘You Could Have Said Yes’: Lessons from Reykjavik,” *Orbis* 31, no. 1 (1987): 95-97 and Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 364-365.

nor Fitzgerald presents any substantive evidence that the two leaders were not realistically considering the elimination of nuclear weapons, and my own research has not uncovered any evidence supporting this claim either. Rather, the arguments of Haley and Fitzgerald are based solely on conjecture. Secondly, Gorbachev set forth his proposal to abolish all nuclear weapons before Reagan proposed the elimination of all offensive ballistic missiles, making it virtually impossible for Gorbachev to have offered this proposal because he was dissatisfied with Reagan's suggestion about eliminating all offensive ballistic missiles. Lastly, both men, particularly Reagan, had a long history of believing in nuclear abolitionism. Prior to the summit, both Reagan and Gorbachev had repeatedly stated that they desired the abolition of nuclear weapons, so it seems unlikely that either leader would have halfheartedly presented a proposal to eliminate nuclear weapons for fear that the other leader would take the proposal seriously and insist that it be implemented.

The second major school of thought about why the summit ended without an agreement centers on the two leaders' fundamentally opposing positions on whether the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) should be confined to the laboratory for ten years. This argument is best presented by Paul Lettow in the book *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*.⁹ While it is true that SDI proved to be a stumbling block in the negotiations at Reykjavik, I think that Lettow's unqualified assertion that this was the reason that the two leaders could not reach an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons is superficial, as it overlooks the larger forces that shaped these positions. Thus, this thesis aims to identify and describe those forces that caused Reagan and Gorbachev to maintain the positions that they did on SDI. It will also show that Reagan was not quite as firm in his position of refusing to restrict research on SDI

⁹ Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 226.

to the laboratory for 10 years as he later stated, but rather maintained this position due to the influence of other forces.

Finally, other scholars have offered additional explanations of why the two leaders were unable to reach an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons that have garnered less support from other historians, but are nevertheless worth mentioning. In the article "Reagan's Turn on Summit Diplomacy," Charles H. Fairbanks Jr. argues that the two leaders' failure to reach an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons was the inevitable result of their use of summit diplomacy as the means of addressing this issue. Disengaged from the advice of their top aides, both leaders allowed their discussion to take an unpredictable turn and were then unprepared to come to any real resolution on the unexpected proposal that emerged to abolish all nuclear weapons.¹⁰ Also, in the book *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*, which was cited above, Fitzgerald suggests that Reagan and Gorbachev were unable to come to an agreement that would eliminate nuclear weapons because the American delegation was hopelessly unprepared for the summit and so was forced to cling to their old proposal that provided for the protection of SDI.¹¹ Lastly, both Richard Rhodes, in *Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race*, and Jay Winik, in *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War*, present the argument that the fault lies with Reagan's and Gorbachev's aides, who convinced the two leaders not to alter their positions on SDI, thereby preventing them from reaching a compromise that would have allowed them to conclude an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons.¹²

¹⁰ Fairbanks, "Reagan's Turn on Summit Diplomacy," 80.

¹¹ Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 355-357.

¹² Richard Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 261-262 and Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 515.

This thesis is based upon interviews with members of the American delegation to the summit, as well as an examination of both American and Soviet memoirs, the official American memoranda of conversation and Soviet transcripts of the summit sessions, notes from meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev and their respective aides prior to the summit, Reagan's official talking points for the summit, transcripts of press conferences and speeches made by members of each delegation after the summit collapsed, and other similar primary sources. My analysis of these sources leads me to agree largely with the explanation set forth by Rhodes and Winik. However, this thesis will argue that only Reagan was restrained by the advice of his hard-line aides, which prevented him from striking a compromise on SDI so that an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons could be reached. It will also argue that the two leaders could not reach an agreement because Reagan was constrained by the fear of a negative reaction by the American people, particularly his conservative base, if he made any concessions on SDI to Gorbachev. Thus, this thesis makes an original contribution to the literature by offering a new explanation of why Reagan and Gorbachev, who both had the desire and willingness to abolish nuclear weapons, were unable to conclude such an agreement when they had the opportunity at the Reykjavik Summit. It will also add to the literature on the summit because it is based in part on documents that have only been declassified recently and have not been used in other works.

Near the end of the final summit session, before the negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev completely collapsed, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who up to this point had been a relatively silent participant in the summit negotiations, issued a plea to the two leaders to try to find a way to reach an agreement, stating, "the two sides were so close to accomplishing a historic task, to decisions of such historic significance, that if future generations read the minutes of these meetings, and saw how close we had come but how we did not use

these opportunities, they would never forgive us.”¹³ If we do indeed ever hope to forgive Reagan and Gorbachev for their actions during this “lost weekend,” understanding *why* they could not reach an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons at Reykjavik is the first key step in the process.

¹³ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Final Meeting. 12 October 1986, 14.

Chapter 1

“A Bolt Out of the Blue”: The Lead-Up to the Reykjavik Summit of October 1986¹⁴

On September 30, 1986, U.S. President Ronald Reagan announced at a White House press conference that he would be meeting with General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, on the weekend of October 11-12. Billed as merely a pre-summit, this meeting was the brainchild of Gorbachev, who proposed it in a letter to Reagan that was delivered to the President by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze when he visited Washington, D.C. on September 19.¹⁵ Within a day, Reagan assented to Gorbachev's proposal to meet for “a quick one-on-one meeting,” but made his agreement conditional on a fast and fair resolution to the Daniloff affair, which involved the Soviets' arrest on trumped up spying charges of *U.S. News and World Report* journalist Nicholas Daniloff in retaliation for the U.S.'s arrest of Soviet spy Gennadi Zakharov.¹⁶ Thus, the White House waited ten days to announce the meeting with Gorbachev, only revealing it after Daniloff had been successfully freed from Soviet custody.

Reagan also immediately made it known to the Soviets that he preferred the city of Reykjavik over Gorbachev's other suggestion of London as the site for the pre-summit to take place. Despite the fact that it is the capital of a NATO-member country, Reykjavik was and still is quite the improbable location for a meeting between the two most powerful leaders in the world. Consisting of about 80,000 people, Reykjavik started out as a humble fishing village, but

¹⁴ This quotation is taken from Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Frank Gaffney's description of Gorbachev's proposal to meet with Reagan in Reykjavik, Iceland and can be found in Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 500.

¹⁵ “Statement by Secretary George P. Shultz and Remarks by the President on Soviet-United States Relations.” September 30, 1986. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/093086a.htm> (accessed 9 October 2009).

¹⁶ Mikhail Gorbachev to Ronald Reagan, 15 September 1986, 6. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document01.pdf>; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), 728.

has blossomed into the largest city in Iceland. Best known to Americans for being a training site for NASA astronauts, Reykjavik is the northernmost national capital in the world and boasts temperatures that hover around the freezing point, rainfall every other hour, and only a few precious hours of sunlight per day in the month of October, which was when the Reagan-Gorbachev meeting took place there.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Secretary of State George Shultz thought that Reykjavik was a good choice for the location of the meeting because it was remote and its government would not insist upon being involved in negotiations or holding social events, which would distract from the work that the two leaders needed to do.¹⁸ Also, Reagan liked the symbolism of meeting at a location that was roughly half-way between Moscow and Washington.¹⁹

Reagan's agreement to the meeting came as a surprise to many, both inside and outside the administration, given the state of U.S.-Soviet relations at that point and the fact that Reagan had previously rejected both the idea of holding a meeting with Gorbachev in the months prior to the 1986 midterm elections and the notion of meeting Gorbachev in a neutral country. Reagan was still hoping and waiting to schedule that summit meeting in Washington that Gorbachev had promised him when they first met at the Geneva Summit in November 1985. Nevertheless, the President started to make plans to meet Gorbachev in Iceland and the world waited and wondered if a framework for an arms control agreement would emerge.

This chapter aims to briefly describe the history of arms control negotiations between the Americans and Soviets prior to the Reykjavik Summit in order to provide context for the meeting and to show that both Reagan and Gorbachev clearly had a desire to abolish nuclear weapons

¹⁷ Kenneth L. Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summits – A Skeptic's Account*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 21.

¹⁸ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 743.

¹⁹ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, Translated by Georges Peronansky and Tatjana Varsavsky, (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 414.

prior to the summit in Iceland. This chapter will also explore the two leaders' goals for the meeting, as well as the preparations made for it by each side. Finally, it will demonstrate how Reagan's and Gorbachev's goals for the meeting affected the preparations made by their respective countries for the summit, which in turn affected their performances at Reykjavik.

Arms Control Negotiations Prior to the Reykjavik Summit

Having run on a Republican platform that stated that "before arms control negotiations may be undertaken, the security of the United States must be assured by the funding and deployment of strong military forces sufficient to deter conflict at any level or to prevail in battle should aggression occur," Reagan entered the White House in favor of a massive modernization and buildup of American military forces and staunchly opposed to the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), which imposed limits on each type of nuclear weapon that the U.S. and the Soviet Union could possess, but permitted the Soviets to maintain an advantage in intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) warheads.²⁰ Despite Reagan's personal belief in nuclear abolitionism and his agreement to informally follow the provisions of SALT II as long as the Soviets did the same, he was immediately perceived by the Soviets as a hard-liner on arms control issues, thereby setting a negative tone for American-Soviet arms control negotiations, which occurred only intermittently, during Reagan's first term.²¹

Prior to the start of negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) with the Soviet Union in Geneva in 1981, however, Reagan did adopt the famed "zero-zero" proposal, which advocated the abolition of intermediate-range missiles in Europe and was viewed by the

²⁰ "Republican Party Platform of 1980," *Political Party Platforms*, The American Presidency Project at the University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25844>; Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 32.

²¹ Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 152.

President as an initial step towards achieving his goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons.²² This was a very radical proposal at the time, as it would abolish an entire class of nuclear weapons (intermediate-range nuclear forces), thereby making it one of the first serious efforts to move discussions with the Soviets away from merely arms limitation and towards actual arms reduction. At that point in time, though, the Soviets were the only ones with intermediate range missiles (SS-20s) in Europe and so opposed the “zero-zero” plan based on the fact that they would be the only ones eliminating missiles under its provisions.²³ However, in accordance with an agreement that President Jimmy Carter had signed in 1979, the U.S. was planning to deploy its own INF missiles (Pershing IIs) in Europe at the end of 1983 to counterbalance the Soviet SS-20s. Thus, under the “zero-zero” proposal, the U.S. would in fact also be eliminating INF missiles, as it would not be deploying Pershing II missiles in Europe as it had previously planned.²⁴ The Soviets did not see the situation this way, however, and talks between the two countries ultimately broke off.

The two sides decided to try negotiating with one another again a year later, re-opening arms control negotiations in Geneva in the summer of 1982, with separate talks being conducted on INF missiles and strategic arms reduction (START). In between the 1981 and 1982 arms control negotiation sessions at Geneva, the nuclear freeze movement, which reached the height of its popularity around this time, staged massive demonstrations against nuclear weapons across the globe. The most notable of these protests against nuclear weapons took place in New York City on June 12, 1982, during which an estimated 600,000 to 750,000 people from around the world marched through downtown Manhattan and then rallied in Central Park in favor of

²² Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 59-60.

²³ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 553.

²⁴ Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 59; Reagan, *An American Life*, 551.

immediate nuclear disarmament.²⁵ As the largest demonstration in favor of nuclear abolitionism in U.S. history, this enormous outpouring of public opposition to the continued maintenance of nuclear weapons probably contributed to the American decision to maintain the “zero-zero” proposal of 1981 in the new session of INF talks and to propose reducing each side’s nuclear warheads by a third and strategic missiles by half in the new START talks.²⁶

Nevertheless, it is important to note that while Reagan was making these arms reduction proposals, he was also seriously pursuing a new policy called “Peace Through Strength,” whereby the U.S. would update and increase its military forces in an effort to gain military equivalency or superiority over the Soviets. Thus, Reagan appeared to be simultaneously advocating two seemingly contradictory ideas, achieving U.S. military supremacy and reducing nuclear arms. These ideas were not in opposition to one another, however, but actually worked in tandem, as Reagan hoped that the modernization of U.S. conventional and nuclear forces would ensure nuclear deterrence and prompt the Soviets to come to the negotiating table seeking reductions in nuclear arms.²⁷ However, the Soviets neither made nor agreed to any proposals of the sweeping nature that the Americans desired, but merely offered to reduce their SS-20 missiles in Europe by a third provided that the U.S. did not go through with its planned deployment of Pershing II missiles in Europe at the end of 1983.²⁸

It was also during this second try at negotiations that Reagan announced his dream of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which was a space-based defense program. SDI, which was meant to be non-nuclear in nature, was supposed to be a strategic defense system that could

²⁵ Paul L. Montgomery, “Throngs Fill Manhattan To Protest Nuclear Weapons,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1982, www.proquest.com.

²⁶ Ibid.; Reagan, *An American Life*, 563.

²⁷ “Address to the Nation on Strategic Arms Reduction and Nuclear Deterrence,” November 22, 1982. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/112282d.htm> (accessed 12 October 2009).

²⁸ Letter, Yuri Andropov to Ronald Reagan, August 4, 1983 in Reagan, *An American Life*, 576-8.

intercept and destroy incoming Soviet ballistic missiles in the event of a nuclear attack. In his speech announcing the project on March 23, 1983, Reagan hailed it as “an effort which holds the promise of changing the course of human history,” and which could allow us to “begin to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles.”²⁹

Reagan thought that if we could successfully deploy strategic defenses, we could begin abolishing the nuclear missiles that the current nuclear strategy of mutual assured destruction (MAD) required we rely upon for our defense.³⁰ The American media quickly branded the project as unfeasible and unrealistic, though, dubbing it “Star Wars,” which was a reference to the popular science fiction films created by George Lucas. This moniker not only implied that the proposed SDI program was so fanciful that it belonged in the fictional world of the movies, but it was also a swipe at Reagan’s previous career as an actor in Hollywood. The “Star Wars” nickname has persisted, however, and most people still use it to refer to the SDI program to this day.³¹

While SDI would ultimately become one of the major stumbling blocks in negotiations at Reykjavik, it was not initially the focus of Soviet anger that it would become three years later. Rather, the Soviets were more worried at this point about stopping the planned U.S. deployment of Pershing II missiles in Europe. Hundreds of thousands of Western Europeans took to the streets with the hope that massive demonstrations against the presence of Pershing II missiles in Western Europe might convince the U.S. to scrap its planned deployment of these missiles. An estimated 620,000 protestors turned out in various cities in West Germany, with 350,000 people demonstrating in Rome, 250,000 in London, 100,000 in Vienna, 25,000 in Paris, 20,000 in

²⁹ “Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security,” March 23, 1986. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/32383d.htm> (accessed 10 October 2009).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 113.

Stockholm, and 4,000 in Dublin.³² Nevertheless, Soviet and Western European efforts failed and the U.S. did deploy its Pershing II and Tomahawk missiles in the United Kingdom, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands in November 1983, thereby prompting the Soviets to walk out of both the INF and START negotiations that were going on in Geneva.³³ These talks would remain dormant for 15 months, not resuming until March 12, 1985, which was the day after Mikhail Gorbachev became the new General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.³⁴

A few months after he became the new leader of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev agreed to meet Reagan for a summit in Geneva on November 19-20. At this summit, the two leaders agreed to meet for two more summits, one in Washington and one in Moscow, and agreed to the principle of a 50% reduction in strategic offensive arms.³⁵

After the Geneva Summit, the next substantive proposal made in the realm of arms control was set forth by Gorbachev on January 15, 1986 and consisted of a step-by-step plan to rid the world of nuclear weapons by the year 2000.³⁶ While many deemed Gorbachev's January 15 statement a propaganda tactic, Gorbachev intended it to be a serious foreign policy proposal.³⁷ Despite the fact that Gorbachev was in charge of one of the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons in the world, he had definite leanings towards nuclear abolitionism. Following his declaration of January 15, 1986, Gorbachev continued to advocate the elimination of nuclear weapons for the remainder of his time as head of the Soviet Union. He had also raised his desire to see the two world leaders take the first steps towards bringing about a nuclear-free world at the Geneva

³² James M. Markham, "Vast Crowds Hold Rallies in Europe Against U.S. Arms," *New York Times*, October 23, 1983, www.proquest.com.

³³ Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 134-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

³⁵ Reagan, *An American Life*, 637; *Ibid.*, 639.

³⁶ Statement by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, January 15, 1986 in Mikhail Gorbachev, *For a Nuclear-Free World*, (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1987), 10.

³⁷ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 403.

Summit, saying, “the Soviet Union was for reducing the number of weapons. History would remember the President, as well as the Soviet leader, for having begun to eliminate nuclear weapons.”³⁸ He knew that Reagan shared the dream of a world without nuclear weapons, despite the fact that the President was also in charge of one of the world’s most massive arsenals of nuclear weapons. Having begun to speak about his desire to eliminate nuclear weapons as early as the 1960s, Reagan actually asked his advisers in both 1981 and 1982 to devise plans to rid the world of nuclear weapons.³⁹ He also developed the concept of SDI because he thought that it would make it safe to abolish nuclear weapons.⁴⁰

The last significant arms control proposal that was made prior to the Reykjavik Summit was set forth in a letter that Reagan sent to Gorbachev on July 25, 1986. In this letter, Reagan revealed a new plan that had been devised by his administration whereby both the U.S. and the Soviet Union would agree to restrict their work on strategic defenses to research permitted by the ABM Treaty for at least five years or longer, depending on how long it took the two sides to determine whether the deployment of strategic defenses would be feasible and effective. When one country decided that it was ready to move beyond the research phase, it had to offer up a plan for the sharing of its strategic defense technology and for the elimination of all offensive ballistic missiles.⁴¹ It was in devising a response to this letter that Gorbachev would ultimately have the idea for the Reykjavik Summit.

³⁸ Geneva Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Third Plenary Meeting. 20 November 1985, 11:30 a.m.- 12:40 p.m., 5. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB172/Doc21.pdf>.

³⁹ Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 47; *Ibid.*, 60-1.

⁴⁰ “Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security,” March 23, 1986.

⁴¹ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, July 25, 1986, folder “Preparation for 07/25/1986 Letter to Gorbachev – July 1986, 7 of 7,” box 92177, Robert Linhard Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 2-3.

Gorbachev's Motivations for Proposing the Reykjavik Meeting

Gorbachev's decision to propose a meeting with Reagan in Reykjavik was indeed a "bolt out of the blue" to the Soviets as well as the Americans, just as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Frank Gaffney characterized it.⁴² The idea for the meeting with Reagan was Gorbachev's own and came after he received Reagan's letter of July 25 while vacationing in the Crimea. The Foreign Ministry had prepared a response to Reagan's letter which it sent to Gorbachev for his signature, but Gorbachev was highly dissatisfied with this response upon reading it, calling it "simply crap!"⁴³ After reading this draft letter, Gorbachev wrote that he felt that he was "gradually being forced into accepting a logic that was alien to me – a logic that was in open contradiction to our new attitude, to the process we had started in Geneva [at the summit] and – most important – to the hopes of ordinary people."⁴⁴ Gorbachev felt manipulated by the Foreign Ministry, which was not incorporating his proposals to eliminate nuclear weapons and reduce conventional ones into its response letter to Reagan or into its overall strategy. So, Gorbachev decided to take matters into his own hands and propose a more radical response to Reagan's letter that he hoped would achieve real progress: a one-on-one meeting with the President.

Thus, Gorbachev sent Reagan a rather unusual letter in which he spent the first two and a half out of six pages blaming the U.S. for the lack of progress at the Geneva arms control negotiations, charging that "it is a fact, after all, that despite vigorous efforts by the Soviet side we have still not moved an inch closer to an agreement on arms reduction."⁴⁵ He then proceeded to outline for the next two and a half pages the Soviets' current positions on the issues of

⁴² Winik, *On the Brink*, 500.

⁴³ Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, Translated and Edited by Robert D. English and Elizabeth Tucker (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 78.

⁴⁴ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 414.

⁴⁵ Mikhail Gorbachev to Ronald Reagan, September 15, 1986, 3.

SDI/ABM Treaty, INF, and nuclear testing. Gorbachev did link defensive and offensive issues in this letter, writing that if work on strategic defenses, which was a veiled reference to SDI, was restricted to the laboratory for 15 years, then “significant reductions in strategic offensive arms” could be worked out.⁴⁶ On the issue of INF, Gorbachev accepted Reagan’s “zero-zero” proposal, but specifically stated that it did not apply to Soviet missiles in Asia. Finally, Gorbachev urged the U.S. to accept a cessation of nuclear testing and dismissed the U.S.’s reasons for not agreeing to a ban on nuclear testing.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, after five pages of denigrating the U.S.’s willingness to reach an arms control agreement and criticizing their positions on arms control issues, Gorbachev surprisingly proposed a meeting with Reagan. The first reason that he gave in the letter for wanting to meet with Reagan was that a meeting between the two leaders was the only way to break the stalemates in the START and INF talks going on in Geneva. He then stated that this meeting would allow the two leaders to work out frameworks for agreements that could then be signed during his visit to Washington for a second summit.⁴⁸ Thus, it appeared from his letter that Gorbachev proposed the Reykjavik meeting so that the two leaders could invigorate the deadlocked Geneva negotiations and work out instructions for agreements on the three issues of SDI/ABM, INF, and nuclear testing, which could then be signed at a summit in the U.S.

Gorbachev’s Goals for Reykjavik

In spite of the fact that Gorbachev wrote in the letter of September 15 to Reagan that their meeting should “not be a detailed one, for its purpose and significance would be to demonstrate political will,” Gorbachev had very ambitious goals for the Reykjavik meeting right from the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

start.⁴⁹ In fact, Gorbachev's main goal for the Reykjavik Summit was that he and Reagan would be able to devise a framework for an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons. He actually had this in mind when he was reviewing the draft letter to Reagan that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared that contained the proposal to meet at Reykjavik. Anatoly Chernyaev, who was a foreign policy adviser to Gorbachev and the only staff member he took with him on his vacation to the Crimea, wrote a letter to Anatoly Kovalev, who had prepared the draft letter to Reagan, in which he stated:

I was present at the inception of the Reykjavik idea. I was the first to hear Gorbachev formulate his plan for the summit. And in the light of these ideas, here is my opinion about what you came up with...The January 15 program has been completely forgotten, together with its statement about a nuclear-free world by the end of the century. And so the issue of strategic arms limitation has been pushed into the background although it is the primary danger to humanity, as Gorbachev has openly said on many occasions.⁵⁰

Chernyaev's singling out of the fact that the letter did not contain any provisions from or even make any mention of Gorbachev's January 15th Statement on the Liquidation of Nuclear Weapons by the Year 2000 means that this must have been an important point to Gorbachev, as Chernyaev made it clear at the start of the letter that his reactions to Kovalev's draft letter were formed in light of Gorbachev's intentions for the summit.

In meetings with the Reykjavik Preparation Group, Gorbachev himself also made it clear that reaching an agreement with Reagan on the abolition of nuclear weapons was his main goal for the Reykjavik Summit. In his October 4th meeting with the Reykjavik Preparation Group, for example, Gorbachev made several references to his desire to formulate a framework for an agreement eliminating nuclear weapons with Reagan. At the beginning of the meeting, he stated "and we must emphasize that we are proposing the liquidation of nuclear weapons, which we already discussed with the President in Geneva. The talks must be devoted precisely to this goal.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 78.

We should link this position with my January 15th statement.”⁵¹ He stressed this idea again later, stating “I repeat, the leitmotif is the liquidation of nuclear weapons” and reiterated that his top goal was the “preparation of a [draft] agreement based on the maximum program. My ultimate goal is the liquidation of nuclear weapons.”⁵² There was no more explicit way in which Gorbachev could have articulated his desire to reach an agreement with Reagan to abolish nuclear weapons than he did in this meeting.

Gorbachev also expressed this goal to the Politburo in the weeks leading up to the summit, adopting Chernyaev’s advice that “we should start with the thesis about the necessity of liquidating nuclear weapons, which has been repeatedly stressed by the U.S. president as well. This goal should define our intentions to reduce and liquidate strategic arms.”⁵³ The fact that Gorbachev told both the Politburo and the Reykjavik Preparation Group that his main desire for the summit was an agreement eliminating nuclear weapons shows that he must have been serious about it.

While these statements make it clear that Gorbachev truly wanted to reach an agreement at Reykjavik to abolish nuclear weapons, Gorbachev’s motives for concluding such an agreement are worth exploring. Contrary to the nature of Reagan’s beliefs, Gorbachev’s nuclear abolitionism was not always completely rooted in a utopian desire to bring about a world in which people did not live in fear of nuclear annihilation. To be sure, Gorbachev did have a moral aversion to nuclear weapons based on their destructive consequences for humanity, but as his advisor Andrei Grachev notes, this hatred of nuclear weapons on moral principle arose

⁵¹ Anatoly Chernyaev’s Notes on Gorbachev’s Instructions to the Reykjavik Preparation Group, 4 October 1986. Translated by Anna Melyakova and Svetlana Savranskaya, 1, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document05.pdf>.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵³ Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 82.

largely after the disaster at Chernobyl in April 1986.⁵⁴ On April 26, reactor number four at a nuclear power plant in the town of Chernobyl in Ukraine exploded, setting buildings that housed two nuclear reactors on fire and emitting extremely high levels of radiation.⁵⁵ In fact, the amount of radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl disaster was the same as that which would have been emitted after a twelve-megaton nuclear explosion, which is enormous if one considers that the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima was only a 0.015 megaton explosion.⁵⁶ Also, this fallout not only covered Ukraine, but reached parts of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland, exposing thousands of individuals to dangerously high levels of radiation.⁵⁷ By May 12, which was roughly two weeks after the disaster at Chernobyl, 10,198 people from areas near the explosion had been ““admitted to the hospital for observation or treatment, of whom 345 [including thirty-five children] show symptoms of radiation syndrome.””⁵⁸ Clearly, the Chernobyl disaster had profoundly destructive effects on many human lives, which was a fact not lost on Gorbachev. In his address on the Chernobyl disaster to the Soviet people, Gorbachev stated that ““the accident at Chernobyl showed again what an abyss will open if nuclear war befalls mankind. The stockpiled nuclear arsenals are fraught with thousands upon thousands of disasters far more horrible than the one at Chernobyl.””⁵⁹ Gorbachev was clearly expressing a rejection of nuclear weapons that was based on moral grounds, as these weapons had the power to kill and maim people, as well as destroy their homelands. As one of the Chernobyl evacuees put it, after the explosion, ““we didn’t just lose a town. We lost our whole lives.””⁶⁰ The

⁵⁴ Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 81.

⁵⁵ Richard Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-22; *The Manhattan Project: An Interactive History*, U.S. Department of Energy – Office of History and Heritage Resources, <http://www.cfo.doe.gov/me70/manhattan/hiroshima.htm>.

⁵⁷ Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly*, 14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

accident at Chernobyl motivated a moral dimension to Gorbachev's nuclear abolitionism, which in turn prompted him to seriously seek nuclear arms reduction negotiations with the U.S. Speaking to the Politburo just two weeks after the Chernobyl disaster, Gorbachev firmly stated that "we need negotiations. Even with this 'gang' [the U.S.] we need to negotiate. If not, what remains? Look at the Chernobyl catastrophe. Just a puff and we can all feel what nuclear war would be like."⁶¹

It should be noted, however, that Gorbachev's nuclear abolitionism was primarily motivated by domestic concerns. In February 1986 at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev formally presented a broad domestic reform program known as *perestroika*, which literally means "restructuring," that he hoped would be able to revitalize both the flagging economy and the demoralized society of the Soviet Union. While Gorbachev stated that his new program would keep the Soviet Union a socialist state, it clearly injected an element of capitalism into the Soviets' current economic system. The main goal of the economic dimension of *perestroika* was to advance the Soviet economy by improving the quality of its domestic enterprises, enabling them to produce high-quality goods and offer high-quality services. This was to be accomplished by letting market forces, or what Gorbachev called "real social demands," determine the production levels of various goods, rather than having the government order industries to produce a certain number of goods. In addition, the Soviet government was meant to actively facilitate an atmosphere of economic competition among industries, thereby ensuring that they would all consistently improve the quality of their goods in an effort to impress consumers. Also, the government planned to instruct Soviet companies to link their employees' salaries to the amount of profits that they generated, thereby encouraging employees to work hard at creating and selling quality products so that their salaries would

⁶¹ Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 81.

increase.⁶² Finally, the Soviet Union planned to invest in new technologies and areas of science, in the hopes that it would be able to develop its own domestic technological industries, as well as uncover more effective means of producing goods.⁶³

The social aspect of *perestroika* centered on improving the quality of life of Soviet citizens, namely through increasing the amount of housing available, as well as the amount of food. Thus, the Soviet Union began investing money in several construction projects, so that additional homes could be built in both rural and urban areas. Additionally, *perestroika* called for improving the school system by putting more emphasis on teaching students about math, science, and technology and by financially motivating teachers to acquire more education and training in order to improve their teaching skills. There was also talk of improving the quality of Soviet public health services, but Gorbachev had not yet set forth a specific plan for doing this in 1986.⁶⁴

Clearly, both the economic and social initiatives of Gorbachev's *perestroika* were sweeping in nature and accordingly would require a lot of funding to be enacted. The government would need money to invest in new science and technology programs, to build housing for its homeless population, to pay teachers to obtain additional training, and to support a restructuring of public health services to improve their quality. However, at the time that Gorbachev proposed his *perestroika* plan, the Soviet economy was in shambles. The country was suffering from declining rates of economic growth and was in an increasingly precarious

⁶² Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 85-6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 27-8.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 98-100.

financial situation.⁶⁵ Thus, it was initially unclear as to what would be the source of the money needed to fund these new domestic reform initiatives.

Gorbachev was acutely aware of the fact that obtaining funding for his new proposals was going to be a difficult task with the Soviet economy in such poor shape. So, he devised a solution whereby he would seek an end to the nuclear arms race with the U.S., which would allow the Soviet defense budget to be slashed, thereby freeing up money to fund his *perestroika* plan. Thus, Gorbachev's nuclear abolitionism was largely driven by a desire to spend less on defense projects and funnel the money that was then being saved to the funding of his reform initiatives. Gorbachev even acknowledged this link between his stance on arms control issues and his desire to enact reform in the Soviet Union, telling his aide Grachev in an interview after he left office that bringing an end to the arms race with the U.S. was his top foreign policy priority, because "without that, any plans for *perestroika* would have had to remain in the realm of fiction."⁶⁶

Gorbachev's openness about his desire to reach an agreement with Reagan at Reykjavik to abolish nuclear weapons suggests that he had a relatively free hand in devising Soviet foreign policy, as he was able to voice his radical nuclear abolitionist goals without anyone from the Politburo or Soviet military trying to persuade him against it. While it is true that this desire of Gorbachev's was no surprise to the Politburo or Soviet military, as he had set forth a proposal in January of that year to eliminate nuclear weapons by the year 2000, there were rumors widely circulating that the Politburo and Soviet military were unhappy with Gorbachev's proposals and were considering either replacing him as General Secretary or assassinating him. For example, in the daily CIA report known as "The President's Daily Brief" for October 11, 1986, the first

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁶ Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 55.

day of the summit, there was a message that the Soviet army had turned against Gorbachev because of his desire to reach visionary agreements with the Americans and were considering a plot to assassinate him so as to decrease the likelihood that any agreements would be concluded between the USSR and the U.S.⁶⁷ The records of Gorbachev's conversations with Politburo members and Soviet military personnel in the weeks leading up to the summit, however, show no evidence of opposition to any of Gorbachev's statements about the direction the Soviets should take at Reykjavik, which were actually received as the final word on the matter. Gorbachev wrote that he had the strong support of the Politburo on his arms control initiatives, and while he did acknowledge some opposition among members of the military to his proposals, he had the support of its highest ranking member, Chief of the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, who ultimately headed the Soviet delegation at the meeting of the working group on military issues at Reykjavik.⁶⁸

The Soviet Politburo and military were actually also in favor of cuts in nuclear arms, so this probably explains their willingness to let Gorbachev play the dominant role in formulating Soviet policy positions for the summit. However, it should be noted that the Soviet military did not want to completely eliminate nuclear weapons and actually did want to maintain a slight edge in the number of weapons that the Soviets had in comparison to those possessed by the Americans, because they were not confident in their weapons technology, fearing that it was inferior to American technology. Nevertheless, Akhromeyev, who was very loyal to Gorbachev at this time, did his best to ensure that the military did not get out of line with Gorbachev and interfere with his formulation of Soviet proposals for the summit.

⁶⁷ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 757.

⁶⁸ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 415.

While the Soviet political and military establishment did not oppose Gorbachev in his main goal of reaching a framework for an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons at Reykjavik, this did not mean that they played no role in devising Soviet goals for the summit. They let Gorbachev know that they had a goal of their own for the meeting: the halting of SDI. The Soviets feared SDI because they thought that it would make it possible for the U.S. to gain first strike capability, whereby the U.S. would attack the Soviet Union and then deploy strategic defenses to prevent the Soviets from attacking the U.S. in retaliation. Thus, they wanted Gorbachev to find a way to stop the program, which was very important to Reagan, as it was his brainchild and played an important role in his larger vision of a world without nuclear weapons. If Gorbachev found himself unable to halt work on SDI, the Politburo and military wanted a similar strategic defense program of their own, which Gorbachev knew the Soviet Union would be unable to afford if he was going to implement his new domestic reform programs. So, stuck between a rock and a hard place, Gorbachev accepted the obstruction of SDI as another Soviet goal for the summit.⁶⁹

Finally, another more minor goal that Gorbachev had for the Reykjavik meeting was to further improve his image as a world statesman and to present an image of the Soviet Union as a nation working for peace. While the phenomenon known as “Gorbymania,” which was a fascination and love for Mikhail Gorbachev that eventually gripped Western Europe, had not begun to take hold quite yet, Gorbachev was beginning to win the approbation of Europe’s top leaders and their respective publics by 1986. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously declared after first meeting Gorbachev in 1984, before he had even replaced Konstantin Chernenko as General Secretary, that “I am cautiously optimistic. I like Mr. Gorbachev. We can

⁶⁹ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

do business together.”⁷⁰ French President Francois Mitterand, who was on the opposite end of the political spectrum from the conservative Thatcher, also liked Gorbachev and made a trip to Moscow in July 1986 where he and Gorbachev talked about prospects for arms control agreements with the U.S., and he even gave Gorbachev advice on dealing with Reagan. Even former U.S. President Richard Nixon met with Gorbachev in July 1986 to encourage him to continue to seek arms control agreements with the Reagan administration.⁷¹ Gorbachev liked that he was winning the approval of top European leaders and their peoples and hoped that Reykjavik would further his image as a peacemaker, which would subsequently make him appear to be a leader worthy of Europe’s respect. This was particularly needed after the Chernobyl disaster, which prompted significant Western European suspicion and distrust of Gorbachev for failing to publicly address the accident for 18 days.⁷² Thus, in preparing for Reykjavik, Gorbachev stressed that “Reykjavik will allow us to improve the image of our foreign policy. It will highlight its constructivism, our desire to untie the knots, to end the deadlock that Geneva brought us into” and that even if the meeting failed, it would make it clear to the world that Gorbachev, rather than Reagan, was the one pushing for sweeping arms control agreements that were favored by most world leaders.⁷³

Reagan’s Goals for Reykjavik

In comparison to Gorbachev’s goal that Reykjavik would bring humanity significantly closer to a world without nuclear weapons, Reagan’s goals for the meeting were quite modest. In fact, the U.S. government’s private description of the Reykjavik meeting, which one would

⁷⁰ Margaret Thatcher, interview by John Cole, British Broadcasting Corporation, December 17, 1984.

⁷¹ Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 76.

⁷² Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 167-168.

⁷³ Anatoly Chernyaev’s Notes from the Politburo Session, 8 October 1986. Translated by Anna Melyakova and Svetlana Savranskaya, p. 4, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document08.pdf>.

assume would be its most candid characterization of it, was in sharp contrast to the Soviet Union's portrayal of the meeting. While Gorbachev was instructing the Reykjavik Preparation Group to be prepared to formulate a draft agreement based on his proposal to eliminate nuclear weapons, the U.S. government was privately declaring that "no signed agreements [were] expected or necessary" at Reykjavik.⁷⁴ The U.S. government also stated that "the objective [for Reykjavik] is to identify areas where progress is possible by accelerating negotiating efforts," as opposed to actually achieving progress in these areas at the meeting.⁷⁵ Members of the administration also repeatedly characterized Reykjavik, in both public and private statements, as merely a meeting where preparations for Gorbachev's visit to the U.S. for a summit in Washington would be made.⁷⁶ Despite the fact that Reagan shared Gorbachev's desire to see a world without nuclear weapons, he did not go into the Reykjavik meeting planning to propose an agreement on the matter or even expecting to discuss the topic.⁷⁷ I expect that Reagan thought that if professional arms control specialists had not been able to reach agreements in Geneva to simply eliminate one class of weapons, INF, or reduce strategic offensive weapons, then there was no hope for reaching an agreement on the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons at Reykjavik.

In fact, Reagan's main goal for Reykjavik was simply to set a date for the Washington Summit.⁷⁸ He hoped that Reykjavik would allow him to show Gorbachev that this U.S. summit would be productive, as this would increase his chances of getting Gorbachev to agree to a date

⁷⁴ U.S.G. Speaker's Package for Reykjavik Meeting, October 1986, folder "Reykjavik Meeting Basics 10/12/1986-10/13/1986, 1 of 4," box 56, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Background Briefing by Senior Administration Official, October 2, 1986, folder "Reykjavik Meeting Basics 10/12/1986-10/13/1986, 2 of 4," box 56, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 2; Public Diplomacy Themes, folder "President's Trip to Reykjavik Overall Briefing Book 10/10/1986-10/12/1986, 2 of 2," box 57, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 1.

⁷⁷ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, (New York: Random House, 2004), 213.

⁷⁸ Memo, John M. Poindexter to the President, folder "Reykjavik, 4 of 4," box 90907, NSC: European and Soviet Affairs Directorate Records, Ronald Reagan Library, 1.

for the summit before their Iceland meeting concluded. Reagan hoped to show Gorbachev that a U.S. summit in the near future would be worth his time by demonstrating a will to solve the problems currently facing the U.S. and the USSR, identifying areas in which the two sides could possibly conclude an agreement, and beginning to work to achieve agreements in those issue areas.⁷⁹ Reagan really did not have one or two specific issues on which he was hoping to reach an agreement with Gorbachev. Rather, his attitude was that he would engage Gorbachev on the full range of issues – arms control, bilateral issues, regional matters, and human rights – in hopes that enough progress could be made in one of these areas to justify in Gorbachev’s mind the setting of a date for the Washington Summit.

Unlike Gorbachev, who was hoping that success in Iceland would allow him to enact his *perestroika* reform program, Reagan had no ulterior domestic motive that was impelling him to seek a sweeping arms control agreement at Reykjavik. Reagan did not need a perceived victory at the Reykjavik meeting to improve his popularity or to accord him political capital to get a policy priority enacted into law. Rather, Reagan was actually at the height of his popularity in 1986, with a presidential approval rating that did not dip below the mid-60s until the last two months of the year, after the Iran-Contra scandal broke.⁸⁰ In fact, the Gallup poll conducted October 1-2, 1986, which was a week before Reagan left for Iceland, shows that Reagan had a 64% approval rating heading into the Reykjavik meeting with Gorbachev.⁸¹ Reagan’s high level of popularity is exemplified in the overwhelmingly positive reception he received on July 3-6, 1986 in New York City at Liberty Weekend, which was a series of celebrations meant to

⁷⁹ Talking Points, folder “Briefing Book for Ambassador Matlock for the President’s Trip to Reykjavik, 4 of 10,” box 56, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 1-2.

⁸⁰ *How the Presidents Stack Up – Presidents, 1945-2006*, The Wall Street Journal, <http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-presapp0605-31.html>; *How the Presidents Stack Up – Ronald Reagan*, The Wall Street Journal, <http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-presapp0605-31.html>.

⁸¹ Gallup/Newsweek Poll, Oct, 1986. Retrieved Feb-8-2010 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

commemorate the centennial of the Statue of Liberty. *Time* magazine put a picture of Reagan at the festivities on its cover the following week and featured an article by Lance Morrow in which Reagan was highly praised as ““a Prospero of American memories, a magician who carries a bright, ideal America like a holograph in his mind and projects its image in the air...Reagan, master illusionist, is himself a kind of American dream. Looking at his genial, crinkly face prompts a sense of wonder: How does he pull it off?””⁸² Clearly, Reagan did not need a success at Reykjavik to improve his image in the way that Gorbachev did and so was not overly concerned with reaching an agreement with the General Secretary in Iceland.

If an agreement was going to be reached at Reykjavik on an arms control issue, however, the U.S. thought that it would be in the realm of INF. On September 20, which was the day after Shevardnadze gave Reagan the letter from Gorbachev proposing the Reykjavik meeting, Georgi Kornienko, who worked for Head of the Central Committee’s International Department, Anatoly Dobrynin, stated that INF was the only issue on which an agreement could possibly be reached.⁸³ In addition, in an October 1 Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs press conference on the Reykjavik Summit, deputy spokesman for the ministry Boris Pyadishev singled out INF and nuclear testing as the only two issues on which there was then a significant possibility that an agreement would be reached.⁸⁴ So, in response to these statements, the U.S. began hoping for an INF agreement out of Reykjavik and American officials making preparations for the summit began devoting their attention to the INF issue.⁸⁵

⁸² Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 654-55.

⁸³ Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision: A Memoir* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 429.

⁸⁴ National Security Council Secretariat Memo, American Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, October 1986, folder “Reykjavik Summit Cables,” box 57, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

⁸⁵ Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 429.

Soviet Preparations for Reykjavik

The Politburo, Soviet military, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs all took part in the preparations for the Reykjavik Summit, but these preparations were clearly under the direction of Gorbachev himself. For example, representatives from each of the aforementioned entities, Akhromeyev from the Soviet military, Yuly Vorontsov from the Foreign Ministry, and Kornienko from the International Department of the Central Committee, formulated the official directives for Gorbachev to use at Reykjavik during the first few days after the meeting was publicly announced. However, Gorbachev, taking the advice of his foreign policy adviser Chernyaev, heavily criticized these talking points, arguing that they did not go far enough in seeking to bring about an end to the nuclear arms race. Thus, the directives were reworked in light of Gorbachev's January 15, 1986 proposal.⁸⁶

In preparing for Reykjavik, the Soviets ended up devising new proposals in each of the major arms control issue areas, START, INF, and SDI/ABM Treaty. Although Gorbachev did not mention his position on START in the letter to Reagan proposing the Reykjavik meeting, he had previously agreed with Reagan at the Geneva Summit that the reduction of strategic offensive weapons by 50% was a desirable goal towards which to work, but had disagreed with him on how the reduction would be carried out.⁸⁷ At Reykjavik, Gorbachev proposed for the first time that the cuts in strategic offensive weapons should be across the board, including on heavy land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), which was a category of weapons in which the U.S. had been pushing for reductions for some time.⁸⁸ On INF, Gorbachev reaffirmed the position he laid out in his letter of September 15 to Reagan, which was new at the time, in favor of the complete elimination of INF missiles in Europe, not counting the French and

⁸⁶ Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 83-4.

⁸⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 639.

⁸⁸ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 758.

British missiles.⁸⁹ Although he did not reveal this until the third summit session, Gorbachev had decided during the Soviets' preparations for the summit that he would be willing to agree to the reduction of Soviet INF missiles in Asia to 100.⁹⁰ Finally, in his letter to Reagan, Gorbachev had proposed restricting work on SDI to the laboratory for 15 years, in accordance with his interpretation of the ABM Treaty.⁹¹ However, during the preparations for the Reykjavik meeting, Gorbachev decided to reduce the period during which SDI should be restricted to the laboratory to 10 years.⁹²

In formulating these new proposals during their preparations for the summit, the Soviets were very careful to take American interests into account. Gorbachev repeatedly warned those doing preparatory work for the summit that "in order to move Reagan, we have to give him something. Something with pressure and breakthrough potential has to be done...But all of us – myself, the Politburo, and the MFA – must understand that nothing will come out of it [the Reykjavik Summit] if our proposals lead to a weakening of U.S. Security. The Americans will never agree to it."⁹³ Gorbachev had finally realized that if the Soviets wanted to make real progress with the Americans on arms control, they could not merely reiterate their same tired proposals and hope for a new result. Rather, Gorbachev needed to make Reagan see that his proposals were also in America's best interest.

It is important to note that the Soviets were very tight-lipped about the fact that they were devising new policy proposals to present to Reagan at Reykjavik. In fact, in one of the few public statements made by a Soviet official prior to Reykjavik about Gorbachev's intentions and

⁸⁹ Letter, Mikhail Gorbachev to Ronald Reagan, September 15, 1986, 4.

⁹⁰ Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes from the Politburo Session, 8 October 1986, 5.

⁹¹ Letter, Mikhail Gorbachev to Ronald Reagan, September 15, 1986, 4.

⁹² Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (morning), 4.

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document10.pdf>.

⁹³ Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes on Gorbachev's Instructions to the Reykjavik Preparation Group, 4 October 1986, 1 & 4.

preparations for the meeting, deputy spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pyadishev said that Gorbachev felt that "existing Soviet positions should be enough to assure arms control agreements across the board," suggesting that the Soviets were not actively modifying their proposals in preparation for the meeting in Iceland.⁹⁴ Similarly, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who served as Gorbachev's principal back-up at Reykjavik, stated that the Soviets were planning to talk mostly about arms control issues at Reykjavik, but gave no indication that the Soviets were developing a sweeping set of new proposals for the meeting, instead emphasizing Gorbachev's strong desire that the U.S. adopt the nuclear test ban proposal that Gorbachev had already laid out in his letter of September 15 to Reagan.⁹⁵

It appears that this secrecy on the part of Soviet officials in talking about Reykjavik was deliberate, as a statement made by Gorbachev's top foreign policy aide Anatoly Chernyaev suggests that Gorbachev purposely ordered officials like Pyadishev and Shevardnadze to remain silent about the fact that the Soviets were preparing substantively new proposals for Iceland. Writing to Gorbachev about his views on the proposals that had been prepared for Reykjavik, Chernyaev commented that "the main goal of Reykjavik, if I understood you correctly in the South, is to sweep Reagan off his feet by our bold, even "risky" approach to the central problem of world politics," referring to the nuclear arms race.⁹⁶ In responding to Chernyaev, Gorbachev did not deny that he aimed to "sweep Reagan off his feet," suggesting that he was indeed hoping to surprise him with his extensive new arms control proposals.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ National Security Council Secretariat Memo, American Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, October 1986.

⁹⁵ Doug Long, "Shevardnadze Says Upcoming Talks Could Include Afghanistan," *Reuters*, October 1, 1986, folder "President-Gorbachev Meeting, Reykjavik, October 1986, 3 of 5," box 57, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 1-2.

⁹⁶ Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 81.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

The question of why Gorbachev decided to pull a surprise on Reagan at Reykjavik is one that merits exploration. Initially, it might appear that Gorbachev's use of surprise tactics at Reykjavik indicated a lack of seriousness on his part in achieving real progress on arms control issues, as it seems that Reagan would have been unlikely to accept proposals at Reykjavik that he and his advisers had not had the opportunity to thoroughly examine and consider in light of American interests. However, Gorbachev's use of the element of surprise at the Iceland meeting actually signified a strong commitment to making advances in the realm of arms control. Despite Reagan's professed nuclear abolitionism, he was backed by a group of supporters and surrounded by a team of advisers who were all largely hard-line on defense issues, opposing any cuts in nuclear weapons. Gorbachev was well aware of this fact, telling the Politburo on October 8 that "the right are concerned about Reykjavik, they are intimidating Reagan. Once again we hear appeals to expand the borders of freedom, once again they are speaking of 'a crusade,' threatening to send socialism to the scrap heap of history. Reagan is working on placating the right for his agreement to go to Reykjavik."⁹⁸ Similarly, he wrote that in the weeks leading up to the meeting in Iceland, "the 'hawks' [were] trying all known means to exert maximum pressure on the American President," not to strike any arms reduction agreements with the Soviets.⁹⁹ Clearly, Gorbachev realized that Reagan was subject to the influence of forces that possessed more negative attitudes towards the Soviet Union than he did and accordingly were less likely to want arms control agreements with the Soviets.

Thus, if Gorbachev had revealed the nature of his sweeping new arms control proposals to the Americans prior to Reykjavik, he would merely have been providing Reagan's hard-line advisers with an opportunity to convince the President, while they were all still in Washington,

⁹⁸ Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes from the Politburo Session, 8 October 1986, 1.

⁹⁹ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 415.

to reject these new initiatives. However, if Gorbachev waited until the two leaders were meeting in Iceland to offer his proposals, he would be presenting them solely to Reagan and his loyal Secretary of State George Shultz. In this setting, Reagan would be disengaged from the advice of his hard-line advisers and so would most likely be following his own instincts and opinions, rather than those of his aides. Since Reagan was personally a nuclear abolitionist, he would be more likely to accept Gorbachev's proposal to eliminate nuclear weapons if he first heard about it when he was alone in a Reykjavik conference room with Gorbachev, rather than in Washington, where he would have been surrounded by his hard-line aides. Ironically, Reagan's advisers in the NSC actually feared that in a summit setting like Reykjavik, the President might agree to Soviet proposals that he personally found acceptable, but which they would find abhorrent, writing that Gorbachev "expects Reykjavik to add to that pressure [to accept his proposals], and also that getting you away from the 'hard-liners' in Washington may help."¹⁰⁰ The fact that the NSC cited the one-on-one nature of the Reykjavik meeting as part of what Gorbachev thought was his leverage on the President strongly suggests that Gorbachev did in fact think that he had a better chance of getting Reagan to accept his proposals in a summit setting and so explains why he did not reveal his proposals to Reagan until the two leaders reached Reykjavik.

The fact that the Soviets' preparations for Reykjavik were characterized by the formulation of new policy proposals, which took into account not simply the Soviets' interests, but the Americans' as well, can be attributed to the sweeping nature of Gorbachev's goals for the summit. Since Gorbachev's main hope for the meeting in Reykjavik was that it would provide him with the opportunity to reach an agreement with Reagan that would provide for the eventual

¹⁰⁰ "How to Maximize Your Leverage," October 2, 1986, folder "Reykjavik, 1 of 4," box 90907, NSC: European and Soviet Affairs Directorate Records, Ronald Reagan Library, 1.

elimination of nuclear weapons, he knew that the Soviets needed to totally rework their current positions on arms control issues like START and INF to make them more far-reaching in scope, as well. How were the two leaders ever going to agree to abolish nuclear weapons in the next 10 to 15 years if they could not agree to begin eliminating INF missiles and significantly reducing START missiles immediately? Since Gorbachev was really hoping to win Reagan's approval of his main goal of eliminating nuclear weapons in the near future, it makes sense that he would take American interests into account on the comparatively minor INF and START issues, potentially hoping that giving Reagan his way on these issues would make the President more inclined to keep the reductions coming and help Gorbachev realize his main goal for the summit.

One final thing worth noting about the Soviets' preparations for Reykjavik is that during the weeks leading up to the summit, Gorbachev did not initially plan to link an agreement on reductions in offensive weapons with an agreement to restrict SDI to the laboratory for a set period of time. He told the Reykjavik Preparation Group that "our proposals are: to reduce every type of nuclear weapons by 50% in the first stage... We should not link this position with space [issues]."¹⁰¹ This is surprising in light of the fact that Gorbachev ultimately did establish a strong link between offensive and defensive issues at Reykjavik, which proved to be a major stumbling block in negotiations.¹⁰² It is also surprising because he had linked these issues in his letter of September 15 to Reagan proposing the meeting in Reykjavik, stating "should this be the case [that SDI was restricted to the laboratory for 15 years], it would be possible – and this is our proposal – to agree on significant reductions in strategic offensive arms."¹⁰³ Clearly, Gorbachev was going back and forth on whether to link offensive and defensive issues, thereby making it all

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰² Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (morning), 5.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document10.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Letter, Mikhail Gorbachev to Ronald Reagan, September 15, 1986, 4.

the more frustrating that he ultimately decided that this linkage was a good idea, since it made the negotiations between Reagan and himself at Reykjavik so difficult.

American Preparations for Reykjavik

The preparations that the Americans made for Reykjavik were quite different than those made by the Soviets, both in terms of who participated in them and what they entailed. First, unlike the Soviet military, which played a significant role in the Soviet preparations for Reykjavik, the U.S. Defense Department and Joint Chiefs of Staff had very little real involvement with the preparations being made for Reykjavik. Rather, the preparatory work was mainly done by the NSC, with Senior Director of the NSC's European and Soviet Affairs Directorate Jack F. Matlock preparing all of the briefing books for the summit. The State Department also obviously had a major hand in preparations for Reykjavik, since Secretary Shultz was the principal back-up for Reagan at the summit. According to Matlock, however, the material that the State Department sent to the President to be reviewed prior to Reykjavik was often too voluminous in nature and so had to be distilled and reworded by the NSC into shorter memos that the President could review more quickly.

It should be noted that the U.S. Defense Department normally did not play a large role in summit preparations or have a notable presence at actual summits, because Reagan felt that above all, summits were political negotiations and so should be carried on by civilians like himself and Secretary Shultz, rather than by representatives from the Pentagon. Nevertheless, the decision to exclude Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger from the Reykjavik Summit was an intentional one on the part of the President, due to the fact that Weinberger maintained very hard-line views about arms control reductions. According to Matlock, Reagan personally decided to exclude Weinberger from going to Reykjavik because he felt that his presence there

would send the message to the Soviets that the U.S. did not want to negotiate with them on arms control issues, as Weinberger was known to oppose many arms reduction proposals, partially on principle and partially out of a fear that they would prompt Congress to appropriate less money to the Defense Department in the future.¹⁰⁴ Weinberger was also the administration's most vocal advocate for SDI and opposed any and all restrictions on the program.¹⁰⁵ Since SDI was sure to be one of the main topics of the Reykjavik meeting, it would make sense that Reagan decided to exclude the one figure in his administration whose reputation was built on refusing to surrender SDI to any concessions. Finally, Weinberger and Shultz nearly always took opposing positions on arms control issues.¹⁰⁶ Since Shultz was Reagan's principal back-up for Reykjavik, it seems logical that his arch nemesis on arms control issues would not be invited to participate at Iceland.

It should be noted, however, that despite the fact that Weinberger did not play a large role in the preparations for Reykjavik or attend the meeting, the Defense Department was not completely excluded from the summit. Weinberger was still kept abreast of the preparations that were being made by the NSC and the State Department for Reykjavik. Also, the Defense Department's representative to Reykjavik, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, was placed on key back-up committees, like the working group on military issues, while in Iceland.¹⁰⁷

The lack of real involvement by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the preparations for Reykjavik and in the actual meeting itself is a bit harder to explain. Not only were they not consulted on arms control policies in the weeks leading up to Reykjavik, but they also were not consulted prior to the composition of Reagan's letter of July 25 to Gorbachev, which set out the

¹⁰⁴ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon*, (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 328-9.

¹⁰⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 142.

¹⁰⁷ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

radically new proposal that a country should offer a plan for sharing its strategic defense technology and for the elimination of all offensive ballistic missiles if it wanted to deploy strategic defenses.¹⁰⁸ Rather, it was not until after Reykjavik that the Joint Chiefs were even asked to study the military feasibility and desirability of eliminating all offensive ballistic missiles, which Reagan had proposed in both the letter of July 25 to Gorbachev and at Reykjavik. The Joint Chiefs ultimately concluded that the elimination of offensive ballistic missiles in 10 years time, as had been proposed at Reykjavik, was not militarily wise and would be extremely costly.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the U.S. administration may have been particularly attached to some of its arms control proposals, like the one involving the elimination of offensive ballistic missiles, but feared that the military would brand them as unwise and unfeasible and so decided just not to consult the military on these proposals at all.

Secondly, the nature of American preparations for Reykjavik also differed greatly from that of Soviet preparations. Rather than devise an entirely new set of proposals for their leader to present at Reykjavik like the Soviets did, the Americans merely reviewed and rehashed the arms control positions that they had been presenting at the Geneva arms control negotiations since July. One need only compare the proposals that Reagan set out in his letter of July 25 to Gorbachev with those that were contained in the final talking points prepared for the President to use at Reykjavik to see that no new proposals had been developed. For example, in the talking points prepared for Reagan for the Reykjavik meeting, the President was actually instructed to

¹⁰⁸ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, July 25, 1986, 2-3.

¹⁰⁹ Memo, Linton Brooks to Frank C. Carlucci, Feb. 23, 1987, folder "JCS Response – NSDD 250, 12/19/86, 1 of 3," box 92186, Robert Linhard Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

just reiterate the proposal on strategic defenses and the ABM Treaty that he had made in his letter of July 25 and even to verbally acknowledge that this was what he was doing.¹¹⁰

Similarly, on the issue of START, Reagan proposed in the letter of July 25 that the two sides put in motion a 50% reduction in strategic offensive nuclear weapons, with a particular focus on eliminating offensive ballistic missiles.¹¹¹ He did express willingness, however, to implement a lesser, interim solution if that would help the two sides reach an agreement.¹¹² Both of these proposals were repeated in Reagan's official talking points for Reykjavik, thereby showing that just like in the realm of defense and space, there had been no work on new START proposals during the preparations for Reykjavik.¹¹³ Finally, during the Americans' preparations for Reykjavik, no new proposals were made in the realm of INF, despite the fact that many thought an agreement on this issue might come out of the Iceland meeting. The Reykjavik talking points restated Reagan's commitment to the total global elimination of all long-range intermediate nuclear forces (LRINF), but also acknowledged his willingness to seek a lesser, interim agreement on the issue, just as he wrote in his letter of July 25 to Gorbachev.¹¹⁴

So, while the Soviets spent the three weeks leading up to Reykjavik preparing new proposals for Gorbachev to bring to the negotiating table in Iceland, the Americans did exactly the opposite. Rather than devise new arms control initiatives, the Americans spent the bulk of their preparation time reiterating the same old arms control proposals to Reagan over and over again. In fact, they actually provided him with a rather detailed script, which he could

¹¹⁰ Scene Setter and Talking Points for the Afternoon Session (October 11, 1986), October 1986, folder "Reykjavik, 4 of 4," box 90907, NSC: European and Soviet Affairs Directorate Records, Ronald Reagan Library, 9.

¹¹¹ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, July 25, 1986, 3.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹³ Scene Setter and Talking Points for the Afternoon Session (October 11, 1986), 1-2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4; Letter, Ronald Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, July 25, 1986, 4.

practically read from word for word at the summit.¹¹⁵ As Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Kenneth Adelman joked after the summit, “none of our ‘cards at the Reykjavik poker game’ was facedown. Despite all the bureaucratic tail chasing, we planned no new initiative. We had no real fallback position.”¹¹⁶ It was not until the proverbial eleventh hour, which in this case was actually about 2 p.m. on the second day of the summit, that the Americans finally came up with a new arms control proposal, the famed Perle-Linhard formulation, which Perle and NSC staffer Robert Linhard were forced to draft on a board over a bathtub in Hofdi House because no other meeting space was available.¹¹⁷

The fact that the Americans’ preparations for Reykjavik did not include the formulation of any new arms control proposals is partly due to the fact that Reagan’s goals for the summit were somewhat minimal. Since he did not have any specific issues on which he was utterly determined to reach an agreement with Gorbachev at Reykjavik, it makes sense that he would not spend time devising new policy proposals. Reagan instead wanted to set a date for a summit in Washington, which he thought could be achieved merely by stating his desire to reach solutions with Gorbachev on the problems in U.S.-Soviet relations and by identifying areas in which concrete progress could be made at a U.S. summit. No new policy proposals were needed to accomplish either of these things.

The Americans’ decision not to devise new policy proposals during their preparations for Reykjavik could also be attributed to the fact that they completely underestimated the Soviets’ goals for Reykjavik. They never imagined that Gorbachev would go to Reykjavik with the goal of reaching an agreement with Reagan to eliminate all nuclear weapons. Rather, the CIA

¹¹⁵ Reagan-Gorbachev Preparatory Meeting (scene setters, goals, and talking points), October 1986, folder “Reykjavik, 4 of 4,” box 90907, NSC: European and Soviet Affairs Directorate Records, Ronald Reagan Library

¹¹⁶ Kenneth L. Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Alan Weisman, *Prince of Darkness: Richard Perle – The Kingdom, the Power, and the End of Empire in America*, (New York: Union Square Press, 2007), 100-1.

advised the President that based on their intelligence it appeared that Gorbachev mainly wanted to simply “keep up the political process of dialogue, including prospects for summits.”¹¹⁸ They advised that at most Gorbachev was hoping for “a few areas of agreement for a follow-on summit (e.g. INF) plus some movement by you toward the Soviet position that SDI should be reliably blocked to facilitate nuclear force reductions. He wants, but doesn’t really expect the latter at this point.”¹¹⁹ Thus, the Americans did not expect to be responding to any sweeping new Soviet proposals and so accordingly did not prepare any of their own.

Thus, Gorbachev’s and Reagan’s goals for their meeting in Reykjavik clearly affected the nature of the preparations that their respective countries made for the summit. The fact that Gorbachev had the sweeping goal of reaching an agreement with Reagan to abolish nuclear weapons prompted the Soviets to refashion their proposals on the comparatively minor issues of INF and START, so that they would also be sweeping in scope. Similarly, the fact that Reagan’s main goal for the Reykjavik meeting was simply to set a date for a summit in Washington, as opposed to achieving an agreement with the Soviets on a particular arms control issue, explains why the Americans did not prepare new proposals for Reykjavik like the Soviets did, but rather spent their preparatory time ensuring that Reagan understood all of their current proposals and devising a script for him to use at the summit, since the technical language and intricacies of arms control policies were not his forte.

As the next chapter will show, just as each side’s goals affected its preparations for the summit, its preparations would ultimately affect its leader’s performance at Reykjavik, as well. The fact that the Soviets had prepared new policies for Gorbachev to present in the Reykjavik Summit sessions while Reagan had only his old proposals to offer meant that until the final

¹¹⁸ CIA Paper “How to Maximize Your Leverage,” 2 October 1986, folder “Reykjavik, 1 of 4,” box 90907, NSC: European and Soviet Affairs Directorate Records, Ronald Reagan Library, 1.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

unplanned session, Gorbachev always had the initiative, whereas Reagan was constantly forced into the position of having to respond to Gorbachev and his proposals. In addition, since Reagan had not been adequately prepared for the possibility that the Soviets might present new policy proposals at Reykjavik, he was forced to rely on the advice of his aides, who were specialists in arms control policy, to determine how to respond to these initiatives. However, most of Reagan's advisers had hard-line positions on arms control, so as the next chapter will show, the fact that Reagan was forced to rely on their advice would come to have significant effects on the two leaders' ability to reach an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Chapter 2

“The Highest Stakes Poker Game Ever Played”: The Reykjavik Summit Sessions¹²⁰

At 10:30 a.m. on October 11, 1986, U.S. President Ronald Reagan bounded out of Hofdi House, the structure owned by the municipal government of Reykjavik that had been chosen by the U.S. and Soviet advance teams to be the site of the U.S.-Soviet summit meeting, to greet General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev upon his arrival at the house. After some handshakes and smiles for the pool of photographers that was gathered outside of Hofdi to catch a glimpse of the two leaders before the press blackout was officially imposed at the start of the first summit session, Reagan and Gorbachev entered the house and began their discussions. In the next 32 hours, 21 of which would be spent in negotiations either between Reagan and Gorbachev or between their respective delegations, arms control discussions would reach unprecedented heights. In a house which most Icelanders believed to be haunted by a female apparition and in which they naturally expected the unexpected to occur, the Americans would indeed face the unexpected, as Gorbachev would surprise them by proposing and then pursuing the idea of abolishing all Soviet and American nuclear weapons.¹²¹ Nevertheless, despite the fact that both Reagan and Gorbachev had the desire and willingness, along with the opportunity at Reykjavik, to eliminate nuclear weapons, the two leaders would not be able to reach an agreement to do so, and their talks would end abruptly before any agreement could be concluded.

This chapter seeks to describe and analyze each of the four summit sessions between Reagan and Gorbachev, as well as the all-night meeting of the Nitze-Akhromeyev working group

¹²⁰ This quotation is taken from a comment made by Secretary of State George Shultz about the Reykjavik Summit sessions following their conclusion and can be found in Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 351.

¹²¹ Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 504; *Ibid.*, 499.

on military issues and the informal discussion that took place between Reagan and his advisers during the break in the final summit session. By examining each of these meetings, this chapter will begin to identify the obstacles that prevented Reagan and Gorbachev from reaching an agreement at the Reykjavik Summit to eliminate their nuclear weapons.

First summit session – Saturday morning, October 11

Anticipation for the start of the Reykjavik Summit had been building since September 30, when Reagan announced his intention to meet with Gorbachev in Iceland, but it reached a fever pitch when Reagan and the American delegation arrived in Reykjavik on October 9. Despite the announcement of an official press blackout during the summit, over 3000 journalists, including Nicholas Daniloff, whose release from Soviet custody Reagan deemed a prerequisite for his meeting with Gorbachev, descended upon the city to cover the event.¹²² This massive influx of reporters, in addition to the arrival of the American and Soviet delegations, led to an acute housing shortage in the city, prompting the Soviets to stay on the Estonian ocean liner *George Otts* in Reykjavik harbor and forcing reporters to seek lodging as far as 80 miles outside of Iceland's tiny capital city. Reykjavik was abuzz with summit-related activity in the days leading up to the Reagan-Gorbachev meeting, as American and Soviet security personnel worked to secure all of the buildings that were going to be used by summit participants, reporters milled around trying to uncover any information that could serve as the basis of a good story, and local merchants sold summit souvenirs, the most popular of which was an empty can labeled "Genuine Hot Air from Reykjavik," which was a gag inspired by the public's general expectation that no agreements were going to emerge from this Iceland meeting.¹²³

¹²² Ed Rowny, *It Takes One to Tango* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1992), 179; *1986 Iceland summit: Archive news report*, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8421599.stm>.

¹²³ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, Translated by Georges Peronansky and Tatjana Varsavsky, (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 416; Rowny, *It Takes One to Tango*, 179-80.

The first summit session began shortly after Gorbachev's arrival at Hofdi House on the morning of October 11. Lasting roughly two hours, it began as a meeting strictly between Reagan, Gorbachev, and their respective interpreters and notetakers, with Shultz and Shevardnadze joining in about halfway through the discussion when Gorbachev began to set forth the new proposals that the Soviets had devised for Reykjavik. During the initial private part of the session, Reagan and Gorbachev talked about the state of U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations and the goals they each had for this meeting in Reykjavik. Though this was supposed to be an exchange of views, the leaders' conversation was largely dominated by Gorbachev, who emphasized that "on the main questions which concern both sides – how to eliminate the nuclear threat, how to utilize the beneficial impulse of Geneva [Summit of 1985], how to reach specific agreements – there is no movement, and this concerns us somewhat" and told Reagan that the two of them should strive at Reykjavik "to give a strong impulse to this process and allow us to reach agreements which could be concluded during our next meeting in the USA."¹²⁴

Reagan agreed with these sentiments of Gorbachev's, but became a bit too excited at this mention of the proposed meeting in the U.S., asking Gorbachev if he had a date in mind for his visit to America. He did so much to the chagrin of the U.S. notetaker Jack Matlock, who had specifically prepped Reagan not to appear too eager for a summit meeting in Washington without progress on arms control matters having first been made. If Reagan acted this way, Gorbachev could then accuse the President of not having a serious desire to devise solutions to the arms

¹²⁴Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (morning), 2.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document10.pdf>.

*Note about citations: Both the American and Soviet transcripts from each of the four summit sessions have been examined and found to contain no substantive differences. Therefore, in this chapter, I will cite the Soviet transcripts when quoting Gorbachev or referring to a statement made by him. Conversely, I will cite the American memoranda of conversation when quoting Reagan or referring to any of his statements.

control problems facing the two nations, which would complicate efforts to negotiate any agreements.¹²⁵ In fact, Reagan's question did irritate Gorbachev, who told the President that he would not discuss specific dates for a U.S. summit until the two sides had reached agreements on arms control issues that could be signed by Reagan and him during his trip to the U.S. Thus, Reagan would have to wait a bit longer to see if he would be able to realize his goal of setting a date for a summit in Washington with Gorbachev.

Gorbachev then invited Shultz and Shevardnadze to join the two leaders so that he could begin his presentation of new Soviet arms control proposals, which would become one of the defining episodes of the entire summit. These new Soviet proposals set the tone for the rest of the summit, both in terms of its purpose, which became to realize Gorbachev's goal of devising an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons, and the way in which the two sides conducted negotiations, with Gorbachev consistently on the offensive and Reagan on the defensive, desperately relying on the advice of his aides to determine how he should respond to Gorbachev's arms control initiatives.

First of all, Gorbachev made it clear right from this initial presentation of Soviet proposals that his goal for Reykjavik was the conclusion of an agreement leading to the abolition of nuclear weapons, saying "the principle question of international policy of the two countries [the Soviet Union and the U.S.] is the recognition of complete elimination of nuclear weapons as our mutual goal...I would like to confirm our point of view regarding the fact that we should move toward this goal in stages, ensuring at each stage equal security for both sides."¹²⁶ While Gorbachev only offered proposals at this point in the summit for the initial stages of this process of abolishing nuclear weapons, he still made it clear that the elimination of nuclear weapons was

¹²⁵ Jack F. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 220.

¹²⁶ Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (morning), 3.

the ultimate goal towards which he thought the two sides should be working. Thus, from the very first session, he framed the summit as a part of the effort to bring about the realization of a world without nuclear weapons, just as he had told the Politburo and Reykjavik Preparation Group that he would. The summit was subsequently viewed by both leaders in this light until its abrupt conclusion.

Since Gorbachev's ultimate goal of abolishing nuclear weapons was so sweeping in nature, it makes sense that the proposals that he offered in this initial presentation would similarly be far-reaching in scope. How were Reagan and Gorbachev ever going to agree to abolish nuclear weapons in the next decade or so if they could not agree to begin immediately heavily reducing START missiles and eliminating INF missiles? So, for example, on the issue of strategic offensive weapons, Gorbachev affirmed in this first session the Soviet Union's commitment to a 50 percent reduction in strategic offensive arms and also expressed willingness for the first time to make cuts in their heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Similarly, in the realm of INF, Gorbachev agreed to the complete elimination of Soviet and American long-range INF (LRINF) missiles in Europe and dropped his demand that the British and French INF missiles that had been deployed in Europe also be eliminated, focusing simply on the American and Soviet missiles. He also expressed a willingness to negotiate with the Americans on the reduction of LRINF missiles in Asia. Finally, with regard to the ABM Treaty, Gorbachev reduced the period from 15 to 10 years during which he thought the U.S. and Soviet Union should agree not to withdraw from the treaty and should accordingly be restricting their strategic defense research to the laboratory. He also suggested for the first time that after

the 10 year non-withdrawal period there should be a period of three to five years during which both sides could discuss what their next course of action on strategic defenses would be.¹²⁷

Not only were these proposals offered by Gorbachev sweeping in scope, they also actually took into account U.S. interests, a fact that Gorbachev himself even verbally acknowledged as he presented them to Reagan and Shultz. The U.S. had been pushing for a long time for the cuts in Soviet heavy ICBMs that Gorbachev proposed for the first time at Reykjavik. In addition, Gorbachev's proposal to eliminate LRINF missiles in Europe represented a good step in the direction of the radical U.S. "zero-zero" proposal, which advocated the global elimination of LRINF. Finally, the idea of a 10 year non-withdrawal period from the ABM Treaty was a compromise between Reagan's suggestion of a five to seven year period and the 15 year period that Gorbachev had proposed in his letter of September 15 to Reagan. In fact, the Soviet proposals contained so many shifts in the direction of American policy that Shultz's immediate reaction upon hearing them was that "he [Gorbachev] was laying gifts at our feet – or, more accurately, on the table – concession after concession."¹²⁸ Also, during Reagan and Shultz's meeting with the rest of the American delegation after the conclusion of the first summit session, Special Advisor to the President Paul Nitze, who had been involved in American foreign affairs since the Second World War, called Gorbachev's presentation during the first session "the best Soviet proposal we have received in twenty-five years."¹²⁹ Clearly, Soviet arms control positions were moving closer to American positions, which greatly pleased the U.S. delegation.

While Gorbachev's sweeping set of proposals, which contained significant concessions to the Americans, was understandably viewed as a positive development by the members of the

¹²⁷ Ibid., 3-4.

¹²⁸ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), 760.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

American delegation, these proposals also had major negative consequences for them, especially for Reagan. Prior to the Iceland meeting, Reagan and the rest of the delegation had thought that "although Gorbachev may possibly throw in a few 'sweeteners' at the outset, he probably will reserve most of his real concessions (if he is bringing any) until late in the day (or rather, until the second day)."¹³⁰ Thus, the fact that the Soviets had actually brought substantive new proposals to Reykjavik and were offering them at the very beginning of the summit was quite a surprise to the Americans and threw Reagan somewhat off kilter.

In response to Gorbachev's proposal that the Soviet Union and the U.S. eliminate INF in Europe and negotiate reductions on INF in Asia, Reagan replied that "zero INF in Europe is fine, but there must be reduction of these missiles in Asia... There also could be reductions in Europe to 100 warheads on each side."¹³¹ Not only did this comment seem nonsensical in light of the fact that the Soviets had already adopted the U.S. position of eliminating all INF warheads in Europe, it was also devoid of the kind of excitement that one would have expected from a President who had been presented with such significant Soviet arms control concessions. After more than five years of wrangling by American and Soviet negotiators on the issue of INF reductions, the Soviets were finally taking a significant step in the direction of the U.S. "zero-zero" proposal, which was a fact of which Reagan seemed to be wholly unappreciative. Rather, the comment seems to be evidence of Reagan being flustered by all of the new Soviet proposals, for which he had no answer in his script. The line that Reagan uttered about urging the Soviets to compromise on 100 warheads in Europe was practically verbatim from his script and shows that he was desperately trying to cling to a set of lines that had become rather irrelevant in light

¹³⁰ Memo, John M. Poindexter to the President, folder "Reykjavik, 4 of 4," box 90907, NSC: European and Soviet Affairs Directorate Records, Ronald Reagan Library, 2.

¹³¹ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. First Meeting. 11 October 1986, 10:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., 6. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document09.pdf>.

of the new Soviet proposals. Gorbachev even picked up on this, writing in his memoirs that “Reagan reacted [to his proposals] by consulting or reading his notes written on cards...He started shuffling them, looking for the right answer to my arguments, but could not find it. There could be no right answer available – the American President and his aides had been preparing for a completely different conversation.”¹³²

Having been an actor prior to entering politics, one of Reagan’s primary political skills was the ability to convincingly deliver lines that had been carefully crafted for him. While he was known as the “Great Communicator,” Reagan was clearly most effective when he was reading from a script, rather than speaking extemporaneously.¹³³ In fact, White House aides like Rhett Dawson, who was the White House chief of operations during the Reagan administration, blatantly acknowledged this fact, saying “he [Reagan] was an actor and he worked from a script.”¹³⁴ Since Reagan’s arms control script for Reykjavik had become practically useless and he was not personally prepared nor particularly able to respond to new Soviet proposals off the top of his head, he was forced to rely on the advice of his aides, who were arms control specialists, to determine his responses to Soviet proposals. As Shultz stated after the first session, “Gorbachev had introduced new and highly significant material. Our response, I knew, must be prepared with care, capturing the extensive Soviet concessions and pointing up deficiencies and difficulties from our standpoint. I was glad we had on hand a knowledgeable team with all the expertise we needed. They could rework the president’s talking points during the break.”¹³⁵ This meant that the views of the aides, which were much more hard-line than Reagan’s own views on arms control, would have a significant amount of influence on the

¹³² Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 416.

¹³³ Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), iv.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹³⁵ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 760.

positions Reagan took at the summit and would affect his ability to reach an agreement with Gorbachev on the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Also, since Reagan was not expecting any substantive agreements to come out of Reykjavik and was only hoping to set a date for a future summit with Gorbachev in the U.S., he had not prepared any comparable new proposals to offer Gorbachev after his presentation of Soviet proposals.¹³⁶ So, at the end of the first session, after Gorbachev had finished his presentation of new Soviet proposals, Reagan could only offer reactions to the ideas Gorbachev had proposed, rather than set forth any new initiatives of his own which the two leaders could then consider in their efforts to devise agreements that would be acceptable to both sides. By not having any new initiatives of his own to present, Reagan effectively let Gorbachev and his proposals set the tone for the rest of the sessions. Thus, Reagan was forced into a defensive posture at Reykjavik and would remain in this position for almost the entire summit. The pattern of Gorbachev making new proposals and Reagan simply responding to them became a bit of a routine throughout the summit sessions.

Despite Reagan's lack of proposals to offer Gorbachev in response to those he presented in the first summit session and his possession of a script that had become useless in light of the new Soviet initiatives, Reagan was in surprisingly high spirits when he and Shultz met with the rest of the American delegation after the first session ended. The arms control experts who had traveled to Reykjavik as part of the American delegation to the summit were confined to a series of upstairs sitting rooms in Hofdi House during the actual summit sessions, able to offer their opinions to Reagan only during breaks in the sessions or between sessions, thereby making them all the more eager to do so at these times. Thus, these experts, which included Chief of Staff

¹³⁶ U.S.G. Speaker's Package for Reykjavik Meeting, October 1986, folder "Reykjavik Meeting Basics 10/12/1986-10/13/1986, 1 of 4," box 56, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 2.

Donald Regan, National Security Advisor John Poindexter, Nitze, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, NSC staffer Robert Linhard, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Kenneth Adelman, and chief negotiator at the Geneva arms control discussions Max Kampelman, were quite ready to speak with Reagan after the conclusion of the first session. So, these advisers, along with Reagan and Shultz, all crammed into the U.S. embassy's "bubble," which was a clear plastic room that could not be bugged by listening devices and was located in every U.S. embassy across the globe, to rehash the first session. However, the "bubble" in Reykjavik was the smallest one in the world, prompting Reagan to joke upon entering it that "we could fill this thing with water and keep goldfish."¹³⁷ Reagan's lighthearted manner largely persisted throughout the discussion of Soviet proposals with his advisers, as he jokingly asked his aides "why did Gorbachev have more papers than I did?" The mood was pretty high, as Reagan and his advisers marveled at the concessions that Gorbachev offered Reagan in his first set of proposals and reviewed the responses that Reagan should offer to Gorbachev's initiatives in the second session.¹³⁸

Second summit session – Saturday afternoon

The second summit session, which took place on Saturday afternoon from 3:30 p.m. to 5:40 p.m., largely consisted of Reagan offering his reactions, issue by issue, to the new set of proposals Gorbachev had presented in the first session on START, INF, and SDI/ABM. Generally, this entailed Reagan setting forth his criticisms of provisions of Gorbachev's proposals and then reiterating proposals that either he or the American delegation at the Geneva arms control negotiations had previously made. Reagan clearly occupied a defensive position in

¹³⁷ Kenneth L. Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summitry – A Skeptic's Account* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 45; Winik, *On the Brink*, 505.

¹³⁸ Winik, *On the Brink*, 505.

this second summit session, for even though he dominated the conversation taking place, he was primarily only offering his reactions to Soviet proposals.

First of all, Reagan agreed with Gorbachev's general proposal to reduce strategic offensive weapons by 50%. He liked the Soviet proposal of limiting land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers to 1600, but disagreed with Gorbachev on the limit that should be placed on ballistic missile warheads, believing it should be 4500 rather than the Soviet-suggested 6400 to 6800, which he deemed too high. Reagan also agreed to the idea of limiting air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) warheads to 1500, but expressed disapproval of the prospect of imposing a limit on bomber weapons like gravity bombs, which are not technologically guided to reach their targets, and short-range air-to-surface attack missiles (SRAM), which are directed to hit their targets. Reagan argued that these bomber weapons should not be considered equivalent to missile warheads because they are less accurate and take longer to reach their target. He also pointed out that previous arms control treaties had not equated bomber weapons and missile warheads, meaning that a precedent existed for treating these types of nuclear weapons differently.¹³⁹

Reagan then shifted his attention to Gorbachev's INF proposal. His response to the Soviet INF initiative is the first example of how Reagan's reliance on the advice of his hard-line aides, due to the fact that his script for the summit became irrelevant when Gorbachev unexpectedly set forth substantive new proposals, affected the positions he adopted at Reykjavik. In his letter of July 25 to Gorbachev, Reagan wrote that his goal with respect to INF was "eliminating this entire class of land-based, LRINF missiles worldwide," but also stated that he would be willing to agree on "steps that would lead toward this goal in either one step, or, if you

¹³⁹ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Second Meeting. 11 October 1986, 3:30 p.m. – 5:40 p.m., 1-2. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document11.pdf>.

prefer, in a series of steps.”¹⁴⁰ The INF proposal that Gorbachev made in the first session seemed to fall in line with this idea of globally abolishing LRINF missiles in multiple steps, as it consisted of the immediate elimination of LRINF in Europe and a promise to negotiate reductions in LRINF in Asia.¹⁴¹ In other words, LRINF in Europe would be abolished in the first step and then LRINF in Asia would be reduced or eliminated in a second step, after negotiations on the exact terms of this reduction were held. As demonstrated earlier, Reagan’s initial response to the Soviet INF proposal at the end of the first session was short and incoherent, but one would think that upon reflection, Reagan would have realized that this proposal met the qualifications for the type of interim agreement that he had laid out in his letter of July 25 to Gorbachev. When Reagan did speak about Gorbachev’s INF proposal in the second session, however, “he had to say he was disappointed” by it and insisted that any interim INF agreement must include global reductions not in total, but in each of its stages.¹⁴² In other words, Reagan was now insisting that a fraction of the INF missiles in Europe and a fraction of those in Asia be eliminated in the first step, with the remaining INF missiles in Europe and Asia being eradicated in the second step. In his letter of July 25, however, Reagan had not made any demands on the specific nature of the reductions that should take place in each step, but simply maintained that all INF missiles in the world had to be eliminated by the end of the process.

During the meeting that Reagan and Shultz had with the rest of the American delegation after the first session, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, a noted hard-liner on arms control, put a bit of a damper on the jubilation of Shultz, Nitze, and Kampelman at the content of the Soviet proposals by denigrating the Soviet stance on INF. Perle noted that while the Soviets

¹⁴⁰ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, July 25, 1986, folder “Preparation for 07/25/1986 Letter to Gorbachev – July 1986, 7 of 7,” box 92177, Robert Linhard Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 4.

¹⁴¹ Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (morning), 5.

¹⁴² Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Second Meeting. 11 October 1986, 2.

had decided to go ahead and abolish LRINF in Europe, their unwillingness to eliminate their LRINF in Asia at the same time was unacceptable because ““by keeping their missiles in Asia they keep open the option of moving them right back to Europe on short notice.””¹⁴³ It seems that Perle’s analysis of the situation must have influenced the President as it is the only practical explanation for why Reagan would shift his position on the nature of an interim INF agreement. Thus, Reagan was prompted in this second session to insist on a scheme by which each side could retain 100 INF missile warheads in Europe as well as 100 outside of Europe.¹⁴⁴

While Reagan spent a considerable amount of time in this second session responding to Gorbachev’s proposals on START and INF, he devoted most of his response to addressing the General Secretary’s proposal on the ABM Treaty and how it related to the American SDI. In fact, Reagan and Gorbachev’s exchange concerning strategic defenses was actually the most significant one of the session. Reagan initially broached the subject by criticizing Gorbachev for not accepting the proposal that he had set forth in his letter of July 25 to the General Secretary, which Reagan stated still constituted his stance on the issue. As a reminder, Reagan’s proposal of July 25 was that each side would agree to restrict its work on strategic defenses to research permitted by the ABM Treaty, which Reagan believed would allow research conducted outside of the laboratory, for at least five years or until the U.S. and Soviet Union concluded that deploying strategic defenses would be a feasible and worthwhile endeavor. If a country determined that it was ready to move beyond simply researching strategic defenses and towards

¹⁴³ Alan Weisman, *Prince of Darkness: Richard Perle – The Kingdom, the Power, and the End of Empire in America* (New York: Union Square Press, 2007), 99.

¹⁴⁴ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Second Meeting. 11 October 1986, 4.

deploying them, it was supposed to set forth a plan for the elimination of all offensive ballistic missiles and for the sharing of its strategic defense technology.¹⁴⁵

Following Reagan's attack on Gorbachev's position on strategic defenses and his reiteration of his stance on the issue, the two leaders' engaged in a lengthy dialogue on the subject. It was during this exchange of views that Gorbachev first linked, albeit informally, an agreement on strategic defenses with one on offensive reductions, stating:

If we begin the process of reducing strategic and medium-range missiles now, how will the leaders of our two powerful states be able to allow elimination of what is the last obstacle in today's dangerous situation. I am referring to the open-ended ABM Treaty. Can we really go and violate it, rather than strengthening it? If we are going to have reductions, it is very important for both sides to be certain that no one will create weapons during this time that would undermine stability and parity.¹⁴⁶

Gorbachev's use of the term "weapons" in this statement is a veiled reference to SDI, which he feared was actually an American project to develop offensive space weapons.¹⁴⁷ While Reagan did not believe that SDI was a space weapon, he knew from the way that Gorbachev had talked about SDI at the Geneva Summit that the General Secretary viewed the project this way and so was referring to SDI when he used the word "weapons." Thus, this speech is a significant moment not only in this session, but in the summit as a whole, as Gorbachev's linkage of offensive and defensive issues would prove to be a major stumbling block in the negotiations that took place in the fourth session to reach an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons. It is important to note that Gorbachev first linked these two issues in the second session, because it

¹⁴⁵ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, July 25, 1986, 2 and Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation, Second Meeting, 11 October 1986, 4-5.

¹⁴⁶ Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (afternoon), 5. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document12.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

shows that Reagan's statement that Gorbachev first linked them at the proverbial eleventh hour of the final summit session is patently false.¹⁴⁸

Gorbachev's insistence that the two sides consent to restrict work on strategic defenses to the laboratory if they were going to reach any agreements on reductions in offensive weapons is also significant because it brings up the point that Reagan and Gorbachev disagreed over the fundamental nature of SDI. Gorbachev believed that SDI was actually offensive in nature and that the U.S. was simply saying that it was defensive as part of a covert effort to develop space weapons that they could use to attack the Soviet Union. Both Roald Sagdeyev and Yevgeny Velikhov, who were prominent Soviet scientists, told Gorbachev that they thought that neither the Soviets nor the Americans would be able to build an impermeable strategic defense system, leading him to believe that such a feat was impossible and so must be a cover for the development of offensive space weapons. If SDI was not an American effort to build space weapons, then Gorbachev, as well as the Soviet military, thought that it was part of a covert strategy designed to give the U.S. the capability of launching a disarming first strike. According to this scenario, the U.S. would attack the Soviet Union, specifically its nuclear arsenals, and then deploy SDI to ensure that the Soviet Union could not retaliate against the U.S., thereby thwarting the concept of mutual assured destruction (MAD) that had undergirded the nuclear peace since the 1950s.¹⁴⁹

Reagan tried desperately at Reykjavik to assure Gorbachev that SDI was in fact defensive in nature, but that it was not being developed to give the U.S. first strike capability. As Reagan reminded Gorbachev, the General Secretary's concern about SDI being an avenue to the U.S. possessing first strike capability had caused him "to propose a treaty now which would lead to

¹⁴⁸ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 677.

¹⁴⁹ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

the elimination of all offensive ballistic missiles. Once we do that, the issue of a combination of offensive and defensive forces giving one side or the other an advantage would not arise.”¹⁵⁰

Reagan even appealed to the desire Gorbachev had voiced in the first session to eliminate nuclear weapons, which was a desire that the President shared, stating that the deployment of strategic defenses would make it safe for the two superpowers to ultimately abolish their nuclear weapons, as it would protect them against cheating by the other side or the acquiring of nuclear weapons by a madman. “Think about us two standing there and telling the world that we have this thing [strategic defenses], and asking others to join us in getting rid of these terrible [weapons] systems,” Reagan instructed Gorbachev, in an effort to use Gorbachev’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons as a way to entice him to accept SDI.¹⁵¹

The final thing of significance that occurred during the second summit session was that Reagan, at the urging of Shultz, proposed that the two leaders instruct the arms control experts from their respective delegations to meet at 8 o’clock that evening in Hofdi House to work out the specific details of agreements on the range of issues that they had discussed during the first two sessions. This suggestion could easily be viewed as a further indication that Reagan was somewhat flustered without a script for the summit and so was forced to rely on the advice and talent of his advisers to do the real negotiating work. As Reagan somewhat jovially admitted in the second session “he himself did not know all the numbers.”¹⁵² As Gorbachev more cynically put it, “we often had to interrupt the talks for consultations within the teams [of American advisers]. The breaks would occasionally last for quite a while, the White House experts obviously needing additional consultations.”¹⁵³ Nevertheless, Gorbachev agreed that a meeting

¹⁵⁰ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Second Meeting. 11 October 1986, 5.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵³ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 417.

of the experts should take place that night, setting up the marathon meeting of the working group on military issues that would last until the next morning.¹⁵⁴

All-night meeting of the working group on military issues – Saturday evening

There were actually two working groups that met on the evening of October 11 in Hofdi House. The first was the working group on military issues, which was co-chaired by Special Advisor to the President Paul Nitze and Chief of the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev. The second was a working group that dealt with all matters facing the Soviet Union and the U.S. that did not relate to arms control, namely regional conflicts, human rights, and bilateral issues, and was headed by Assistant Secretary of State Rozanne Ridgway and Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh. The discussion that took place in this second working group on non-arms control matters was basically just a summary of the points that had been made earlier by Reagan and Gorbachev on these issues. Thus, other than devising a list of cooperative projects that the U.S. and Soviet Union might work on together, this working group made no real progress.¹⁵⁵ So, the focus of this section will be on the working group that dealt with arms control issues, which did make progress in their marathon discussion that lasted from 8 on Saturday evening until about 6:30 on Sunday morning.

Akhromeyev, who headed the Soviet delegation to the meeting, was a relatively unknown figure to the Americans prior to the Reykjavik Summit. Being the last active Soviet commander who had fought in the Second World War, Akhromeyev called himself “the last of the Mohicans,” which was a phrase that also signified that he was not as averse to Western culture as the rest of his Soviet colleagues, since the phrase was also the title of a novel by the American writer James Fenimore Cooper, whom Akhromeyev cited as one of his favorite authors. At the

¹⁵⁴ Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (afternoon), 5.

¹⁵⁵ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 222-3.

time of the Reykjavik Summit, Akhromeyev was the head of the Soviet military, meaning that he held the rank equivalent to that of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the U.S.¹⁵⁶ Each member of the American delegation who had a chance to talk with him informally during the summit expressed a positive view of him and this impression held during the meeting of the working group that he co-chaired. Kampelman, who was part of the American delegation to the meeting, remembered, "what did impress most of us was Akhromeyev's serious and no-nonsense approach to our meeting. He tolerated no polemics or speeches from his side."¹⁵⁷ Clearly, he aimed to make progress on arms control, which was somewhat surprising given that he was part of the Soviet establishment that the CIA had told the President was potentially plotting to assassinate Gorbachev because of his desire to reach sweeping agreements with the U.S.¹⁵⁸ In October 1986, Akhromeyev was actually one of Gorbachev's most loyal supporters, always seeking to ensure that the Soviet military also supported the General Secretary's positions. Nevertheless, he did ultimately join the coup against Gorbachev in 1991 and then committed suicide when it failed.¹⁵⁹

Members of the American and Soviet delegations had had the chance to talk to one another prior to this meeting of the working group on military issues. Like the Americans, members of the Soviet delegation to the summit were also confined to a few sitting rooms on the second level of Hofdi House during Reagan and Gorbachev's summit sessions. In fact, the American and Soviet delegations each had two rooms upstairs in Hofdi House, with a common room joining their suites. During the second summit session, members of the two delegations began to mingle in this common room and it was not long before Poindexter and Akhromeyev

¹⁵⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 763.

¹⁵⁷ Max M. Kampelman, *Entering New Worlds: The Memoirs of a Private Man in Public Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 336.

¹⁵⁸ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 757.

¹⁵⁹ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

struck up a serious conversation about nuclear arms reduction and Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Alexander Yakovlev began recounting his time as a student at Columbia University to any American official who would listen.¹⁶⁰ These informal interactions were significant in themselves, because as Shultz's executive aide Charles Hill said, "before that time, you could not have a conversation with any Soviet official. It was impossible. For decades they simply wouldn't talk to you. You'd say, "Good morning," and they would give you a diatribe back about ideology."¹⁶¹ Despite their new willingness to socialize with American officials, the Soviets still proved to be tough negotiators in the all-night meeting of the arms control working group.

The focus of the first six hours of negotiation centered on START, specifically the form that the 50% reduction in strategic offensive forces should take. Both sides agreed on the general premise of cutting the strategic weapons of each country in half, but the Soviets thought that each side should just slash its number of weapons by 50% on a category by category basis, while the Americans opposed this proposal due to the fact that the Soviets possessed more strategic weapons than the Americans did, meaning that a simple halving of the number of strategic offensive weapons in each side's arsenal would still leave the Soviets with more weapons than the Americans would have. Rather, the American delegation wanted the two countries' reductions of strategic weapons to reach an equal outcome.¹⁶² After an hour-long break beginning at 2 a.m., during which both sides awakened their superiors to consult them,

¹⁶⁰ Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 192.

¹⁶¹ Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald S. Strober, *The Reagan Presidency: An Oral History of the Era* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2003), 355.

¹⁶² Russian transcript of Negotiations in the Working Group on Military Issues, 11-12 October 1986, 3. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document17.pdf>; *Ibid.*, 9.

*Note on citations: I have only been able to obtain the Soviet transcript of the meeting of the Nitze-Akhromeyev working group on military issues, so this version is the only one that will be cited in this subchapter, regardless of whether an American or Soviet is being quoted.

Akhromeyev agreed “to prepare an agreement for the 50% reduction of U.S. and Soviet strategic weapons to an equal number of carriers and warheads for both sides,” which basically amounted to the Soviet adoption of the U.S. equal outcome principle.¹⁶³ After some additional wrangling on how gravity bombs and SRAMs would figure into the warhead count, the two sides agreed to the American proposal of each country reducing its strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (ICBMs, SLBMs, ALCMs, and heavy bombers) to 1600 and its strategic weapon warheads (ICBM, SLBM, and long-range cruise missile warheads) to 6000. Bombers equipped with gravity bombs or SRAMs would count for one in terms of both delivery vehicles and warheads, regardless of the actual number of gravity bombs or SRAMs on the bomber. Thus, the Soviets were accepting the American argument that bomber weapons should not be equated with missile warheads, due to the fact that they were less accurate than missile warheads and took longer to reach their targets.¹⁶⁴

The fact that the Soviets agreed to reductions that would lead to equal outcomes in strategic missiles and warheads, the American-proposed limits on strategic nuclear delivery vehicles and strategic missile warheads, as well as new rules for counting bombers equipped with gravity bombs and SRAMs amounted to a great success for the U.S. As Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Kenneth Adelman wrote, this was “indisputably more progress than we achieved in thousands of hours in hundreds of meetings over the previous five years.”¹⁶⁵ Nitze was similarly pleased, telling Shultz that ““I hadn’t had so much fun in years”” after Shultz congratulated Nitze on ““a terrific night’s work.””¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Ibid., 34.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 44-47.

¹⁶⁵ Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace*, 53.

¹⁶⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 765.

Despite these successes in the realm of START, the working group was not able to make any progress on the issues of INF and strategic defenses. On INF, the U.S. insisted that reductions in LRINF occur on a global basis, while the Soviets refused to commit to any reductions of their LRINF in Asia at this point in time.¹⁶⁷ With respect to SDI/ABM, both sides merely reiterated the positions set forth by their respective leaders during the first two summit sessions.¹⁶⁸ This failure to make any headway on these two issues, particularly on strategic defenses, set these subjects up as potential stumbling blocks in the final negotiations that were scheduled to take place between Reagan and Gorbachev on Sunday.

Third summit session – Sunday morning, October 12

The third session, which was originally intended to be the last one of the summit, began at 10 a.m. on Sunday and lasted for approximately 3 ½ hours, well exceeding its scheduled stop time of noon. During this session, an agreement on INF was reached, as Gorbachev finally consented to the U.S. proposal that the Soviet Union reduce its LRINF in Asia to 100 warheads, while the U.S. maintained 100 LRINF warheads within its own borders. Each country would also be expected to completely eliminate its LRINF in Europe.¹⁶⁹ While the conclusion of an INF agreement after nearly six years of trying to reach one was indeed an important accomplishment, it was far from the most significant development in this third session.

Rather, the most important development of this third session was that Gorbachev moved from simply discussing the initial stages of a process that would ultimately lead to the abolition of nuclear weapons to beginning to enumerate the terms of an agreement that would provide a specific time frame for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This shift in the nature of the

¹⁶⁷ Russian transcript of Negotiations in the Working Group on Military Issues, 11-12 October 1986, 48.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

¹⁶⁹ Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 12 October 1986 (morning), 3-4.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document14.pdf>.

discussion on the abolition of nuclear weapons was in keeping with the goal that Gorbachev brought to Reykjavik and set out during the first session: to reach an agreement in Iceland that would facilitate the elimination of nuclear weapons. During the third session, Reagan a bit offhandedly commented that “if the U.S. and Soviet Union were to start the process of reducing their own nuclear forces to zero, and would stand shoulder-to-shoulder in telling other nations that they must eliminate their own nuclear weapons, it would be hard to think of a country that would not do so.”¹⁷⁰ This statement clearly had a profound effect on Gorbachev, who immediately moved from talking about the abolition of nuclear weapons in abstract terms to concrete ones after hearing it.

Shultz picked up on this shift in the way that Gorbachev was discussing the prospect of eliminating nuclear weapons and so sought to double check that the General Secretary was indeed intending to set forth a concrete time frame for the abolition of nuclear weapons, stating that “Gorbachev had seemed to link his 10 year no-withdrawal pledge [from the ABM Treaty] to the length of time necessary to eliminate nuclear weapons. Was this in fact the link that the General Secretary had in mind?”¹⁷¹ As the American memorandum of conversation then states, “Gorbachev reaffirmed that this was the case.” So, for the first time at the Reykjavik Summit, a specific time frame, 10 years, was being set forth for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

This proposal that nuclear weapons should be eliminated during the 10 years in which both sides would be strictly observing the ABM Treaty is also significant in that it is the first instance of Gorbachev formally linking reductions in nuclear weapons with the restriction of research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years. In fact, it was this official linkage that fixated Reagan, rather than the fact that Gorbachev was proposing a concrete time frame for eliminating

¹⁷⁰ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Third Meeting. 12 October 1986, 10:00 a.m. - 1:35 p.m., 7. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document13.pdf>.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 9.

nuclear weapons. So, as usual, Reagan launched into a series of passionate speeches about there being no need to restrict research on SDI to the laboratory because it was defensive in nature and would actually make it safe for the U.S. and Soviet Union to complete the process of eliminating nuclear weapons, since it would protect them against cheating by the other side or the acquisition of nuclear weapons by a madman or another third party. Reagan even compared SDI to a gas mask, likening the deployment of SDI in a world without nuclear weapons to keeping a gas mask after poison gas had been outlawed following World War I.¹⁷²

Reagan also offered a new justification for not wanting to restrict SDI to the laboratory that would ultimately have a pivotal effect on the two leaders' ability to reach an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons in the fourth session. This new reason was that Reagan had promised the American people that he would not inhibit in any way SDI's chances of being a successful program and he feared that restricting research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years might be construed as a breach of this promise.¹⁷³ Unlike Gorbachev, who did not face popular election in the one party-dominated Soviet Union, Reagan was an elected official in a two-party system. As President, he was the de facto head of the Republican Party, which was facing serious competition from the Democratic Party in the upcoming midterm congressional elections, which at the time of the summit were only about three weeks away. Thus, it seems natural that Reagan would be considering the ramifications that his actions at Reykjavik might have on the way the country viewed him, since midterm elections often amount to a referendum on the sitting President. If Reagan's actions at Reykjavik prompted independents or conservative Democrats, the so-called "Reagan Democrats" who had voted for him in 1980 and 1984, to view him as having broken his promise to the American people to never give up on SDI, they might vote

¹⁷² Ibid., 16.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 9.

against his party in the upcoming elections. Also, if Reagan's political base, the conservative wing of the Republican Party, thought that Reagan broke his promise to continue to pursue SDI, they might simply stay home on Election Day, thereby depriving Republican candidates of votes that they traditionally would have received.

While this session was supposed to be the last one of the summit, Gorbachev suggested that the two leaders not conclude the summit yet, but merely take an extended break, during which time Shultz and Shevardnadze could work on devising draft agreements on START, INF, and strategic defenses in light of the discussions that took place in the third session. Reagan assented to this proposal, and the two leaders agreed to meet for another session that afternoon.¹⁷⁴

As the third session dragged on past noon, the American and Soviet delegations, relegated to the upstairs sitting rooms in Hofdi, began to anxiously wonder about the nature of the discussions taking place between Reagan and Gorbachev in the negotiating room below them. Kampelman reported that the American delegation thought that it was good that the two leaders were still talking, as it must mean that they were truly nearing some sort of arms control agreement.¹⁷⁵ Perle, on the other hand, stated that while it would not have been impossible for Reagan and Gorbachev to reach an agreement on arms control issues on that second day at Reykjavik, he was not realistically expecting any such agreement to emerge from the summit.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, none of the aides really knew why the two leaders were still meeting and if they would emerge with any kind of agreement. When Shultz finally came upstairs and told the American delegation that a surprise session had been scheduled by Reagan and Gorbachev for that afternoon, all were a bit stunned. As Adelman put it, lending a voice to the views of most of

¹⁷⁴ Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 12 October 1986 (morning), 11.

¹⁷⁵ Kampelman, *Entering New Worlds*, 336.

¹⁷⁶ Richard Perle, telephone interview by the author, November 17, 2009.

the American delegation, "at this precise moment, I knew Reykjavik had changed. No longer were the President of the United States and General Secretary of the Soviet Union reading staff papers to one another. No longer were they blessing what their arms control teams had worked out. They would move from headquarters in base camp to the front lines. They would become negotiators-in-chief."¹⁷⁷ Still, the leaders needed some help from their respective teams to break the impasse on strategic defenses. Thus, Shultz gathered Nitze, Kampelman, Poindexter, Perle, and Linhard, as Shevardnadze rounded up Bessmertnykh and Viktor Karpov, the Soviets' chief negotiator at the Geneva arms control discussions, for a meeting between the foreign ministers that would take place during the two hour lunch break before the fourth session and hopefully lead to a solution to the problem of strategic defenses.¹⁷⁸

When Reagan and Gorbachev emerged from Hofdi House a little after 1:30 p.m., the press assumed that the summit was over. Expecting the two leaders to be on the verge of simply announcing a joint communiqué, as had been done at the close of their first summit meeting in Geneva, one reporter yelled out to Reagan, "Mr. President, have you made any real progress, sir?" Much to the surprise of the members of the press gathered outside of Hofdi, Reagan immediately responded, "we're not through." Somewhat taken aback at Reagan's answer, the reporter followed up with a clarification question, "are you going to meet again, sir?" Very curtly, Reagan responded, "yes," and the two leaders left Hofdi House for the two hour break that was to precede their newly scheduled session.¹⁷⁹ This short exchange of words led to wild speculation on the part of the press that a significant arms control agreement was in the works, speculation that was then further fueled by the Soviets' decision to violate the press blackout and

¹⁷⁷ Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace*, 63.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision: A Memoir* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 433.

¹⁷⁹ "Reagan," in *The American Experience* series, produced by Adriana Bosch, narrated by David McCullough. PBS, February 23 and 24, 1998.

release a statement that Reagan and Gorbachev were very close to agreeing on significant START reductions and the complete elimination of INF. The Soviets probably violated the press blackout in an effort to put pressure on Reagan to cooperate with Gorbachev so that they could achieve an arms reduction agreement in the fourth session. Most likely, the Soviets were hoping that if the press expected a sweeping agreement to result from Reykjavik, then Reagan would be afraid to let them down and do all in his power to ensure that the two leaders emerged from Hofdi House with an arms reduction agreement. Nevertheless, this violation of the press blackout prompted members of the American delegation to begin calling the U.S.'s NATO allies, along with Japan and Korea, to notify them of the arms reductions to which Reagan and Gorbachev had tentatively agreed, so that they would not first hear of these agreements, which appeared to shrink the U.S. nuclear umbrella and thereby directly impact their security, on the news.¹⁸⁰ Thus, both the press and the American allies developed very high expectations for the originally unscheduled fourth summit session, which would become what Shultz referred to as “the highest stakes poker game ever played.”¹⁸¹

Fourth summit session – Sunday afternoon

Reagan and Gorbachev reconvened at Hofdi House at 3:25 p.m. to examine the language that Shultz and Shevardnadze had drafted on the START and INF agreements and to see if they had made any progress on the issue of strategic defenses, on which there was still a difference of opinion between the two leaders. At this point in the summit, Reagan and Gorbachev were in disagreement over the nature of strategic defense research that could take place during the 10 year non-withdrawal period and whether strategic defenses could be deployed immediately after the end of the non-withdrawal period. The exact course of arms reductions that would take place

¹⁸⁰ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 767.

¹⁸¹ Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 351.

during the non-withdrawal period was also unclear at this time. In an effort to find some common ground on these issues, the American delegation, specifically Perle and Linhard, broke out of the defensive mode in which they had been for the entire summit and actually devised a new strategic defense proposal, which became known as the Perle-Linhard formulation. The idea for this proposal came to Perle and Linhard during the meeting that took place between Shultz and Shevardnadze prior to the start of the fourth session and after winning approval of it from the members of the American and Soviet delegations who were present in this meeting, they retired to a Hofdi House bathroom, as no other meeting space was available, to draft it.¹⁸²

This proposal stated that both sides should commit to a 10 year non-withdrawal period from the ABM Treaty, during which only research permitted by the ABM Treaty, which the U.S. interpreted to include research outside of laboratories, could be conducted. During the first five years of this non-withdrawal period, each side would reduce its strategic offensive weapons by 50%, while in the remaining five years, they would eliminate all offensive ballistic missiles. At the end of the 10 year period, either side could deploy a strategic defense system.¹⁸³ Reagan approved of this proposal upon reading it prior to the start of the fourth session and decided to present it to Gorbachev.¹⁸⁴

Gorbachev, having already been informed of the basic substance of this U.S. proposal by Shevardnadze, was ready with a Soviet counterproposal to the U.S.'s Perle-Linhard formulation. This counterproposal specifically restricted the research that could be done on strategic defenses during the 10 year non-withdrawal period to the laboratory. It similarly divided the non-withdrawal period into two five-year periods, but stated that strategic offensive arms would be

¹⁸² Kampelman, *Entering New Worlds*, 337.

¹⁸³ The Initial U.S. Offer on October 12, folder "Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 3 of 3," box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹⁸⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 769.

reduced by 50% in the first period and then eliminated in the second period.¹⁸⁵ The two leaders did not seem to realize that their proposals differed in terms of the type of reductions that would occur in the second five-year period until Shultz pointed it out right before the break in the session. Offensive ballistic missiles are merely one type of strategic offensive weapon, so only ICBMs and SLBMs, would have been eliminated during the second five year period under Reagan's proposal, while all strategic offensive weapons, including ICBMs, SLBMs, ALCMs, and bombers, would have been eliminated in the second five year period of the Soviet plan. Nevertheless, the leaders' discussion in this first part of the session mostly centered on the question of whether research on strategic defenses should be confined to the laboratory for 10 years.¹⁸⁶ Both leaders made their usual arguments, with Reagan insisting that there was no need to restrict SDI because its purpose was to make it safe for both sides to get rid of their weapons, whereas Gorbachev stated that SDI could give the U.S. first strike capability.¹⁸⁷ Deciding that they should each take some time to consider the other's proposal more fully and see if their delegations could devise a compromise, Reagan and Gorbachev decided to take a break at 4:30 p.m.

The nature of the discussion that took place between Reagan and his arms control experts during this break in the fourth summit session undoubtedly had a very profound effect on the two leaders' ability to reach an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons in the second half of the session. Prior to Reykjavik, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and the rest of the officials at the Defense Department had done their best to convince Reagan that restricting SDI to the

¹⁸⁵ The Soviet Counter-Offer on October 12, folder "Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 3 of 3," box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹⁸⁶ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Final Meeting. 12 October 1986, 3:25 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. - 6:50 p.m., 8.

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document15.pdf>

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 2-7.

laboratory for 10 years would be tantamount to killing the program, just as he had been telling Gorbachev in the summit sessions, because Congress would not vote to fund SDI if its components could not be tested outside of the laboratory. Also, there was a fear among Defense Department officials that the nation's top scientists would lose interest in the program if it was confined to the laboratory research phase for 10 years. Nevertheless, Reagan began to doubt this assertion that restricting SDI to the laboratory for 10 years would effectively kill the program and asked his advisers whether this claim was true during the break.¹⁸⁸

According to Matlock, Perle, a noted hard-liner on arms control and the sole representative of the Defense Department at the summit, rushed to answer Reagan's question, insisting that restricting SDI to the laboratory for 10 years would in fact kill the program. Matlock disagreed with Perle's answer, believing that imposing such a restriction on SDI would not hurt the program, as there was still probably 10 years worth of research on SDI that needed to be done in the laboratory.¹⁸⁹ Despite the fact that Matlock disagreed with Perle, he did not contradict him in front of Reagan. While responding to questions from the President in this type of setting did not have to be done in a hierarchical fashion, Matlock thought that either Shultz or Poindexter would contradict Perle. In fact, Matlock stated that "actually, I thought that if someone was going to convince the President that it would not kill SDI to restrict it to the laboratory that person had to be Shultz," because he was the President's principal back-up at the

¹⁸⁸ It is unclear whether confining SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years would have adversely affected the scientific underpinnings of the SDI program. A report issued by the American Physical Society in April 1987 suggested that a decision on whether it would even be feasible to deploy SDI was potentially decades away, implying that restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years would not negatively impact the program, scientifically speaking. However, several advances in SDI technology had been made between the time during which information on SDI was gathered for the report and when the report was ultimately published. Also, there had been significant progress made on space interceptors and laser technology during 1986, making it reasonable for Reagan's advisers to think that restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years would indeed harm the scientific underpinnings of the program.

¹⁸⁹ History would ultimately vindicate Matlock on this point, as SDI ended up being exclusively researched in the laboratory for more than ten years, even without this official restriction having ever been adopted.

summit and had sat in on each of the sessions with Gorbachev.¹⁹⁰ Ultimately, no one did contradict Perle, implying that either they agreed with him, which was probably the case for the high-ranking Shultz, Poindexter, and Regan, or they thought that someone with a higher rank should be the one to contradict Perle, as Matlock felt. Without divulging whether he had accepted the hard-line Perle's statement that restricting research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years would effectively kill it, Reagan returned to the conference room to meet Gorbachev for the last part of their session.¹⁹¹

Besides soliciting the advice of his aides on the effects of confining research on SDI to the laboratory, Reagan had presented the Soviet counterproposal to his delegation during the break in hopes that they would be able to devise a new proposal based on the common ground between it and the initial U.S. offer. While the American proposal was slightly reworked in light of the Soviet counterproposal during the break, the changes made to it were only cosmetic in nature, leaving the original substance of the U.S. proposal intact.¹⁹²

After presenting this counter-counter-offer to Gorbachev, Reagan and Gorbachev began discussing the point that Shultz brought up right before the break, which was that the two sides differed in the nature of the reductions that they proposed for the second five-year period. It was during this discussion that the climax of the entire summit occurred, as Reagan announced that "it would be fine with me if we eliminated all nuclear weapons," effectively accepting the proposal that Gorbachev had made during the third session to abolish all nuclear weapons during the 10 year non-withdrawal period. Gorbachev agreed with Reagan's proposal, stating "we can do that. We can eliminate them," and even Shultz, in his excitement over this prospect, joined in

¹⁹⁰ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

¹⁹¹ Winik, *On the Brink*, 515.

¹⁹² The U.S. Counter-counter offer on October 12, folder "Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 3 of 3," box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

the conversation saying “let’s do it!” Clearly, it seemed that the two sides were headed for an agreement abolishing all of their nuclear weapons in 10 years, as supported by Reagan’s statement that “if they could agree to eliminate all nuclear weapons, he thought they could turn it over to their Geneva people with that understanding, for them to draft up that agreement, and Gorbachev could come to the U.S. and sign it.”¹⁹³

However, this was not to be the case. As will be fully shown in the next chapter, Gorbachev’s insistence that the two leaders reach an agreement that would restrict research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years in conjunction with any agreement eliminating nuclear weapons, which was the view that he had also expressed in the second and third summit sessions, profoundly affected the two leaders’ ability to reach an agreement abolishing their nuclear weapons. While Reagan did initially display a willingness to make this concession to Gorbachev in order to conclude an agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons, the advice of the hard-line Perle, as well as additional advice from another aide during the final part of the fourth session, restrained him from doing this. Finally, American public opinion also prevented Reagan from making this concession to Gorbachev in order to reach an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons, as Reagan feared that the American people would view the restriction of SDI research to the laboratory as a breach of his promise never to give up on SDI. So, Reagan and Gorbachev would depart from Reykjavik with no agreement, and that infamous photograph of them leaving Hofdi House with long faces would prompt the world to view the summit as an utter failure, regardless of how either of the two leaders would characterize it in the future.

¹⁹³ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Final Meeting. 12 October 1986, 11.

Chapter 3

“You Could Have Said Yes,” So Why Didn’t You?: Analyzing the Breakdown and Aftermath of the Reykjavik Summit¹⁹⁴

Nearly seven hours after the Reykjavik Summit had been scheduled to conclude on Sunday, October 12, 1986, U.S. President Ronald Reagan looked across the table at Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev in disgust and told U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz “the meeting is over. Let’s go, George, we’re leaving.”¹⁹⁵ Realizing that he was not going to be able to strike an arms control deal with the Soviet leader, Reagan quickly gathered up the papers in front of him, which contained the U.S. and Soviet arms control proposals that had been made over the course of the past two days, slammed his briefcase shut, and abruptly left the room, with Shultz obligingly following behind him. At the sound of the opening of the doors to the room in which Reagan and Gorbachev had been meeting, the aides to the two leaders became excited, as they were eager to learn the results of this last meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev. However, their mood soon dampened as Chairman of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Kenneth Adelman shouted “there’s no deal.” As he wrote in his memoirs, “it was written all over their faces, especially Reagan’s, as they stood at the door talking for one last moment.”¹⁹⁶ Foregoing the ceremonial send-off that usually concludes summits like the one at Reykjavik, Reagan and Gorbachev simply headed out of Hofdi House with the grim looks on their faces that would ultimately become infamous all over the world.

Just as Reagan was about to get into a limousine bound for the American ambassador’s residence in Reykjavik, he turned to Gorbachev and said “I still feel we can find a deal.”

¹⁹⁴ This quotation is President Reagan’s response to the statement that General Secretary Gorbachev made after the summit that he did not know what he could have done differently so that an agreement between the two leaders would have been reached and can be found in George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner’s, 1993), 773-4.

¹⁹⁵ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 679.

¹⁹⁶ Kenneth L. Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summits – A Skeptic’s Account* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 75.

Gorbachev responded that “I don’t think you want a deal. I don’t know what more I could have done.” Reagan quipped in retort, “you could have said yes.” Gorbachev replied by saying that “we won’t be seeing each other again,” and Reagan got into the waiting car.¹⁹⁷ This question of who could have done what to prevent the summit from ending without an agreement despite 21 hours of intense negotiations is one that was never fully answered in the weeks immediately following Reykjavik, before the summit began to be eclipsed in the minds of Reagan and other members of his administration, as well as the media, by the Iran-Contra scandal.

This chapter aims to describe the immediate aftermath of the Reykjavik Summit, detailing and analyzing the ways in which both Reagan and Gorbachev presented the summit to their respective publics and the reasons that they each gave for its breakdown. It will then provide an explanation based on my own research of why the two leaders were unable to reach an agreement at Reykjavik to abolish nuclear weapons despite the fact that both men had a desire and willingness to free the world from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

The Reagan administration’s response to Reykjavik

The Reagan administration’s report on Reykjavik was quite erratic indeed. In the days and weeks following the summit, the U.S. delegation’s characterization of the Reagan-Gorbachev negotiations shifted radically in tone and its reports of the proposals that the two leaders discussed during their negotiations were very inconsistent. Initially calling the summit’s outcome “deeply disappoint[ing],” the Reagan administration reversed the tone of their characterization of the summit within hours of Gorbachev’s upbeat press conference that followed the conclusion of the summit on Sunday evening.¹⁹⁸ Also, the administration was initially reluctant to reveal the full extent of the proposals made by Reagan and Gorbachev

¹⁹⁷ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 773-4.

¹⁹⁸ “Update: Reagan Gorbachev Iceland Summit.” NBC News. 12 October 1986. Accessed through the Vanderbilt Television News Archive at <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=891385>.

during their negotiations but was ultimately forced to acknowledge that the two leaders had discussed the prospect of eliminating all nuclear weapons after Gorbachev and other Soviet officials publicly stated that this was the subject of their final negotiations.

The initial report that the U.S. issued on Reykjavik was rather bleak. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, who had been the only other U.S. official in the negotiating room with Reagan, was the first member of the American delegation to speak publicly about the event. Holding a press conference in Reykjavik before he departed for Brussels to brief NATO on the results of the summit, Shultz's statements made it clear to the press and the public that the U.S. viewed Reykjavik as a failure. Shultz emphasized that the outcome of the Reykjavik discussions was a deeply frustrating one to the U.S., repeatedly making statements such as "we ended, of course, having worked so hard and come so far, in deep disappointment."¹⁹⁹ He made it clear that no arms control agreements were ultimately reached, despite the fact that potential agreements had been discussed prior to the collapse of the summit, and that Reagan's primary goal for Reykjavik, the setting of a date for a Washington Summit, had not been realized either. The fact that even this more minor goal had not been achieved and that Shultz was not completely sure that the dialogue between Reagan and Gorbachev would continue understandably cast Reykjavik as a failure in the minds of the American press and people.

In addition to his grim statements about the summit, Shultz's physical appearance and manner of speaking to the press drove home the point that the U.S. delegation considered Reykjavik to be a failure. The usually unflappable Shultz appeared physically drained yet acutely emotional when relating the events of the summit to the press. He looked utterly exhausted, making frequent, drawn-out pauses in his speech, giving the impression that he could not quite remember exactly what had gone on in the summit sessions. Yet he became

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

uncharacteristically emotional when discussing Reagan's performance in the negotiations, even welling up with tears as he stated that "the President's performance was magnificent and I have never been so proud of my President as I have been in these sessions and particularly this afternoon."²⁰⁰ It appeared that the results of the summit had utterly overwhelmed him. Thus, it took only this press conference, along with the very dour look on Reagan's face as he emerged from Hofdi House at the end of the summit, to convey the idea to the whole world that Reykjavik was a failure in the eyes of the Americans, which was an image that would become nearly impossible for the U.S. to overcome.

While Shultz was holding this ultimately infamous press conference, National Security Advisor John Poindexter was briefing members of the press on Reykjavik on the trip back to Washington aboard Air Force One. While his portrayal of the summit was not quite as bleak as Shultz's, he did make it clear that there "was sadness on our part that the Soviets wouldn't agree to what we thought was an imminently fair, non-threatening, safe, stable position."²⁰¹ Clearly, the Americans were depicting the Reykjavik Summit in a negative light and the content of Poindexter's press conference merely confirmed the image of the summit as a failure that had already been suggested by Reagan's demeanor and Shultz's press conference in Reykjavik.

However, following Gorbachev's press conference in Iceland, the Americans' portrayal of the summit completely changed. Gorbachev cast the summit in an extremely positive light in this appearance before the press, prompting the Americans to follow suit. For example, Reagan, in a nationally televised address about the summit on the day after its conclusion, told the American people that "we have it within our grasp to move speedily with the Soviets toward even more breakthroughs. Our ideas are out there on the table. They won't go away. We're

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Interview of Admiral John Poindexter on Return from Iceland, October 12, 1986, folder "[Reading File for Regan/Iceland Summit], 2 of 5," box 5, Donald T. Regan Files, Series I: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library, 13.

ready to pick up where we left off... There's reason, good reason for hope. I saw evidence of this in the progress we made in the talks with Mr. Gorbachev. And I saw evidence of it when we left Iceland yesterday."²⁰² He was clearly setting forth the idea that even though he and Gorbachev had left Reykjavik without an agreement, progress had been made in the negotiations, as sweeping arms control proposals had been discussed by the leaders for the first time and would remain on the table to be taken up again by them at their next meeting.

Even those officials, namely Shultz and Poindexter, who had negatively characterized Reykjavik in the hours immediately following its conclusion, were now putting a positive spin on the summit. For example, in a press conference held on October 13 at NATO headquarters, Shultz expressed agreement with the statements made by representatives of the NATO allies that "Reykjavik was a success. It would have been a failure not to try and would be a failure not to follow up on the many achievements at Reykjavik."²⁰³ Absent from his speech were statements that he was disappointed or frustrated with the outcome of the summit, as he instead dwelled on the far-reaching nature of the proposals on START, INF, and nuclear testing that were discussed and upon which informal agreement between the two leaders was reached. Rather than emphasizing the fact that a date for a future summit in the U.S. was not set, Shultz stressed the fact that American negotiators were returning to Geneva the next day, where they planned to put all of the proposals that had been discussed at Reykjavik on the table. Shultz would later go on to mock his "tired and disappointed" appearance in the press conference he gave in Reykjavik and make assurances to the American public that he was simply exhausted after a grueling series

²⁰² "Address to the Nation on the Meetings With Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland." October 13, 1986. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/101386a.htm> (accessed 29 November 2009).

²⁰³ National Security Council Secretariat Memo, U.S. Mission U.S. NATO to the Secretary of State, October 13, 1986, folder "Press Interviews – Reykjavik, 1 of 2," box 57, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 1.

of negotiations, which he now emphasized were not a failure.²⁰⁴ Similarly, Poindexter explicitly tried to reverse the bleak assessment of Reykjavik that Shultz had provided in that first press conference in Reykjavik, saying “we were all tired. We’d been working hard and you become deeply involved in the issue. But upon reflection, I think overnight we realized that we’ve made significant progress and the possibility of, indeed, getting agreement outside of an agreement on SDI and ABM is a significant possibility.”²⁰⁵ Clearly, the Americans were trying to recast their earlier depiction of Reykjavik as a failed summit.

Despite these efforts to alter the image of the Reykjavik Summit as a failure, the press, as well as the public to a lesser extent, continued to view the Iceland meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev in a negative light. This is somewhat surprising given the usual success of Chief of Staff Donald Regan’s infamous “shovel brigade” in spinning events in a way so that they reflected favorably upon President Reagan.²⁰⁶ For example, a few weeks prior to the Reykjavik Summit, the shovel brigade successfully spun the Daniloff affair so that Americans did not realize that Reagan essentially obtained the release of the innocent American journalist Nicholas Daniloff from a Soviet prison by releasing Soviet spy Gennadi Zakharov from a U.S. jail. Similarly, a few weeks after the meeting in Iceland, Regan’s team was able to minimize the political damage the President incurred from losing the U.S. Senate to the Democrats in the 1986 midterm elections.²⁰⁷ So, the question naturally arises as to what made Reykjavik different from

²⁰⁴ Speech and Q&A Session with the Honorable George P. Shultz, Secretary of State before the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., Friday, October 17, 1986, folder “Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 3 of 3,” box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 4.

²⁰⁵ Press Briefing by Admiral John M. Poindexter, National Security Advisor, October 13, 1986, folder “Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 1 of 3,” box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 24.

²⁰⁶ In an interview with *New York Times* reporter Bernard Weinraub, Regan famously said that “some of us [in the White House] are like a shovel brigade that follow a parade down Main Street cleaning up.”

²⁰⁷ Tom Wicker, “IN THE NATION: The Shovel Brigade,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1986, <http://www.proquest.com>.

these other events. Why was the shovel brigade unable to recast the summit in a positive light despite their persistent efforts to do so?

It seems that Regan's team could not cast Reykjavik as a successful summit in the minds of the press and the American public because the images of Reagan and Gorbachev emerging from Hofdi House with long faces, as well as that of Shultz's overly downcast demeanor at his press conference, were just too powerful and thereby too unforgettable to overcome. The sad expressions on the faces of Reagan and Gorbachev as they left Hofdi only minutes after the conclusion of the summit negotiations were clear evidence of their first, unvarnished opinions of the outcome and implications of the summit. Thus, all of their verbal assessments of the summit after this exit from Hofdi seemed a bit superfluous, as their facial expressions had already told the world how they really felt about what went on at Reykjavik. Though not quite as powerful as the image of the utterly despondent Reagan and Gorbachev leaving Hofdi, the image of Shultz, the only other American negotiator in the summit discussions with Reagan, on the verge of tears as he described "the agreement that might have been" at his press conference was also quite indelible.²⁰⁸ In fact, Max Kampelman, the chief negotiator at the Geneva arms control talks, who was seated in the front row of the audience during Shultz's press conference, was unable to hold back his tears as Shultz described the breakdown of the summit.²⁰⁹ As *Washington Post* reporter David Ottaway, who covered the Shultz press conference, wrote, "no one who attended the summit, or watched the secretary's televised news conference at its end, is likely ever to forget the sense almost of grief etched across Shultz's usually expressionless face."²¹⁰ Thus, these images were simply too unforgettable to both the press and the public to be overcome by simple

²⁰⁸ "Update: Reagan Gorbachev Iceland Summit."

²⁰⁹ Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 348.

²¹⁰ Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-2001* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 206-7.

verbal assurances by members of the shovel brigade that Reykjavik, upon reflection, was indeed a success.

In addition to radically shifting the tone of their characterization of Reykjavik, the Reagan administration also altered their statements concerning the nature of the proposals that Reagan and Gorbachev had discussed at the summit. The initial reports of the substance of Reagan's final proposal in the last summit session were rather inconsistent. Shultz stated in his press conference in Reykjavik that "as the agreement that might have been said, during this ten year [non-withdrawal] period, in effect, all offensive strategic arms and ballistic missiles would be eliminated."²¹¹ In this statement, it appears that Shultz was referring to the final written proposal that the U.S. delegation offered, in which they proposed a 50% reduction in strategic offensive weapons (ICBMs, SLBMs, ALCMs, and bombers) during the first five years of the 10 year non-withdrawal period and the elimination of the remaining offensive ballistic missiles (ICBMs and SLBMs) in the last five years of the non-withdrawal period.²¹² However, in discussing the reductions that would take place in the second five-year period, Shultz seems to have conflated the concepts of strategic offensive weapons and offensive ballistic missiles. Offensive ballistic missiles are merely one type of strategic offensive weapon, with long-range cruise missiles and bombers being the other types. Thus, one would not eliminate "all offensive strategic arms *and* ballistic missiles" as Shultz said, because if one eliminated all offensive strategic arms, that would include all ballistic missiles.²¹³ Nevertheless, despite this conflation of concepts, Shultz made no reference to the final proposal to which Reagan verbally agreed, which

²¹¹ "Update: Reagan Gorbachev Iceland Summit."

²¹² The U.S. Counter-counter offer on October 12, folder "Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 3 of 3," box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

²¹³ "Update: Reagan Gorbachev Iceland Summit." Please note that the emphasis was added by the author.

was the elimination of all nuclear weapons in 10 years.²¹⁴ Similarly, Poindexter confused the ideas of strategic offensive weapons and offensive ballistic missiles, stating in his press briefing on Air Force One that continuing to reduce strategic offensive weapons at the same rate in the second five-year period as in the first would result in the elimination of all offensive ballistic missiles. He also neglected to mention the fact that Reagan did agree to a proposal to abolish all nuclear weapons in a decade.²¹⁵

Other members of the American delegation to the summit, including Reagan himself, also referred to the final written proposal that the President presented to Gorbachev, rather than the one to which he verbally agreed, when discussing the last proposal that the two leaders were considering before the summit collapsed. However, unlike Shultz and Poindexter, these officials managed to state the proposal correctly, properly distinguishing between the 50% reduction in strategic offensive weapons in the first five-year period and the complete elimination of offensive ballistic missiles in the second period. Reagan, in his national address to the American people on the day after the summit, stated that the U.S. Counter-counter offer was the last substantive proposal to which he agreed and made no mention of his assent to Gorbachev's proposal to abolish all nuclear weapons during the 10 year non-withdrawal period. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, Adelman, and Senior Director for European and Soviet Affairs in the National Security Council Jack Matlock offered similar accounts of the summit.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Final Meeting. 12 October 1986, 3:25 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. - 6:50 p.m., 11.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document15.pdf>.

²¹⁵ Interview of Admiral John Poindexter on Return from Iceland, October 12, 1986, 9.

²¹⁶ For the full text of each gentleman's comments, please see "Address to the Nation on the Meetings With Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland;" Briefing by Mr. Richard N. Perle, ASD/ISP at the Pentagon, Oct. 14, 1986, folder "Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 1 of 3," box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library; Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace*, 80-82; and United States Information Agency Foreign Press Center transcript, Jack F. Matlock, Jr., Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European and Soviet Affairs, National Security Council on the Reagan-Gorbachev Meeting in Reykjavik, Oct. 14, 1986, folder "Press Interviews - Reykjavik, 1 of 2," box 57, Jack F. Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

In contrast, Reagan told the press right after the summit concluded that “we said to the Soviets, we will do away with all nuclear weapons – nuclear bombs, nuclear shells for field artillery. Everything was on the table.”²¹⁷ He was clearly referring to the last verbal, rather than written, proposal to which the President assented. This remark received little attention from the press, however, until Reagan himself made mention of the fact that he and Gorbachev seriously discussed the elimination of all nuclear weapons in 10 years during a briefing for congressional leaders, which Senator Sam Nunn then revealed in a press conference following the briefing.²¹⁸ Within a few days, both the public and the press were clamoring to know the exact nature of the exchange between Reagan and Gorbachev in that final, unplanned summit session, but the Reagan administration still largely refused to admit that the two leaders had considered the prospect of abolishing all nuclear weapons in 10 years. It would not be until after Gorbachev and Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh publicly declared that the Americans were distorting the events of Reykjavik that the administration would reveal that Reagan and Gorbachev did seriously debate eliminating nuclear weapons in that last session.

It is important to note that members of the administration did not simply neglect to mention the leaders’ discussion of the elimination of nuclear weapons, as if they were merely unaware that such a conversation had taken place between Reagan and Gorbachev, but actively tried to conceal the fact that the President and General Secretary seriously discussed ridding the world of their nuclear weapons. For example, in a set of talking points that was distributed to members of the administration who would be speaking about the Reykjavik Summit to the press, officials were instructed to respond to questions about whether Reagan seriously discussed

²¹⁷ Donald Regan quoted in Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace*, 81.

²¹⁸ Press Briefing by Senators Robert Dole, Richard Lugar, Robert Byrd, Sam Nunn and Congressman Robert Michel, Oct. 14, 1986, folder “[Reading File for Regan/Iceland Summit], 2 of 5,” box 5, Donald T. Regan Files, Series I: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library, 2.

abolishing all nuclear weapons in Iceland by saying that “both leaders have expressed a common goal of *ultimately* eliminating nuclear weapons. This was discussed in Iceland. The President’s proposal in Iceland, however, as he reported in his speech [on October 13], was to eliminate all offensive ballistic missiles during the next ten years.”²¹⁹ Similarly, Poindexter even encouraged Reagan himself to “make no further public comment endorsing the idea of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons in 10 years as something discussed and agreed with the General Secretary. If asked, I would recommend that you stand firm by your long-term commitment to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, but always cast this in terms of a long-term goal.”²²⁰ Clearly, the Reagan administration was purposefully trying to hide the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev seriously discussed abolishing all of their nuclear weapons.

Thus, the question naturally arises as to why the U.S. administration was so determined to conceal from the press and the American public the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev had informally agreed to abolish all of their nuclear weapons prior to the collapse of the Reykjavik Summit. It appears that two concerns were most likely motivating the administration’s desire and efforts to prevent the exposure of this fact. The first of these concerns was rooted in the opposition of the leaders of the NATO countries, despite the approval of their citizens, to the idea of the U.S. drastically reducing or eliminating its nuclear stockpile, since this would reduce the protection that these countries would receive from the American “nuclear umbrella.” If the leaders of the NATO countries discovered that Reagan seriously considered getting rid of all of the U.S.’s nuclear weapons, this could cause a rift between the U.S. and its European allies. For example, the British government, which was headed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who

²¹⁹ Talking points on the question of whether Reagan proposed the elimination of all ballistic missiles or all nuclear weapons at Reykjavik, Oct. 16, 1986, folder “[Reading File for Regan/Iceland Summit], 2 of 5,” box 5, Donald T. Regan Files, Series I: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library. Please note that the emphasis was added by the author.

²²⁰ Memo, John M. Poindexter to the President, folder “Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 3 of 3,” box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library

was Reagan's closest foreign ally at the time, was described in the days after Reykjavik as being "concerned by what they see as a lapse in Allied consultation during the summit – given the scope of the agreements under consideration – and by the administration's embrace of the goal of eliminating all ballistic systems within ten years."²²¹ If Thatcher disapproved of Reagan's efforts to abolish all ballistic missiles in 10 years, deeming this goal too broad in scope, then she certainly would have opposed his efforts to eliminate all nuclear weapons in the same time frame. In fact, Thatcher would make clear her support for the existence of nuclear weapons in a conversation with Gorbachev in 1989, stating "both our countries know from bitter experience that conventional weapons do not deter war in Europe, whereas nuclear weapons have done so for over forty years."²²²

This horror at Reagan's willingness in Iceland to agree to the abolition of all ballistic missiles in 10 years was also shared by French President Francois Mitterrand, with whom Thatcher had arranged a meeting in London after the collapse of the Reykjavik Summit to discuss its implications.²²³ In addition, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl traveled to Washington shortly after the Reykjavik Summit to express his displeasure at Reagan's readiness to abolish American INF missiles in Europe.²²⁴ With the leaders of the U.S.'s three closest NATO allies, Thatcher of Great Britain, Mitterrand of France, and Kohl of West Germany, expressing disapproval of the proposals simply to eliminate all American INF missiles in Europe or all ballistic missiles in 10 years, it is understandable that the U.S. feared a negative reaction from each of the leaders to the even more far-reaching idea of abolishing all nuclear weapons in

²²¹ National Security Council Secretariat Memo, American Embassy in London to the Secretary of State, October 1986, accessed through the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website at <http://www.margarethatcher.org/document/83D9AAF13FB44270A89C8B1B56A1B5C7.pdf>

²²² Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace*, 83.

²²³ Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 368.

²²⁴ Jack F. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 239.

10 years. Thus, it stands to reason that the U.S. administration was motivated to conceal the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev seriously discussed the idea of eliminating all of their nuclear weapons out of a fear that this would damage U.S. relations with its allies.

The second concern that could have prompted the U.S. administration to try to hide the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev seriously debated the prospect of eliminating all of their nuclear weapons at Reykjavik is that this concept was very unpopular with elites in the national security community. After reports that Reagan seriously discussed nuclear abolitionism with Gorbachev in Iceland began to emerge, influential members of the national security community like Republicans Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, James Schlesinger, Brent Scowcroft, and Dick Cheney, as well as Democrats Zbigniew Brzezinski, James Woolsey, and Les Aspin, publicly scolded the President for his efforts at the summit to rid the world of nuclear weapons.²²⁵ Most famously, Nixon wrote that “no summit since Yalta has threatened Western interests so much as the two days at Reykjavik” and that “no genuine progress on the central issue of arms control – the strategic balance between the superpowers – will be possible until the mythologists of Reykjavik abandon the twin fantasies of eliminating all nuclear weapons and of making nuclear weapons obsolete.”²²⁶ It is reasonable to assume that the Reagan administration knew that many of the elites in the national security community were opposed to the abolition of nuclear weapons and so would publicly reprimand Reagan for advocating this idea to Gorbachev at Reykjavik, as occurred. It also makes sense to suppose that the Reagan administration feared that such public criticism of the President on the eve of midterm congressional elections, which generally amount to a referendum on the sitting President, could hurt the Republican Party in the elections. Thus, the Reagan administration may have sought to conceal Reagan and Gorbachev’s discussion of

²²⁵ Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace*, 82.

²²⁶ Richard Nixon, *1999: Victory Without War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 191; *Ibid.*, 71.

the elimination of nuclear weapons out of a fear of a backlash from political elites, which could then negatively impact the Republicans' chances for success in the 1986 congressional elections.

Despite the inconsistencies in the U.S. administration's tone and reports about the negotiations that took place during the last summit session, members of the American delegation to Reykjavik did consistently blame Gorbachev's insistence that research on strategic defenses be restricted to the laboratory for 10 years for the summit's collapse before any arms reduction agreement could be reached. After the summit concluded, Reagan wrote in his diary that Gorbachev "wanted language that would have killed SDI. The price was high but I wouldn't sell and that's how the day ended...I'd pledged I wouldn't give away SDI and I didn't, but that meant no deal on any of the arms reductions."²²⁷ Clearly, Gorbachev was being portrayed by the Americans as the villain, trying to kill SDI by restricting the U.S.'s ability to effectively conduct research on it and then linking an agreement on reductions in offensive weapons with one restricting strategic defense research. All of the other members of the American delegation to Reykjavik echoed this sentiment, with Perle even stating that Gorbachev "came [to Reykjavik] to kill SDI. He said to Reagan, here are all these things that you want and you can have them, but there is this one little string attached and that was SDI."²²⁸

Gorbachev's response to Reykjavik

From the beginning, Gorbachev's characterization of the Reykjavik Summit was vastly different than the one given by the dreary Shultz in the moments after the summit concluded. Holding his press conference after Shultz's had ended, Gorbachev adopted a very positive tone. This was actually against his first inclination, which was to blame Reagan's refusal to compromise on the issue of SDI research for the breakdown of the summit before any agreement

²²⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 679.

²²⁸ Richard Perle, telephone interview by the author, November 17, 2009.

could be reached. Despite the fact that Gorbachev had about an hour to reflect on the events of the summit, he wrote in his memoirs that he still had not decided whether to cast Reykjavik in a positive or negative light when he reached the room in which he was scheduled to hold his press conference. Upon entering the room, Gorbachev wrote, "I sensed the anxiety in the air. I suddenly felt emotional, even shaken. These people standing in front of me seemed to represent mankind waiting for its fate to be decided." It was at this point that Gorbachev realized that he should present Reykjavik as the breakthrough that it was, despite the fact that he and Reagan had not reached any concrete agreements.²²⁹

In this press conference, Gorbachev recounted in detail the proposals that he had brought to Reykjavik in the areas of START, INF, SDI/ABM, and nuclear testing. He also described Reagan's response to each of these new proposals, as well as the sweeping nature of the agreements they had informally reached, such as the complete elimination of LRINF in Europe, the reduction of LRINF in Asia to 100, the reduction of START to 1600 SNDVs and 6000 warheads in five years, and the resumption of discussions on a nuclear testing ban. He then explained how the two leaders' disagreement on whether SDI research should be restricted to the laboratory proved to be an insurmountable stumbling block in negotiations, leading to the abrupt conclusion of the summit before any concrete agreements had been reached. Nevertheless, Gorbachev described himself as an optimist after this summit and stated that:

The entire meeting here was of major significance. We did, after all, come close to reaching agreements; only they have yet to be endorsed... This was an interesting, important, and promising meeting on the whole... [so] let us not despair. I think that with this meeting we have reached the very important stage of understanding where we are. And it has been shown that accords are possible. I am sure of this.²³⁰

²²⁹ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs*. Translated by Georges Peronansky and Tatjana Varsavsky. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 419.

²³⁰ "Press Conference in Reykjavik, Iceland," October 12, 1986, in Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Toward a Better World* (New York: Richardson and Steirman, 1987), 32; *Ibid.*, 34-5.

Gorbachev's speech was met with a resounding round of applause, as members of the press leapt to their feet and cheered the General Secretary. Gorbachev's wife, Raisa Maximovna, even became overcome with emotion, bursting into tears of joy as her husband deemed Reykjavik "a breakthrough, which allowed us for the first time to look over the horizon."²³¹

This optimism at the outcome of the Reykjavik Summit was not simply an act that Gorbachev put on for the media at his press conference. On the flight home from Iceland to the Soviet Union, Gorbachev mused on the summit and its significance to his top foreign policy adviser Anatoly Chernyaev. According to Chernyaev's notes on this conversation, Gorbachev continued to characterize Reykjavik as a success even in private, as he stated that "I am even more of an optimist after Reykjavik...In no sense would I call Reykjavik a failure. It is a step in a complicated and difficult dialogue, in a search for solutions."²³² Clearly, Gorbachev truly felt that the summit with Reagan was a success.

It was Gorbachev's public display of optimism at his post-summit press conference that prompted the Americans to begin calling Reykjavik a success rather than a failure. As members of the American delegation to the summit were just beginning to change the tone with which they spoke about Reykjavik, casting it in a newfound positive light, Gorbachev continued to assert that the meeting was a breakthrough. In a nationally televised speech to the Soviet people on October 14, Gorbachev affirmed the positive characterization of Reykjavik that he had first made in that press conference in Iceland. While he more forcefully blamed the abrupt ending of the summit on Reagan's stubbornness and inability to set forth new, constructive arms control

²³¹ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 419.

²³² Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes on Gorbachev's thoughts on Reykjavik, 12 October 1986, 1.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document19.pdf>.

proposals, he still maintained that “the meeting was useful. It paved the way for a possible step forward, for a real positive shift.”²³³

Just as Gorbachev consistently presented the Reykjavik Summit in a positive light to the Soviet people, he also set forth consistent reports about the nature of his discussions with Reagan. Unlike the Reagan administration, Gorbachev never made a secret of the fact that the two leaders seriously considered abolishing nuclear weapons, referring to it in his very first press conference. Gorbachev initially raised the point that he and Reagan discussed eliminating all of their nuclear weapons when explaining why the Soviet Union insisted on restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years. The General Secretary made the argument that “if we should enter the stage of a real, deep reduction, within ten years – and that’s how things looked to us at the meeting – the nuclear potentials of the Soviet Union and the United States would have been eliminated,” then measures needed to be in place to ensure that the ABM Treaty was not being circumvented.²³⁴ Clearly, Gorbachev’s initial impression of the final summit session was that he and Reagan had been headed towards an agreement to abolish their nuclear stockpiles prior to the meeting’s collapse. This makes it clear that he considered Reagan’s verbal assent to his proposal to eliminate nuclear weapons to be the President’s final stance on the issue, which is a view supported by both the American and Soviet transcripts of the final summit session.

Gorbachev continued to make reference to the fact that he and Reagan informally agreed to abolish nuclear weapons in 10 years, as he stated in his October 14 speech on Soviet television that he and Reagan had agreed to abolish all of their nuclear weapons, not simply offensive ballistic missiles, by the end of the 10 year non-withdrawal period.²³⁵ In Gorbachev’s view,

²³³ “Report on the Meeting in Iceland with President Reagan,” October 14, 1986, in Gorbachev, *Toward a Better World*, 61.

²³⁴ “Press Conference in Reykjavik, Iceland,” 29.

²³⁵ “Report on the Meeting in Iceland with President Reagan,” 58.

there was no reason to hide the fact that he and Reagan had discussed the elimination of all nuclear weapons, as both men had previously named the realization of a world without nuclear weapons as one of their main foreign policy goals. Thus, when Gorbachev listened to President Reagan's nationally televised address on the summit, read the transcripts of press briefings that other members of the U.S. delegation to Reykjavik, like Perle and Matlock, had given, and realized that the Reagan administration was not telling the American public that Reagan had informally agreed to the abolition of all nuclear weapons in 10 years, he became furious. So, he gave a televised address, which was his second such speech on the subject in less than a week, dedicated to setting the record straight. In this speech, which was filled with harsh, condemnatory language directed at the U.S. administration, Gorbachev sought "to draw your [the Soviet people's] attention to the juggling with words and dissonance which we are observing" on the part of the Americans. He lamented the fact that:

Things got to the point of outright misrepresentation. It is alleged, for example, that during the past meeting the U.S. President did not agree to the Soviet proposal on a *complete* elimination of *all* strategic offensive arms of the USSR and the U.S.A. by 1996, and that a common point of view on our proposal was never reached. With all the responsibility of a participant in the talks I state: the President did, albeit without particular enthusiasm, consent to the elimination of all – I emphasize – not just certain individual ones, but all strategic offensive arms. And these are to be eliminated precisely within ten years, in two stages.²³⁶

Gorbachev was clearly fed up with what he considered to be deceit on the part of the American delegation in presenting the events of the summit.

In response to this speech, the Reagan administration did issue a revised synopsis of the summit in which it stated that Reagan and Gorbachev seriously discussed the prospect of abolishing all of their nuclear weapons but failed to set forth a concrete time period in which

²³⁶ "The Impact of the Meeting in Iceland with President Reagan," October 22, 1986, in Gorbachev, *Toward a Better World*, 76.

these weapons would be eliminated.²³⁷ Since the Reagan administration refused to admit that a time frame for abolishing nuclear weapons was informally agreed upon, in effect denying the veracity of Gorbachev's version of events, the Soviets took an unprecedented step in an effort to force the Americans to tell the truth about that last summit session: Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh publicly quoted from the classified Soviet transcripts of the summit. On October 24, Bessmertnykh read to the press from the official Soviet record of the last summit session, quoting Reagan as having said that "“If we agree that by the end of the 10-year period all nuclear arms are to be eliminated, we can refer this to our delegations in Geneva to prepare an agreement that you could sign during your visit to the United States.””²³⁸ While U.S. officials like Perle criticized the Soviets for breaking diplomatic protocol in quoting a classified summit transcript, a senior U.S. official, familiar with the substance of the Reykjavik discussions but speaking on condition of anonymity, finally did state that Gorbachev was correct in saying that Reagan had agreed to his proposal to eliminate all nuclear weapons in 10 years.²³⁹

As Reagan and other members of the U.S. delegation to Reykjavik had done in the days following the conclusion of the summit, Gorbachev offered reasons why he thought that the summit had collapsed before an agreement could be reached. He similarly cited the two leaders' fundamentally different positions on whether SDI research should be restricted to the laboratory for 10 years as the primary stumbling block in the negotiations. However, Gorbachev both publicly and privately suggested that Reagan's refusal to agree to restrict SDI research to the laboratory could have been a result of the influence of his hard-line aides. In his press

²³⁷ Gerald M. Boyd, "U.S. Says 2 Leaders Spoke of Giving Up All Nuclear Arms," *New York Times*, October 24, 1986, <http://www.proquest.com>.

²³⁸ Neil A. Lewis, "U.S. Says Russians Violate Diplomacy by Quoting Talks," *New York Times*, October 27, 1986, <http://www.proquest.com>.

²³⁹ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Official Backs Moscow's Version of Reagan's Stand," *New York Times*, October 28, 1986, <http://www.proquest.com>.

conference in Reykjavik, he noted that “we took breaks [in the summit sessions], resumed debates and I noticed that the President was not supported,” suggesting that Reagan may have ignored his own inclination to make a deal on SDI in order to get an agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons because of the advice of his aides.²⁴⁰ Similarly, in a meeting with the Politburo on October 14, Gorbachev said that “As soon as we would begin to go down to big issues, Reagan at once would refer to the need of consulting them with experts. And the experts who accompanied him to Reykjavik were primarily representatives of the right reactionary forces. Its reactionary political views are well known.”²⁴¹ Clearly, Gorbachev thought that Reagan’s aides may have encouraged him not to make any concessions on SDI, thereby thwarting the leaders’ chances of reaching an agreement on offensive reductions, since Gorbachev had linked offensive and defensive issues. However, Gorbachev did not totally implicate Reagan’s advisers in the breakdown of the summit, suggesting that maybe Reagan himself truly did not want to make any concessions on SDI research.²⁴²

So, after examining both the American memoranda of conversation and the Soviet transcripts of the summit sessions, as well as both Reagan’s and Gorbachev’s statements after the conclusion of the summit, it becomes clear that SDI was the key stumbling block in the Reykjavik negotiations. However, as Gorbachev’s comments about the potential influence of Reagan’s advisers on the President’s SDI stance suggest, the two leaders’ positions were indelibly shaped by larger forces. Thus, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to identifying those forces, as they are truly at fault for the two leaders’ inability to reach an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons.

²⁴⁰ “Press Conference in Reykjavik, Iceland,” 31.

²⁴¹ CC CPSU Session of the Politburo on the results of Reykjavik, 14 October 1986. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document21.pdf>, 8.

²⁴² “The Impact of the Meeting in Iceland with President Reagan,” 73.

The effects of Gorbachev's all or nothing mentality

In seeking to determine why Reagan and Gorbachev, who both clearly had a desire and willingness to abolish nuclear weapons, could not reach an agreement to eliminate their nuclear stockpiles, it is important to consider the effects that Gorbachev's linkage of an agreement on reductions in offensive weapons with one restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years had on the two leaders' ability to conclude an agreement. Both the American and Soviet records of the summit make it clear that Reagan and Gorbachev were in near perfect agreement on a plan to reduce and eliminate offensive nuclear weapons. In the final summit session, Reagan agreed to the proposal that Gorbachev had set forth in the third session to abolish all nuclear weapons in the 10 year non-withdrawal period. In fact, Reagan and Gorbachev were in such agreement on this issue of eliminating nuclear weapons in 10 years that Reagan said that he thought they "could turn it over to the Geneva people with that understanding, for them to draft up that agreement, and Gorbachev could come to the U.S. and sign it."²⁴³ Clearly, the two leaders were very close to reaching an agreement that dealt with reductions in offensive weapons.

It was when Gorbachev reminded Reagan that he would only sign on to an agreement on offensive weapons in conjunction with one confining strategic defense research to the laboratory that the negotiations encountered problems. Since Reagan and Gorbachev had diametrically opposing views on whether strategic defense research should be confined to the laboratory, the mention of strategic defense issues, particularly the insistence that an agreement in this realm was a condition for an agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons, was sure to raise tensions. In fact, each leader specifically cited their inability to reach a mutually acceptable position on SDI research as the reason for the collapse of the summit, specifically stating that "it

²⁴³ Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Final Meeting. 12 October 1986, 11.

is a question of one word,” ‘laboratory,’ that was “frustrate[ing] a meeting that had promised to be historic.”²⁴⁴

Gorbachev’s linkage of offensive and defensive issues was rooted in his fears of SDI. On the one hand, Gorbachev worried that SDI might not actually be defensive in nature, but rather a cover for the development and deployment of offensive space weapons by the U.S. If SDI was truly a defensive system, Gorbachev feared that it might be part of a covert strategy designed to give the U.S. a disarming first strike. Thus, Gorbachev was hoping that he could either weaken or kill SDI by offering Reagan the chance to realize his dream of a nuclear-free world if he would agree to place restrictions on strategic defense research.

This linkage of an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons with one confining SDI research to the laboratory did not signify that Gorbachev was not serious about eliminating nuclear weapons and so was simply trying to back out of an historic agreement that would have abolished them in 10 years. Jack Matlock, who would go on to become the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union the year after the Reykjavik Summit, asked Gorbachev about a decade ago whether his insistence on confining research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years was just an effort to give Reagan a way out of a sweeping arms control agreement. According to Matlock, Gorbachev’s reply was “‘Hell no, I was trying to kill the program.’”²⁴⁵ Clearly, this linkage simply signified that Gorbachev was seriously afraid of SDI and wanted to reduce its chances of viability. However, due to this linkage, the summit ultimately collapsed without an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons. Despite both Reagan’s and Gorbachev’s desire and willingness to reach an agreement that would liquidate nuclear weapons, when they could not

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 15.

²⁴⁵ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

agree on whether to confine SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years, they were forced to walk away from Reykjavik without any agreement reducing or eliminating nuclear weapons.

The role of Reagan's aides in the breakdown of the summit

Gorbachev's insistence that he and Reagan reach an agreement that would restrict research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years in conjunction with one eliminating nuclear weapons clearly affected the two leaders' ability to reach an agreement abolishing their nuclear weapons. Reagan, however, did initially display a willingness to make this concession on SDI in order to conclude an agreement with Gorbachev on the elimination of nuclear weapons. As mentioned in the last chapter, Reagan emerged from the first part of the fourth summit session seriously questioning the idea, which Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and others at the Pentagon were constantly emphasizing, that restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years would effectively kill the program. Thus, he began to wonder whether he should agree to this restriction on SDI so that a sweeping arms reduction agreement could be reached with the Soviet Union. So, one of the first questions that Reagan asked his advisers in his meeting with them during the break in the last summit session was whether restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years would in fact kill the program.

As explained in the previous chapter, Matlock has stated that Richard Perle, who was the Defense Department's only representative at the summit and is still known today as a hard-liner on arms control, quickly replied that restricting SDI research to the laboratory would indeed kill the program. While Matlock personally disagreed with Perle's answer, he did not openly contradict Perle in front of the President, because despite the fact that answering questions from the President did not have to be done in a hierarchical manner, Matlock felt that either Shultz or Poindexter should be the one to voice disagreement with Perle. Specifically, Matlock thought

that “if someone was going to convince the President that it would not kill SDI to restrict it to the laboratory that person had to be Shultz. Since he [Shultz] did not do this, I didn’t feel right about getting out in front of the Secretary of the State on the issue.” According to Matlock, neither Shultz, nor anyone else for that matter, offered a response to Perle’s statement and the President became convinced that he should not agree to restrict SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years, even though this was probably going to be a deal-breaker for Gorbachev and would mean the end of their negotiations at Reykjavik.²⁴⁶

Perle, however, has provided a very different account of the discussion that took place between Reagan and his advisers during this break in the last summit session. According to his version of events, the President posed the question of whether restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years would kill the program and then went around the room soliciting the opinion of each of the advisers present. Perle did acknowledge that “when it got to me, I said, as a practical matter, that if we restricted SDI to the laboratory, which meant that we could not test it outside of four walls, then it would kill the program.”²⁴⁷ However, he stated that others, like chairman of the all-night working group on military issues Paul Nitze, John Moellering, who was the Joint Chiefs of Staff representative at the summit, and even Shultz himself voiced the opinion that Reagan should make the concession on SDI research in order to reach an agreement with Gorbachev on reductions in offensive weapons.²⁴⁸ This account of events clearly stands in direct contradiction with the one offered by Matlock, who specifically noted the silence of Shultz, along with all of Reagan’s other advisers except for Perle, in response to the President’s question of whether he should agree to restrict SDI research to the laboratory.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Richard Perle, telephone interview by the author, November 17, 2009.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

I think that Matlock's version of events is probably the more accurate of the two, as it seems highly unlikely that Moellering and Shultz would have advised the President to restrict SDI research to the laboratory so that he could reach an agreement with Gorbachev on the elimination of nuclear weapons. First of all, Moellering came to Reykjavik as the sole representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who would officially condemn the idea of abolishing all offensive ballistic missiles in a report to the President roughly two months after Reykjavik.²⁴⁹ If the Joint Chiefs opposed the concept of eliminating all offensive ballistic missiles in a decade, there was no way that they would support the even more sweeping idea of abolishing all nuclear weapons in that same time frame. Thus, it seems illogical that their representative would advise Reagan to make a concession that would make it more likely that he and Gorbachev would reach an agreement that the Joint Chiefs opposed. Similarly, it does not seem likely that Shultz, who would affirm Reagan's decision not to restrict SDI research to the laboratory in the second half of the final summit session, would tell the President to make the concession on SDI only an hour before he would encourage him not to do so. Rather, it seems that Perle is merely trying to avoid being blamed for the collapse of the summit by stating that while he did seek to convince Reagan not to agree to restrict SDI research to the laboratory, other aides voiced the opposite view.

Thus, Perle's speech to Reagan during the break in the final summit session is the first instance of one of Reagan's advisers convincing the President not to make a concession on SDI research in order to get an agreement with Gorbachev. The second instance occurred during the second half of the final summit session. It was in this part of the session that Reagan explicitly agreed to the proposal that Gorbachev had made during the third summit session to abolish all nuclear weapons in the 10 year non-withdrawal period. Following this informal agreement,

²⁴⁹ Executive Summary of the JCS Response, folder "JCS Response – NSDD 250, 12/19/86, 1 of 3," box 92186, Robert Linhard Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 1.

however, the two leaders entered into a heated and lengthy exchange about the necessity of restricting SDI research to the laboratory. As the conversation appeared to be winding to a close, without any concrete agreement having been reached, Gorbachev told Reagan that he would have liked to move towards the President's position on SDI, but he just could not justify the idea of allowing the Americans to conduct research on a program that he suspected was not purely defensive in nature while the two sides were in the process of eliminating their nuclear weapons. He concluded by stating that "my conscience is clear before the President and his people. What depended on me I have done." It was at this point that Reagan once again began to consider the prospect of consenting to Gorbachev's demand that SDI research be restricted to the laboratory so that he could reach an agreement with the Soviet leader on the abolition of nuclear weapons. Reagan wrote a note to Shultz that briefly expressed his qualms and asked him whether he was wrong in maintaining the position that SDI research should not be restricted to the laboratory. Shultz, in the second example of an aide influencing Reagan's position on SDI, told the President that he should stick to his position and not make any concessions on SDI to Gorbachev.²⁵⁰

Finally, the substance of an October 16 memo to the President entitled "Why We Can't Commit to Eliminating All Nuclear Weapons Within 10 Years" lends further credence to the idea that it was Reagan's hard-line aides that held him back from reaching an agreement with Gorbachev on the abolition of nuclear weapons. This memo, which was drafted by NSC staffer Robert Linhard on behalf of John Poindexter, is devoted to convincing Reagan that the idea of eliminating all nuclear weapons in 10 years is a terrible one and that he should no longer publicly advocate or even refer to it. As the memo explains, the elimination of nuclear weapons would make world peace dependent upon the relative strengths of countries' conventional forces, as

²⁵⁰ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 773.

was the case prior to the Second World War. The U.S. would clearly be at a disadvantage in such a world, as the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies possessed much larger conventional forces than the Americans and their NATO allies. Linhard then admits that the President's advisers at Reykjavik sought to convince him to reject any Soviet proposals that included the elimination of all nuclear weapons for this very reason.²⁵¹ Clearly, Reagan's advisers were personally opposed to the idea of a nuclear-free world and so sought to ensure that Reagan did not agree to abolish all nuclear weapons at Reykjavik.

The role of American public opinion in the breakdown of the summit

In addition to being restrained from making any concessions on SDI by the advice of his hard-line advisers, Reagan was also prevented from agreeing to restrict SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years by the fear of a negative reaction by the American public to such an action. Throughout that final segment of the fourth summit session, Reagan repeatedly made reference to the fact that he had promised the American people that he would never give up on SDI and so feared that agreeing to confine research on the program to the laboratory might be construed by the American public as a breach of this promise. In fact, Reagan's final pleadings with Gorbachev to drop his insistence that strategic defense research be restricted to the laboratory for 10 years centered on the fact that Reagan worried that he would suffer a backlash at home if he made concessions on SDI. According to the American memorandum of conversation of the final summit session, Reagan said that "he wished to speak as one political leader to another political leader. He had a problem of great importance to him on this particular thing...If he did what Gorbachev asked, he would be badly hurt in his own country."²⁵² Clearly, Reagan was persuaded not to consent to restrict SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years in

²⁵¹ Memo, John M. Poindexter to the President, folder "Reykjavik Briefings: Memo re Eliminating Nuclear Weapons, 3 of 3," box 91636, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library, 3-5.

²⁵² Reykjavik Summit Memorandum of Conversation. Final Meeting. 12 October 1986, 14.

order to get an agreement with Gorbachev on the elimination of nuclear weapons partially by his fear that the American people would react negatively to any concessions being made on SDI.

In considering the reactions that the American people would have to the various positions that Reagan could take on the issue of strategic defense research, Reagan worried particularly about one specific group within the public: his right-wing political base. As he told Gorbachev, “he had people who were the most outspoken critics of the Soviet Union over the years, the so-called right wing, and esteemed journalists, who were the first to criticize him. They were kicking his brains out.”²⁵³ This was clearly a problem for Reagan, as no President can politically afford to alienate his base, particularly on the eve of midterm congressional elections, which frequently become referenda on the sitting President. Thus, it makes sense that Reagan would be worried about how the right wing would react to his actions at Reykjavik. Being firm in their convictions that the Soviet Union was inherently evil, they would clearly be opposed to the President making any concessions to Gorbachev on SDI research, which was a fact that Reagan appreciated and which ultimately restrained him from agreeing to confine SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years.

Public opinion polling conducted by a variety of news sources and polling firms after the conclusion of the Reykjavik Summit support Reagan’s claim that the American public was not in favor of restricting research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years even if this concession meant that an arms reduction agreement would have been reached. Several polls actually included a question specifically about whether Reagan should have made concessions on SDI at Reykjavik in order to conclude an agreement reducing or eliminating nuclear weapons. For example, an NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll conducted on October 14 asked respondents the following question:

²⁵³ Ibid., 13.

The United States and the Soviet Union had come to an understanding at the (Summit) meeting in Iceland about reducing nuclear arms, but no formal agreement was reached because of differences in opinions on American development of 'Star Wars' (space-based defense system). Do you think Ronald Reagan should have made concessions on 'Star Wars' so that a formal agreement could have been reached, or don't you think so?

60% of those polled replied that Reagan should not have made concessions, meaning that they agreed with the course of action he took.²⁵⁴ Similarly, a *Time*/Yankelovich Clancy Shulman poll conducted a day later asked respondents:

As you may know, (at the Iceland summit), the Soviet Union offered to make substantial reductions in nuclear weapons if the United States agreed to limit the development of Star Wars to laboratory research only for the next 10 years. Do you feel that President Reagan should have accepted this offer?

69% of the respondents stated that Reagan should not have agreed to this offer, signifying their support for his actions in the final summit session.²⁵⁵ Thus, these poll results suggest that Reagan was right to fear a public backlash if he had made concessions on SDI in order to reach an agreement with Gorbachev abolishing nuclear weapons.

Despite the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev both had the desire and willingness to abolish nuclear weapons, the two leaders were unable to reach an agreement to do so at the Reykjavik Summit because of Gorbachev's linkage of an agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons with one restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years. While Reagan was initially willing to confine SDI research to the laboratory for a decade in order to reach an agreement with Gorbachev to eliminate nuclear weapons, he was ultimately restrained from doing so by the advice of his hard-line aides, who were personally opposed to the idea of a

²⁵⁴ NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll, Oct, 1986. Retrieved Feb-6-2010 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

²⁵⁵ *Time*/Yankelovich Clancy Shulman Poll, Oct, 1986. Retrieved Feb-6-2010 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html

nuclear-free world, and by a fear of a negative reaction by the American people to his making a concession on SDI.

Conclusion

U.S. President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev each traveled to Reykjavik, Iceland with a desire and willingness to abolish nuclear weapons. When actually presented with the opportunity at the Reykjavik Summit to realize their dream of a nuclear-free world, however, the two leaders were ultimately unable to conclude an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons. In this thesis, I have demonstrated that Gorbachev's insistence that he and Reagan reach an agreement that would confine research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years in conjunction with any agreement abolishing nuclear weapons significantly hindered the two leaders' ability to conclude an agreement. While Reagan did initially exhibit a willingness to restrict SDI research to the laboratory in order to reach an agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons, the advice of his hard-line aides, as well as the fear of a negative reaction by the American people, restrained him from making this concession so that an agreement with Gorbachev could be attained.

It is important to note, however, that this answer to the question of why Reagan and Gorbachev were unable to reach an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons at the Reykjavik Summit is based on evidence that has gaps in it. Many of the Soviet documents related to the lead-up and aftermath of the summit have still not been made available to the public. Also, the Soviet memoir literature has proven to be somewhat limited, as many former Soviet officials of the period did not write accounts of their time serving in Soviet government. In addition, several of those who did publish memoirs, namely Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, did not devote much space to Reagan and Gorbachev's meeting in Iceland. Similarly, many American documents pertaining to the Reykjavik Summit remain classified or have recently been reclassified. Nevertheless, many more American documents on the Reykjavik Summit have

been released to the public than Soviet documents, meaning that the majority of the primary sources that I have examined for this thesis are American government documents, suggesting that my understanding of the American perspective is deeper than my knowledge of the Soviet one.

In addition, there is one major gap in the American memoir literature that is worth noting. In *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, Secretary of State George Shultz makes no reference to the pivotal conversation that took place between Reagan and Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle during the break in the final summit session, in which Perle urged Reagan not to follow his inclination to restrict research on SDI to the laboratory for 10 years in order to reach an agreement with Gorbachev to abolish nuclear weapons, because this concession would kill the SDI program. Thus, Shultz offers no explanation for his silence during this conversation, a silence that is still quite troubling to Jack Matlock, the former Senior Director of European and Soviet Affairs in the National Security Council, nearly 25 years later. In addition, while Shultz does make a few passing references to his views on the effects of restricting SDI research to the laboratory for a decade, he fails to discuss his opinions on this matter at length. This is particularly frustrating because the answer that Reagan adopted to the question of whether it would kill SDI to restrict research on the program to the laboratory for 10 years seriously hindered his ability to conclude an arms reduction agreement with Gorbachev in Iceland.

There was some disagreement within the Reagan administration on the effects of restricting SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years. Perle, along with Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and others at the Pentagon, had long advocated the idea that placing this type

of restriction on SDI research would in fact kill the program.²⁵⁶ On the other hand, Matlock felt that confining SDI research to the laboratory for a decade would not damage the viability of the program, even though he did not voice this opinion during that fateful break in the last summit session. Matlock told me that he believes that Shultz shared his view and that Shultz's opinion, had it been voiced during the break in the final summit session, probably would have carried the most weight with Reagan, since the Secretary was the President's principal back-up at the summit.²⁵⁷ However, even though Shultz does not write about this all-important conversation between Reagan and his advisers during the break in the final summit session, he does make it clear that he basically agreed with Perle's assessment that restricting SDI research to the laboratory for a decade would kill the SDI program. In his memoir, he writes that "Gorbachev obviously knew, but did not say directly, that the restrictions he wanted would make the successful development of a strategic defense extremely remote," and that if Reagan had made the concession on SDI research that Gorbachev sought, the President would have effectively been agreeing "to let SDI die."²⁵⁸

Thus, it remains unclear why Matlock still believes that Shultz shared his view on the effects of confining SDI research to the laboratory, as Shultz has clearly written that he was more inclined to agree with Perle's opinion on the matter. Nevertheless, since Shultz does not expound at length in his memoir on his views on SDI research, the rationale behind his concurrence with Perle's view, which is somewhat surprising given the traditional disagreement between the State and Defense Departments on arms control issues, is not immediately apparent. Since Shultz did share Perle's opinion that confining SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years

²⁵⁶ Richard Perle, telephone interview by the author, November 17, 2009.

²⁵⁷ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., telephone interview by the author, October 5, 2009.

²⁵⁸ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), 770; *Ibid.*, 773.

would kill SDI, it also remains unclear why Shultz did not speak up during the break in the final summit session to second this view.

Despite these gaps in the evidence, there is a wealth of primary source material on Reykjavik from which concrete conclusions about its breakdown can be drawn. Since the Soviet Union did collapse in 1991 amidst the *glasnost* spirit of openness of information, the Kremlin has declassified and released a number of Soviet documents pertaining to Reykjavik, the most notable being the complete Soviet transcripts of the summit proceedings. Additionally, Gorbachev and his top foreign policy aide Anatoly Chernyaev have reflected on the summit at length in their respective memoirs. The U.S. government has also declassified and released a lot of documents relating to the Reykjavik Summit, including the complete American memoranda of conversation of the summit sessions, the talking points that the American delegation prepared for Reagan to use in each of the summit sessions, the NSC and CIA appraisals of Gorbachev's motivations for proposing the Reykjavik meeting and the tactics that he was expected to use in Iceland, and the text of both on and off the record briefings by various administration officials about the summit after its collapse. Clearly, there is sufficient substantive material on which to base an answer to the question of why Reagan and Gorbachev could not conclude an agreement in Iceland to abolish all of their nuclear weapons.

In examining the reasons why Reagan and Gorbachev were unable to reach an agreement at Reykjavik to eliminate all of their nuclear weapons, it is important to consider whether it is even a good idea to abolish nuclear weapons. The thought of realizing a world in which individuals do not have to live under constant fear of nuclear annihilation and nations do not have to amass large stockpiles of nuclear weapons in order to ensure that they will not be subject to nuclear attack is unquestionably appealing. As Shultz famously asked those who were

appalled that Reagan seriously discussed the prospect of eliminating all nuclear weapons at Reykjavik, ““what’s so good about a world where you can be wiped out in thirty minutes?””²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, many have charged that the idea of the U.S. and the Soviet Union abolishing all of their nuclear weapons was utopian at best and outright dangerous at worst.

Kenneth Adelman, who was chairman of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency at the time of the Iceland meeting and a member of the American delegation to the summit, laid out in his memoirs one of the most cogent sets of arguments against a joint American and Soviet effort to eliminate their nuclear weapons in 1986. As Adelman explains, the U.S. should never have concluded an agreement with the Soviet Union to abolish all of their nuclear weapons because the U.S. could never have been sure that the Soviet Union was actually complying with the agreement. Verification measures aimed at ensuring that the USSR was indeed following an agreement to eliminate its nuclear stockpile could never have been completely reliable, as the Soviet Union could have moved nuclear warheads and strategic nuclear delivery vehicles around in order to hide them from weapons inspectors, who surely would not have been able to cover the roughly 8.6 million square mile country at one time.

Even if verification measures sufficient to protect against cheating could have been devised, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, in eliminating their nuclear arsenals, would have been leaving Western Europe vulnerable to a Soviet conventional attack. Without nuclear weapons, European nations, and all nations for that matter, would be forced to rely on conventional forces, like armies and tanks, for their defense. The Soviet Union had a clear advantage in the size of its conventional forces, meaning that it could easily have overwhelmed its non-communist Western

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 780.

European neighbors in a conventional war should it ever have decided to undertake such an endeavor.²⁶⁰

The abolition of nuclear weapons by the U.S. and Soviet Union would still have made the world more dangerous even if a conventional war did not break out in Europe. The elimination of all American and Soviet nuclear weapons in 1986 would not necessarily have prompted the rest of the nations who belonged to the nuclear club at that time, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, and South Africa, to have followed suit and abolished their own nuclear weapons. In fact, some of these nations may have actually refused to get rid of their nuclear arsenals because they wanted to gain relative power by retaining nuclear weapons while the two greatest superpowers on Earth destroyed theirs.

Finally, even if the verification of an agreement to abolish nuclear weapons could have been assured, a conventional war did not break out in Europe even though nuclear weapons were no longer in place to keep the peace, and every nation with nuclear weapons had followed the American and Soviet lead and eliminated their own weapons, a world without nuclear weapons would have been a fleeting one. Now that nuclear weapons have been successfully created, it would be impossible to erase the knowledge of how to make them from the human mind. As Adelman wrote, "The first casualty in any serious war would be the elimination of nuclear weapons. Scientists from both sides would hurry to make them once again. But now they would have the essential bit of information lacking during the Manhattan Project, namely that it was indeed possible to make them."²⁶¹

Despite the fact that these four arguments against a joint American and Soviet endeavor to abolish nuclear weapons were articulated in 1989, while the U.S. and the Soviet Union

²⁶⁰ Kenneth L. Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summitry – A Skeptic's Account* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 66.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

remained locked in the Cold War struggle, they are still persuasive today. In the last twenty years, verification measures have not improved to the point that one could be completely sure that a nation was not retaining a secret stockpile of nuclear weapons despite a public profession to the contrary, particularly since some nuclear devices are so small that they can fit into a purse or backpack.²⁶² Also, the threat of conventional war in the absence of nuclear weapons is still very real. Thirdly, with two new nations, Pakistan and North Korea, joining the nuclear club in the two decades following the collapse of the Reykjavik Summit and other nations like Israel being suspected of possessing nuclear weapons, it is clear that the desire to develop nuclear devices is still strong among countries that do not possess such weapons. With several nations, particularly Iran, still making efforts to join the nuclear club, it does not seem likely that the smaller nuclear powers would start destroying their nuclear arsenals simply because the U.S. and Russia began doing so.²⁶³ With the recent rise of terrorism by networks of individuals, like al-Qaeda, who share radical, hate-filled ideologies, there is also the danger that terrorist groups could acquire nuclear weapons just as the major superpowers are eliminating their nuclear stockpiles. Finally, it is still a valid concern that the knowledge of how to build a nuclear weapon is not destroyed simply because the weapon itself is eradicated.

Thus, as psychologically liberating as it would be to leave behind the days of governments making contingency plans for nuclear war and citizens wondering what exactly they would do if the warning sounded that a nuclear attack was imminent, it appears that the ideal of a world without nuclear weapons is simply not practical. Tragically, it seems that a nation that has made such strides in the past few decades in freeing its citizens from racial, gender, and socio-economic prejudice cannot in good conscience liberate them from this final

²⁶² Ibid., 66.

²⁶³ Kathleen Sutcliffe, "The Growing Nuclear Club," Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12050/>.

fear of being annihilated by a person simply pressing a button in a room halfway around the world. The nation that let the nuclear genie out of the bottle in 1945 truly cannot in good faith put it back in.

While it appears that the goal of a world without nuclear weapons towards which Reagan and Gorbachev were working at the Reykjavik Summit is impractical, one cannot be prompted to simply applaud Reagan and Gorbachev's failure to reach an agreement in Iceland that would have abolished their nuclear weapons and subsequently discount the importance of studying the summit. Twenty-five years after it took center stage at Iceland, the goal of nuclear abolitionism has returned to the limelight. On April 5, 2009, in a speech in Prague's Hradcany Square, U.S. President Barack Obama announced his goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons and laid out a series of concrete steps for meeting this objective. In this speech, Obama declared that the U.S. will begin to formulate a new national security strategy in which nuclear weapons do not play such a large role, devise with the Russians a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty to which all nations in the nuclear club will be subjected, adopt a ban on nuclear testing, and work on writing a treaty that will ban the production of fissile materials needed to make nuclear weapons.²⁶⁴

Additionally, Obama hosted a global nuclear security summit on April 12-13, 2010 in Washington, D.C., which was aimed at reaching agreements to secure loose nuclear material in the world.²⁶⁵ Since Obama is resurrecting this goal of a world without nuclear weapons that was held by both Reagan and Gorbachev, it appears that Reykjavik truly was a tragically missed

²⁶⁴ "Remarks by President Barack Obama – Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic," *White House Briefing Room - Speeches and Remarks*, The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered>.

²⁶⁵ "Briefing by White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, 2/26/10," *White House Briefing Room – Press Briefings*, The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/briefing-white-house-press-secretary-robert-gibbs-22610>.

opportunity for realizing the now recurring American foreign policy goal of abolishing nuclear weapons.

In addition, missile defense systems are still a controversial topic in U.S.-Russian relations, as the two countries have argued over the proposed American deployment of a missile defense system in Europe. The U.S. has repeatedly stated that this system is meant to protect the U.S. and its NATO allies against the potential threat of an Iranian nuclear attack. Nevertheless, Russia fears that this proposed missile defense system, which would be based in Eastern European nations that were formerly members of the Warsaw Pact but are now part of NATO, is actually aimed at thwarting its capacity to effectively launch missiles in retaliation for a nuclear attack. While Obama has backed away from President George W. Bush's sweeping missile defense plan, which would have included the installation of 10 land-based interceptor missiles in Poland and a highly advanced radar system in the Czech Republic, he is still planning to deploy smaller SM-3 missiles on ships off the coast of southern Europe and ultimately move these missiles to sites in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic.²⁶⁶ During the U.S. and Russia's rocky efforts to devise a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which Obama and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev did finally sign on April 8, 2010, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin cited the American proposal to install a missile defense system in Europe as the main obstacle to a quick resolution to these negotiations.²⁶⁷ Thus, in an exchange that is eerily reminiscent of those between Reagan and Gorbachev in the late 1980s, Russia is once again

²⁶⁶ "Missiles and Missile Defense Systems," *Times Topics, New York Times*, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/m/missiles_and_missile_defense_systems/index.html?cp=1-spot&sq=missiles%20and%20missile%20defense%20systems&st=cse; Nicholas Kulish and Ellen Barry, "Romanians Accept Plan for Basing of Missiles," *New York Times*, February 4, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/world/europe/05romania.html>.

²⁶⁷ Peter Baker and Dan Bilefsky, "Russia and U.S. Sign Nuclear Arms Reduction Pact," *New York Times*, April 8, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/09/world/europe/09prexy.html?scp=1&sq=Strategic%20Arms%20Reduction%20Treaty&st=cse>; Ellen Barry, "Putin Sounds Warning on Arms Talks," *New York Times*, December 29, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/30/world/europe/30russia.html?_r=1.

displaying a willingness to link offensive and defensive issues by halting progress on the negotiation of an arms reduction treaty because the U.S. wants to develop a new missile defense system. This makes the lessons of the Reykjavik Summit appear particularly relevant, as Obama, who wants to eliminate all nuclear weapons like Reagan did, must face Medvedev and Putin, who like Gorbachev, are wary of American missile defense systems and so have been willing to impede reductions in offensive nuclear weapons in the hopes that it will prevent the Americans from deploying missile defenses.

In considering the significance of the Reykjavik Summit, it is also important to realize that despite the fact that the Reykjavik Summit was and still is generally considered to be a “lost weekend” in which Reagan and Gorbachev tried but ultimately failed to reach sweeping arms control agreements, Reykjavik has actually had a very positive legacy. Unlike the Vienna Summit of 1961, in which U.S. President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev similarly entered summit negotiations somewhat unprepared and emerged without any agreements on the then-prominent issues of nuclear testing and the future of Germany, the Reykjavik Summit did not result in a long-term heightening of tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.²⁶⁸ While the breakdown of the Vienna Summit ultimately led to the construction of the Berlin Wall by the Soviets, as well as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Reykjavik Summit had significantly positive effects on the progress of arms control negotiations, the political legacies of Reagan and Gorbachev, and American-Soviet relations.

Most directly, Reykjavik showed the U.S. and the Soviet Union that an agreement on arms reduction in certain areas, like INF, was indeed possible, as well as advantageous for both sides. On February 28, 1987, Gorbachev unlinked the package of arms control agreements upon

²⁶⁸ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 219-220.

which he and Reagan had agreed in Iceland, declaring that the U.S. and Soviet Union should try to reach a separate INF agreement that would not be conditional upon concluding an agreement on SDI.²⁶⁹ For the next several months, Shultz, Shevardnadze, and the arms control negotiators in Geneva worked on ironing out an agreement that would significantly reduce American and Soviet INF missiles in Europe and Asia. Gorbachev then shocked the world on July 23 by announcing that the Soviet Union no longer wished to retain 100 Soviet INF missiles in Asia, which had been one of its demands at Reykjavik. This prompted the U.S. to announce that it no longer wanted to deploy 100 INF missiles in the U.S.²⁷⁰ On October 30, Reagan announced that Gorbachev would come to the U.S. in December for the long-awaited Washington Summit, at which the two leaders would sign a treaty to abolish all intermediate-range nuclear forces worldwide.²⁷¹ Thus, the gains made at the Reykjavik Summit in the realm of intermediate-range nuclear forces were ultimately pocketed and became the basis of the INF Treaty, which was the first and only treaty to actually provide for the elimination of an entire class of nuclear weapons.²⁷²

In addition to paving the way for an arms reduction treaty, Reykjavik was significant in that it had a positive effect on the political legacies of both Gorbachev and Reagan. First of all, the Iceland meeting greatly improved Gorbachev's image abroad. Prior to the Reykjavik Summit, the leaders and citizens of Western Europe had come to view Gorbachev in a bit of a negative light. Gorbachev's handling of the Chernobyl disaster in the spring of 1986, in which he refrained for 18 days from publicly acknowledging that any accident exposing thousands of

²⁶⁹ Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 217.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 256.

²⁷² *The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later*, the National Security Archive at George Washington University, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/index.htm>.

people to radioactive material had taken place, seriously damaged his popularity in Western Europe. Western Europeans came to be suspicious of Gorbachev and his concern for the Soviet people.²⁷³ However, his performance at Reykjavik seemed to soften Western European opinion of him, particularly in West Germany, where more citizens actually cited Gorbachev, rather than Reagan, as the more trustworthy leader in a poll taken after the collapse of the Reykjavik Summit. This was in direct contrast to the prevailing opinion after the Geneva Summit of November 1985, which showed that more individuals in West Germany thought that Reagan, as opposed to Gorbachev, was the more trustworthy leader. Also, while more British, French, and West Germans still thought that Reagan had the better handle on European problems, surveys taken after Reykjavik, as compared with those taken after Geneva, showed that Gorbachev had significantly cut into Reagan's lead in this category among British and West German respondents.²⁷⁴

This ameliorated opinion of Gorbachev in Great Britain, France, and West Germany following the Reykjavik Summit ultimately developed into the phenomenon known as "Gorbymania," which was a fascination and love for Mikhail Gorbachev that gripped Western Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Building on successful visits in Moscow with French President Francois Mitterrand and former U.S. President Richard Nixon in July 1986 and an improved public image in Western Europe following Reykjavik, Gorbachev undertook a wildly successful series of visits to Western Europe in 1989, traveling to England in April, West Germany in June, France in July, and Italy in November.²⁷⁵ In each of these countries,

²⁷³ Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era*, 167-168.

²⁷⁴ Foreign Opinion Note – British and German Assessment of Reykjavik Remains Bleak, French Support Declines; Europeans Turn Against SDI, Nov. 10, 1986, folder “[Reading File for Regan/Iceland Summit], 1 of 5,” box 2, Donald T. Regan Files, Series I: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library, 9.

²⁷⁵ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, Translated by Georges Peronansky and Tatjana Varsavsky (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 498-508.

Gorbachev received an overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception from both political leaders and citizens. For example, when Gorbachev visited London, he wrote that “our delegation was welcomed by cheering crowds lining the streets outside Westminster Abbey. I asked our driver to stop the car and went over to shake hands with Londoners. The enthusiastic acclamation made any conversation impossible, but the atmosphere of this short exchange spoke for itself.”²⁷⁶

In paving the way for the INF Treaty to be signed in December 1987, the Reykjavik Summit also had a positive effect on Reagan’s political legacy. Not only did Reagan’s signing of this treaty grant him the honor of being the first and only U.S. President to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons, but it also deflected attention away from the Iran-Contra scandal that was in danger of ravaging his presidential legacy. First breaking in November 1986, the Iran-Contra scandal involved the revelation that the U.S. was selling arms to Iran in exchange for the release of American hostages in Lebanon. Money received from the sale of these weapons to Iran was then being diverted to the Nicaraguan contras, who were a rebel group opposing the communist government in power in Nicaragua at the time. Not only did this deal violate Reagan’s promise not to provide arms to countries that sponsored terrorists, like Iran, it also ran contrary to the Boland Amendment, which prohibited the U.S. government from funding the Nicaraguan contras, thereby making this scheme illegal. While the Tower Commission, which was established by the White House to investigate the deal, ultimately concluded that Reagan was not aware of the scheme, it was never completely clear that the President did not know that funds from arms sales to Iran were being diverted to the Nicaraguan contras.²⁷⁷ Additionally, several top officials in the Reagan administration, including National Security Advisor John

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 500.

²⁷⁷ Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 589-590.

Poindexter, were forced to resign from office because of their involvement in the scandal.²⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, the revelation of this affair seriously damaged Reagan's credibility and threatened to overshadow the last two years of his presidency. Thus, the conclusion of an arms reduction agreement with Gorbachev, which had been made possible by the progress achieved at the Reykjavik Summit, provided the President with a concrete accomplishment that could divert the attention of the American press and public away from Iran-Contra and prove that his last two years in office were not a waste.

Finally, the Reykjavik Summit contributed to a thaw in the Cold War hostilities between Reagan and Gorbachev, personally, and between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, more generally. Following their meeting in Iceland, a strengthening of Reagan and Gorbachev's personal relationship, which had begun at the Geneva Summit in November 1985, occurred. As Chernyaev, who was a member of the Soviet delegation to Iceland, put it, "a spark of understanding was born between them [at Reykjavik], as if they had winked to each other about the future. And Gorbachev retained a certain sense of trust in this person [Reagan]. After Reykjavik, he never again spoke about Reagan in his inner circle as he had before... Never again did I hear statements such as 'The U.S. administration is political scum that is liable to do anything.'"²⁷⁹ The two leaders exchanged official state visits to one another's countries after their meeting in Iceland, with Gorbachev traveling to Washington in December 1987 and Reagan visiting Moscow in May 1988. In fact, by the end of Reagan's second term as President, Reagan and Gorbachev's relationship had truly developed into a friendship. The two leaders continued to meet with one another after Reagan left the White House, with the Gorbachevs meeting the Reagans in San Francisco during a visit to the U.S. and the Reagans traveling to

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 701.

²⁷⁹ Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, Translated and Edited by Robert D. English and Elizabeth Tucker (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 85-86.

Moscow at the personal invitation of the General Secretary in 1990. While the two leaders' friendship waned after Reagan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Gorbachev continued to speak highly of Reagan throughout the President's life and even attended Reagan's state funeral in Washington in 2004.²⁸⁰

In the long term, the Reykjavik Summit also helped to improve the overall American-Soviet relationship. There were no major confrontations or misunderstandings between the two superpowers following Reagan and Gorbachev's meeting in Iceland. In this respect, the Reykjavik Summit could be considered to be one of the events that helped bring about the end of the Cold War. It also could be construed as a contributing factor to the transformation of American-Soviet relations from a fierce standoff between two enemy superpowers into an endeavor by a pair of nations to better understand one another and reduce global tensions.

Ultimately, I think that the significance of the Reykjavik Summit is best summed up in a conversation that Shultz had with Gorbachev after the two left public life. As Shultz tells it:

When Gorbachev visited me at Stanford University after we were both out of office, I said to him, 'when you entered office and when I entered office, the Cold War could not have been colder. And when we left, it was basically over. What do you think was the turning point?' And he said, without any hesitation, just like that, 'Reykjavik.' And I said, 'why?' expecting him to talk about missiles and stuff like that. He said, 'because for the first time, the two leaders really had a deep conversation about everything. We really exchanged views. And not just about peripheral things, about the central things. And that was what was important about Reykjavik.'²⁸¹

Thus, though Reagan and Gorbachev's romantic dream of a world without nuclear weapons could not be achieved at Reykjavik, the foundation was laid at this meeting for a world in which the U.S. and Russia no longer feared the outbreak of a nuclear war with one another. The two leaders entered the tiny Hofdi House on Reykjavik Harbor with the hopes that they would

²⁸⁰ Jack F. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 325-326;

²⁸¹ "Reagan," in *The American Experience* series, produced by Adriana Bosch, narrated by David McCullough. PBS, February 23 and 24, 1998.

emerge with an arms reduction agreement. Instead, they departed with a realization about one another that would change the world. Neither truly wanted nor was actually willing to attack the other with nuclear weapons. Though they came from vastly different political and economic systems, Reagan and Gorbachev each wanted, above all else, to be part of a world in which peace and harmony reigned supreme. So, in essence, a farewell to arms did take place at Reykjavik. While the American and Russian nuclear missiles may remain, the fear and hatred that could so easily prompt their use does not.

Appendix: List of Acronyms

ABM – Anti-ballistic missile

ALCM – Air-launched cruise missiles

ICBM – Intercontinental ballistic missiles

INF – Intermediate-range nuclear forces

LRINF – Long-range intermediate-range nuclear forces

MAD – Mutual assured destruction

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

SDI – Strategic Defense Initiative

SLBM – Submarine-launched ballistic missiles

SM-3 – Standard Missile-3

SNDV – Strategic nuclear delivery vehicle

SRAM – Short-range air-to-surface attack missiles

SRINF – Short-range intermediate-range nuclear forces

START – Strategic Arms Reduction Talks

ZBM – Zero ballistic missile proposal

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