

September 27, 1991, Thursday

In the morning Collins called me: Bush wants to talk to M.S. But he was assigned to first inform M.S. what the conversation would be about. I called M.S., at 11 a.m. he had a meeting with Mubarak. At 10:30 a.m. he received Collins, who outlined "Bush's initiative" that will be unveiled today: a universal reduction of nuclear weapons, even the Tomahawks, which the U.S. never agreed to before... Advantageous... Well done... Especially since they are ahead of us in conventional weapons.

But this is not the point. M.S. tried to call Marshal Shaposhnikov to assign him to prepare a "position" for the talk with Bush at 4 p.m. But alas! He could not reach him. M.S. went to his meeting with Mubarak, and assigned me to gather the generals + Karpov and tell them to formulate our response.

Lobov + some general + Karpov came over. For an hour and a half they discussed it... From the outset, they started digging: what, why, and how much... like the years of nonsense in Geneva and Vienna: a dead-end, and lucrative for the negotiators.

I told them: do you think that this initiative was made only to "beat" us, to deceive and humiliate us, and to show that we are no longer a superpower? Let's disarm completely, so to say. There is no beginning of a new U.S. policy here, new relations with us, the outcomes of new thinking. You do not see any of this? How will our President look when the entire world will be astonished by this initiative, but all M.S. will have to say to Bush is that they have more of this, and we still need to do that? After Bush straightforwardly says that he will disarm unilaterally, and calls on us to follow his example?

They changed their tune and tried to show that "of course, they understand." But they are outdated... Again M.S. found a Chief of General Staff who, with God's help, is fit to command a division. We do not have politician-generals, like Bush has...

They left. I dictated to Tamara a "cheat-sheet" for talking with Bush: a major initiative, a major step for Reykjavik, which you, the Americans, did not accept at the time. Support. Let's start, and figure out the details as we go along: where we will meet you, where we will work in parallel, and what will be figured out through negotiations.

Though I have to say that by 3 p.m. Shaposhnikov (he is smarter, more modern, and more politically aware than the previous group I met with) brought over a concept of the conversation similar to my own.

They gathered in M.S.' office... Lobov, who came late, tried to "push" that it is unprofitable for us, that they will deceive us, that he does not see any unilateral action, etc. Despite the fact that he kept pointing at Bush's text and proving the opposite. He kept the generals in his office when he spoke to Bush on the phone. It was a pretty good move. He said things along the lines of "it is a historic opportunity, welcome it, in principle we see this positively, we will discuss the rest and agree on how best to do it."

They also agreed on what M.S.' public reaction to it would be; he already filmed his TV appearance.

[Source: Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary (manuscript donated to the National Security Archive)
Translated by Anna Melyakova]