



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

You should

see Hugh Sidney's

article which

gives the President's

account of Reykjavik

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Very worried

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# No Nukes

Did Reagan blunder?

Ronald Reagan's hopes for a nuclear-free world had some officials in Washington and Western Europe concerned last week that the President had come close to accepting a huge Soviet advantage in conventional forces. Administration officials conceded that the Soviets had not seriously misrepresented the President's assent to a sweeping no-nukes proposal from Mikhail Gorbachev at Reykjavik. Although it seemed that Reagan might have blundered into this position, White House aides insisted that he had been fully aware of the implications of his bargaining tactics.

At issue was whether the President had been willing to ban "all strategic" nuclear weapons in ten years, as the Soviets claimed, or only intercontinental "ballistic" nuclear missiles, as the Administration initially said. The difference is far from academic. If ballistic missiles were eliminated, the U.S. would still retain long-range bombers and cruise missiles that could deliver nuclear blows to the U.S.S.R. If all strategic nukes disappeared, the U.S. would lose its long-standing deterrent to Soviet power in Europe, where the Warsaw Pact's conventional forces outnumber NATO's.

The Soviets quoted Reagan as telling Gorbachev, "If we agree that by the end of the ten-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 U.S." Top Reagan aides did not specifically dispute these words. They said the President, in focusing on the General Secretary's unyielding opposition to the Administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, let Gorbachev broaden the bargain to all strategic weapons. But when Gorbachev failed to budge on Star Wars, talk of banning nuclear weapons was not resumed.

Presidential aides said Reagan, during a break in the meeting, alerted his advisers to the Soviets' substitution of the phrase "all strategic forces" for "ballistic," as written in a U.S. proposal. Said one summit participant: "He knew exactly why that was not a good deal and why it couldn't be achieved in the time frame."

The Administration tried to put the controversy to rest. "Most of this is a teapot, because our formal position is in writing and now tabled in Geneva," said a senior White House official. The U.S. proposal has two parts: start by eliminating half of all strategic warheads and delivery vehicles; scrap all ballistic missiles by 1996. The firmness of Soviet intentions to link any agreement to restrictions on SDI should become clearer this week, when Secretary of State George Shultz meets in Vienna with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. ■

## The Presidency/Hugh Sidey

# "We'll Talk About Everything"

The darnedest things come from Ronald Reagan's heart. "My first goal has always been to eliminate ballistic missiles," he telephoned TIME to say last week. "They are the most destabilizing weapons, the most frightening. Then it has always been my hope, as I've said before, that we could eventually get rid of all nuclear weapons."

There he goes again, his heart talking, way out in front of his mind, tugging at the world's iron realities to see if they might yield to a little soft yearning. Some of that happened in the Reykjavik meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, and it has created a continuing frenzy in Washington, a city that admires ornate theories and prolonged process and is frightened by blurred hope.

This is nothing new about Reagan. He's often let his hopes overwhelm his head, like when he insisted that inflation could be subdued, terrorists apprehended and punished, the tax system reformed. Yes, he missed on some big ones, like that crazy budget formula that has given us scary deficits. But throughout all of this, those who worship process were incredulous. Reagan never understood what he could not do.

Now he is up against one of Washington's oldest and largest priesthoods—the arms-control experts, who say hope must be locked out and megatons must rule. They may be right, but . . .

"I could see in Reykjavik that it came down to SDI," the President recounted.



At the table in Reykjavik: "I tried everything I could think of"

"I made a proposal to [Gorbachev] that if we got the SDI shield then, with the Soviet Union sharing that, we could eventually sign a treaty to eliminate all ballistic missiles.

"But by the way he was hassling me, I could see he was trying to find a way to sink SDI. I tried everything I could think of, even a little Russian, an old Russian proverb that means 'trust but verify.' All the chips were on SDI. The restrictions that the Secretary wanted would kill SDI.

"At the last there were two places in the wording of the agreement that were left open," said the President. "All of a sudden he is interrupting, and he says, 'Why just ballistic missiles? What would you say if we included all of them, bombs, artillery shells, everything?' And I said, 'O.K., we'll talk about everything, we can do that.' But then he came back to SDI, and that was the end."

That Reagan may have wandered farther into his golden vision of a world without nuclear weapons and Gorbachev misunderstood is likely. The President has done this on other occasions in the past. That his mind would have caught up soon, even without the jolt he got on SDI, is also likely. Certainly the world's nervous kibitzers would have pulled up short—and have.

"Of course, I would never agree to anything that would leave them with an advantage," said Reagan. "He's the one who brought that [no nukes] up. We thought it would be something we could put on the table for discussion later."

The President did not say when or even if there would be another chance to sit down at a table and start talking again where he and the General Secretary left off so abruptly. But it was obvious that he may still try to pull off one of those accomplishments the experts keep telling him he can't do. There is something about Gorbachev that intrigues Reagan.

"No other Soviet leader I have dealt with has ever talked of eliminating nuclear weapons," mused the President, his heart almost surely searching for a new way to make another run for it.