

About the Results of the Moscow Summit and Their Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy and Soviet-American Relations.

As experience shows, final results of such events as the Soviet-American summits become apparent over more or less extended period of time. So far, we can only talk about preliminary results. Among them, the following are the most significant.

First of all, the summit brought substantial political and diplomatic results. It is important that we did not allow any breaks in the process of dialog, even though it was possible and even probably due to the U.S. political calendar (the electoral campaign, the situation in which the outgoing administration now finds itself—according to the American political terminology—the state of “lame duck”). Thanks to the summit, the year 1988 did not fall out of the process of normalization of Soviet-American relations; to the contrary, it already became an important marker in their development, which help ensure the continuity: both most likely presidential candidates are simply forced by the logic of events itself to speak positively about Soviet-American relations, about disarmament and other important issues, which were on the agenda. Thus it is as if they are “taking the baton” from Reagan. Furthermore, the preparation for the summit, the summit itself, and the subsequent realization of those agreements, which were achieved or outlined there, do not just cement the constructive changes in Soviet-American relations, but also give them a new impulse for further development in all the spheres—disarmament, resolution of regional problems, and improvement of bilateral relations. As a result, by the end of the 1980s, there will be a serious undertaking, which in itself is becoming a definitely stabilizing beginning.

The Moscow Summit should be seen as a symbolic completion of a certain stage in Soviet-American relations and in American foreign policy. Ronald Reagan, who in his first term as president spoke for conducting a policy of confrontation with the USSR, as if drew a line under the policies of the past by his visit to Moscow, helping to open a new page in relations between the USA and the Soviet Union. This is a certain important lesson for American foreign policy, which shows the unreality of efforts to return to the times of most acute Cold War. In the foreseeable future, this will likely affect the formulation of the U.S. policy line toward the USSR in a positive way. This is a serious argument in favor of moderate forces in the argument, which has been going on for a long time now within the USA, about what represents a “norm,” a normal state of Soviet-American relations—the Cold War or coexistence.

It is also necessary to emphasize that apart from its impact on the USA, the summit—in terms of “material” political results—could have a great importance for Europe. Our whole plan for resolving the problem of conventional armed forces and armaments, which has a central importance for NATO, for Western Europe first of all, was for the first time presented publicly with such clarity, and with such ultimate persuasiveness, which as a matter of fact gives the answer to the most important fears and concerns of the European states. Until now, all our proposals to this effect were hushed up, and the Americans, by refusing to include any joint statement on this issue in the final communiqué of the summit, have just confirmed that it was not an accident. Here,

judging by everything, we have delivered a sensible blow, which was recognized by many American specialists, who participated in the summit, mainly that “we have thrown the ball onto the Western side of the field.” The USA and NATO for decades taught the publics of Western countries to believe that the resolution of the issue of conventional weapons in Europe comes down to the “USSR unwillingness” to deal with it. Now it became clear that the whole business is deadlocked by the Western position. This [development] shifts the struggle around this problem onto a different plane, which we should make use of.

Secondly, the summit had an unusually big ideological importance. Its most obvious result (it is possible that it would turn out to be its main result) is that it helped America and the West to discover as no other event before it, the character, the scale, and the meaning of the changes, which are taking place in the Soviet Union. This relates to the internal aspects of perestroika, glasnost, democratization as well as the external ones—the new thinking in the sphere of foreign policy, our new more flexible approaches, open-mindedness and so on. In this sense, the summit delivered a very forceful blow against the “image of the enemy,” and it could become a sort of “medicine” of long-term impact, which would continue for a long time to exert a favorable impact on the USSR’s image abroad, especially if it is supported by new real actions. This delivers a blow at the most sensitive spot of the entire “cold war” structure, essentially at its starting assumption.

Even those events that were planned by Reagan as a direct propaganda action (the meeting with the dissidents, meetings with the religious public figures), in the West was mainly perceived as a confirmation of glasnost and perestroika in the USSR, [which is] objectively against our propaganda, in our favor. This confirmation of many things that we have been trying to prove by hundreds of articles and statements happened on its own during the summit. There has never been such a discovery of the Soviet Union for America before the Moscow Summit.

And it might be that the most important thing was that the summit showed America and the world the overwhelming intellectual superiority of Soviet policies. Especially so because this superiority was not emphasized by us, but became clear on its own. Among its expressions was our reserve, that we did not respond according the “eye for the eye,” “tooth for the tooth” principle, did not allow ourselves to be dragged into excessive polemics, even though in some cases giving appropriate response to unfriendly actions by the Americans.

The Moscow summit undoubtedly will have a long-term significance in several areas. One of those is the alignment of the political forces in America and most likely in the West as a whole. The fact that the chief author of the “empire of evil” formula, the main American proponent of confrontation—Ronald Reagan—stated publicly that he has reconsidered his former position, admitted its inappropriateness by all his statements at the end and after the summit, delivered a most powerful blow against the conservatives, against the proponents of the “cold war” in the USA. It is even more important because this change in Reagan’s personal position goes along with the substantial objective changes in the American society, including the growing economic and social problems

directly or indirectly related to the strengthening of the arms race and the “imperial” adventures of the administration. All this taken together robs the representatives of the right-wing forces of one of their main arguments—that they are the best patriots and the best defenders of U.S. interests from the “communist threat.” Whoever comes to the White House after Reagan, he would not be able to talk about the USSR as an “evil empire” any longer, he would have to take into account not just the successes but also big losses of the Reagan presidency. As far as public opinion is concerned, we will see a strengthening belief that the time has come for a comprehensive change of the overall structure of Soviet-American relations, for transferring them to a normal business-like course (right now already 65% of American respondents believe that).

Normalization of Soviet-American relations in the conditions of deterioration of economic and social problems in the USA pushes the American elite and the society as a whole in a favorable for us direction—toward concentrating on their own internal affairs (which increases similar possibilities for us too). This became apparent already during the Washington Summit, when, according to many Americans, Gorbachev turned out to be so popular in America among other things because he was telling American the things that they wanted to hear very much—about how the existing hostility, which forces us to make huge material sacrifices, is not necessary, that the relations could be changed.

There are some conclusions and suggestions that follow from what was said above:

1. It seems that we were able to break out of the dangerous crisis of Soviet-American relations, which we reached in the beginning of the 1980s. However, this should not conceal the fact that their further normalization started to slow down.
2. The summit has shown in particular that the Reagan administration had mainly spent its reserve of initiatives and concessions, which it could have made in the existing political and ideological framework. Judging by everything, it no longer has enough political will, power and decisiveness to complete the work on the treaty reducing strategic nuclear weapons, or to move forward in negotiations on a number of other important issues. It is especially so because any new steps in disarmament and normalization of relations are met with resistance of not only the far right, but also of more influential circles of the political elite, who determined the foreign policy course of the USA for decades and are now frightened because they feel that the structures of world politics, which developed during the years of the “cold war” could be in danger now. As a result they will try to impose on us a more and more slow tempo in the real development of relations in the name of “caution” and “realism.”

Such an approach, naturally, does not correspond to our interests and goals. To the contrary, we should use the situation of political stagnation, which developed now in the USA, in order to continue to develop our initiative, our political offensive.

3. On the American front of our foreign policy, however, we have to start from the assumption that Reagan, in the remaining months of his stay in the White House, will be more and more constrained. We should not exclude a possibility that he would try to get a fifth summit; however, there is a very slim chance that he would be able to ensure the completion of the work on the treaty on strategic offensive weapons before the end of the present administration.

In this connection, our propaganda should abstain from excessive optimism and high expectations. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that objective opportunities for a faster progress in the negotiations do exist. Such formulation of the issue would hold the administration under a certain pressure, and would remind it that the ball is in the American court, it would push both candidates to speak on this issue, which would increase the priority of Soviet-American relations in the electoral discussion.

As far as the negotiations are concerned, here we should probably start from the assumption that resolution of any particular problem will make negotiations with the next administration easier. Here, however, we should make one caveat. The search for resolutions should not be result in excessive concessions from our side, especially on the issues on which opinions are split in America itself. First of all, it relates to the issue of preserving the Treaty of 1972 on limiting ABM systems. Here any further concessions seem to be unacceptable. They would only create opposition to us among the important Senate groups, in the Democratic party, and even among moderate Republicans. And besides, [such concessions] would undermine the importance of the agreement itself, because the future administration would not be able to “give back” a concession we already made, regardless what its views would be on any particular problem. This is exactly what was said to us by the experts in the Dukakis circle during our conversations, expressing his foreign policy consultants’ request that we should not make any new concessions on the ABM Treaty (Dukakis, by the way, through his experts, is already trying to feel out for a possibility of a meeting with M.S. Gorbachev already after the Democratic Convention and his nomination. This is not an easy question, a sensitive [question], but we need to think about it. On the part of Dukakis, they also expressed a wish about meetings and contacts with those of our prominent politicians, scientists and public figures, who would be visiting the USA after the Democratic Convention).

4. In order to further develop the political initiative that we have captured in the conditions, which our relations with the USA are slowing down, now it would be important to invigorate our policy on other directions (such invigoration would help us in terms of influence on America as well).

It is hard to overestimate the importance of developing our relations with Western Europe at this stage. Here we should above all use the factor of conventional weapons. Many serious observers that one of our most serious accomplishments at the Moscow Summit was the fact that the West for the first time was truly

informed of the new Soviet plan for reductions in conventional weapons (exchange of information with verification, including in-situ inspections, elimination of asymmetries, reductions by 0.5 million men, changes in the doctrine, structure and the deployment of the armed forces, in such a way as to remove the capability of conducting offensive operations, while preserving the defense capabilities). Making this plan public, attracting attention to it during the summit was a useful step, but now it is important not to allow them to forget about our proposals.

It is even more important because this plan opens a very promising way to pull the West Europeans into the process of genuine disarmament. Obviously, there exist great organizational and diplomatic difficulties on the road to the realization of our plan (the problem of coordination of positions within NATO, the tradition of negotiations within the CSCE framework, and so on), and according to Western experts, an agreement here could be achieved no earlier than in three or four years. But the more energetic and the more persistent we are in insisting on the realization of this plan (and the NATO conservatives are scared by it precisely because it is realistic to implement it), the more noticeably the situation in Europe will be changing.

[...]

5. Now comes an appropriate moment for unilateral actions—after the Moscow summit, without any connection with that summit (otherwise anything we do could be interpreted as propaganda), but as a thought-out political action. We could talk about some measures in the military sphere, to start with, which would be eventually inevitable when—earlier or later—our plan on conventional weapons is accepted by the West, and which are reasonable both from the military-political and from the economic point of view. One of such possibilities is reductions in the number of the tanks (by getting rid of the old stuff) while at the same time emphasizing that we are doing it in anticipation of future agreements on eliminating asymmetries. The same [argument] could be made about for instance our river-crossing equipment (the pontoon bridges and the like), the excess of which allows NATO to talk about our strategy being offensive; to some extent it could be applied to the artillery as well. With the help of such “material evidence” we would be able better to illustrate the truth about our intentions and proposals to the Western publics. We should not exclude the possibility that a time could come for reviving the idea of a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing.

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