

The Reagan-Gorbachev Summit

Star Wars Vs. Peace

On October 11-12th, in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital, the second meeting between US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was held amidst US-generated tension. The summit ended without setting a date for a full-scale summit in the US between the two leaders, and without reaching accords concerning arms limitations, despite the hopeful atmosphere in the first rounds of the negotiations. Disappointment came quickly after the fourth round, in which Reagan's insistence on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), known as Star Wars, caused the summit to fail.

During the two days in which the leaders met, four rounds of negotiations took place, amounting to 11 hours and 54 minutes. The unexpected length of the talks was in itself an indication of how close the two sides came to making historic decisions which would lessen international tension, decrease the threat of war and pave the way for restoring detente. However, the results of the summit did not match the hopeful, early indications.

Despite disagreements on the agenda and priorities, there was agreement between Gorbachev and Reagan concerning the principal issues to be discussed in the meeting. The disagreement occurred in the final round, when Reagan insisted on continuing Star Wars' testing not only in laboratories, but also in outer space. To this, Gorbachev said that only «a madman would accept such a request.»

Is it then a surprise ending? To answer that, one should recall the atmosphere which affected the relations between the two countries prior to the summit. Then, one can conclude that it was not a surprise ending. The summit was held as the US administration was intensifying its aggressive steps which would damage US-Soviet relations, and thus bring closer the threat of nuclear war. One should recall how the Reagan Administration tried to make a big case out of the arrest of Daniloff, the American journalist caught spying in Moscow. The US then expelled 25 UN-based Soviet diplomats, and carried out a nuclear explosion in Nevada, just one day after approving Gorbachev's call for a summit. Last, but not least, there were Caspar Weinberger's statements about the «Soviet threat». Recalling these actions is enough to make one realize that the results of the summit matched the preparations made by the US, despite the hopeful atmosphere which predominated during the first three rounds of the talks.

A summit held in such an atmos-

sphere, with Washington's insistence on Star Wars vs. the Soviet Union's striving for peace on earth, could only end one way. The contradictions between the two sides were not only on principal issues such as the SDI. There were even contradictions concerning the nature of the meeting itself. While the Soviets viewed it as a «work meeting» to complete what had been agreed upon in Geneva, but not implemented, the US viewed it as a preparatory rehearsal for the next summit.

The Soviet Union showed great flexibility and gave major concessions in order to reach accord on the principal issues. The Soviets proposed a program of three parts, aiming at: (1) reduction of the strategic arsenal by 50% within five years; (2) elimination of all intermediate-range nuclear warheads in Europe and 100 in Asia; and (3) banning SDI testing in space for at least ten years. During the negotiations, the two sides basically agreed on the first two, but Reagan's insistence on SDI testing in outer space brought the summit to a deadend, with no accord on the first two parts either.

Despite the failure, Gorbachev expressed his belief that the possibility for continuing dialogue still exists, as does the possibility for another summit.

As expected, Reagan tried to blame the Soviet Union for the summit's disappointing conclusion, in order to escape from the embarrassment his administration suffered due to its insistence on SDI testing, with no consideration for the world's safety and peace. Reagan countered the Soviet Union's insistence on eliminating or freezing Star Wars, by suggesting to «keep Star Wars, even after strategic ballistic missiles were removed from both arsenals ten years down the line.» Ridiculously, Schultz argued that SDI should be retained as an «insurance policy against cheating.» However, to the USSR and the world, it was obvious that the US was seeking military superiority through SDI and that Reagan's «Soviet-to-blame» theory was just a pretext for achieving that.

It was not only the summit which showed how far from each other the two leaders are on peace issues. The Soviet Union long ago initiated a peace offensive with no positive response from the US. The simplest example is the Soviets' unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, which started in August 1985, and is still in effect. Another example is the Soviet proposal to completely eliminate the nuclear arsenals of both countries before the year 2000. All these Soviet peace initiatives were aiming at a safer world. In a press con-

ference after the summit, Gorbachev said that the SDI does not «frighten the USSR even from a military standpoint» and that the Soviet Union would have the answer for it without much «sacrifice on our part». However, he noted that this problem has many aspects. It generates suspicion between the two countries, and would ultimately lead to the development of new, sophisticated weapons and a new stage of the arms race, whose consequences no one can know. Gorbachev remarked that it seemed that the Reagan Administration, which claims to be the protector of the US and 'freedom', had come to the summit without precise proposals-empty-handed in fact. All it brought were «old proposals which emit naphthalene odors» and which complicate the Geneva negotiations.

Despite the Soviet Union's flexibility, the Reagan Administration's obsession with attaining military superiority brought to an end this summit which so many people were hoping would reduce the threat of nuclear war. Comrade Gorbachev and the Soviet Union achieved a great moral victory by winning the propaganda battle against SDI in this round, showing clearly that it caused the failure of the Reykjavik summit and the efforts to reach accords on reducing tension and the nuclear arsenals of both sides. Reagan's refusal of the Soviet proposals ruined a great opportunity for reducing not only the arms race, but also international tension. Grasping this chance, by contrast, might have opened the doors to restoring detente.

Events the first week of November confirmed the ongoing nature of US imperialism's determination to sabotage attempts at disarmament. In Vienna, at the Conference on European Security and Cooperation, Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze met with US Secretary of State Schultz for five hours on two days, reaffirming the Soviets' interest in continuing dialogue. The meeting was to be a continuation of negotiations on the outline accords reached at the Reykjavik meeting. However, as Star Wars did to the Reykjavik summit, so it did to this meeting. According to Shevardnadze, the US tried to «beat a complete retreat from the high ground reached in Iceland» and put forth «a mixed bag of old mothballed views and approaches,» including points that the Soviet Union had already conceded in Reykjavik. Detente remains far away due to US imperialism's striving to attain strategic military superiority.