

SECRET

2

13

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
PRIME MINISTER
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

COPY NO ... OF ...

27 October 1987

Prime Minister

CDP
27/X

EAST/WEST RELATIONS: SUMMIT AND INF TREATY

1. It is too early to know just what lies behind Gorbachev's latest manoeuvre in resurrecting the SDI precondition for a Summit. [redacted] we lack essential information, eg Gorbachev's forthcoming letter to the President; and, as Shultz reminded us in Brussels, Gorbachev still has not finally closed the door: the invitation remains open and Gorbachev apparently said he by no means rules out a Summit this year. Allowing for all this, however, some preliminary judgement is possible.

2. The first question is whether Gorbachev is acting freely or has been forced by internal pressures to change tack. We lack the basis for a firm answer, but I doubt whether he is acting from weakness. I see that Carlucci has expressed a similar view. Our assessments are that he is currently well in command with his men promoted in the June plenum and no coherent opposition as yet. The military are particularly subdued after the Rust incident and consequent changes in personnel. The state of the economy, the need to show results within a finite period and the consequent need to control or reduce military expenditure certainly exert their pressures, but here Gorbachev still has some time to play with. Nor has his course been so inconsistent. True, during his visit to Washington Shevardnadze encouraged a statement that there would be an autumn Summit for signature of an INF Treaty, the date to be set during the Moscow meeting. But, as far back as April, Gorbachev was laying down his requirements for a Summit as an INF agreement and an 'accord' on key provisions on strategic and space issues, the latter including strengthening the ABM Treaty. The two

1
SECRET

SECRET

themes have always been present; according to the situation he has emphasised one or the other.

3. If he was acting freely what was his objective? The most likely explanation is that he judged that in Reagan's weakened condition further concessions could be extracted. Shackling SDI has always been the fundamental Soviet concern; it was decisive (in our favour) at Reykjavik, and its re-appearance now confirms its place at the head of Soviet objectives. Gorbachev may have calculated that either the Americans would weaken or, if they did not, Western public opinion could be aroused to condemn SDI as the one obstacle to detente. There may have been a feeling that Reagan stood to gain more than he out of his appearance in Washington. The move would also have the advantage of reminding his internal audience that he was not neglectful of Soviet security. This must be a constant requirement, particularly if he is taking chances in other sectors of his policy.

4. Has he miscalculated? The President, quite rightly, will not budge and I am puzzled Gorbachev, particularly after Reykjavik, should expect that he would. Moreover, although Western opinion may be critical of Reagan and SDI to some degree, it could also criticise Gorbachev for blowing hot and cold. The image of the man of peace ready to approach arms reductions step by step could be superseded by the older image of the untrustworthy Russian.

5. Can an INF Treaty will be signed without a Summit? Apparently yes. Shevardnadze specifically allowed for this. But here again there is a puzzle. If it is not signed, public opinion will rightly condemn Gorbachev for his all-or-nothing approach. The Soviet opportunity to exploit detente and push for a de-nuclearised Europe will be lost for the time being. Moscow will still be threatened by Pershing II's. If, on the other hand, an INF agreement is

SECRET

SECRET

signed separately, Gorbachev's leverage over SDI will have been drastically reduced.

6. Gorbachev had, in fact, an attractive strategy available to him had he arrived in Washington to sign an INF agreement, as the Americans expected. He would have had a treaty to carry back to Moscow to show any doubters. He would have had subsequent openings to seek a de-nuclearised Europe and exploit differences in the Alliance on the next steps in arms control. He would have had a chance to pick up something more in private conclave with the President. In any case he could have afforded to rely on Congress, the economic crisis and a change of President to emasculate the SDI project over time. Conceivably he could still fall back on this strategy; he has left himself a little room for manoeuvre; but he has little time. It looks more likely that he will settle for an INF Treaty without a Summit; though even here he will have to move fast. At the moment he is endangering some good potential gains for a quick kill over SDI.

h.

PERCY CRADOCK

SECRET