

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S SPEECH IN MURMANSK AT THE CEREMONIAL MEETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE ORDER OF LENIN AND THE GOLD STAR TO THE CITY OF MURMANSK

Murmansk, 1 Oct. 1987

Indeed, the international situation is still complicated. The dangers to which we have no right to turn a blind eye remain. There has been some change, however, or, at least, change is starting. Certainly, judging the situation only from the speeches made by top Western leaders, including their "programme" statements, everything would seem to be as it was before: the same anti-Soviet attacks, the same demands that we show our commitment to peace by renouncing our order and principles, the same confrontational language: "totalitarianism", "communist expansion", and so on.

Within a few days, however, these speeches are often forgotten, and, at any rate, the theses contained in them do not figure during businesslike political negotiations and contacts. This is a very interesting point, an interesting phenomenon. It confirms that we are dealing with yesterday's rhetoric, while real-life processes have been set into motion. This means that something is indeed changing. One of the elements of the change is that it is now difficult to convince people that our foreign policy, our initiatives, our nuclear-free world programme are mere "propaganda".

A new, democratic philosophy of international relations, of world politics is breaking through. The new mode of thinking with its humane, universal criteria and values is penetrating diverse strata. Its strength lies in the fact that it accords with people's common sense. Considering that world public opinion and the peoples of the world are very concerned about the situation in the world, our policy is an invitation to dialogue, to a search, to a better world, to normalization of international relations. This is why despite all attempts to besmirch and belittle our foreign policy initiatives, they are making their way in the world, because they are consonant with the moods of the broad masses of working people and realistically-minded political circles in the West.

Favourable tendencies are gaining ground in international relations as well. The substantive and frank East-West dialogue, far from proving fruitless for both sides, has become a distinguishing feature of contemporary world politics. Just recently the entire world welcomed the accord reached at the talks in Washington to promptly complete drafting an agreement on medium- and shorter-range missiles to be later signed at the top level. Thus, we are close to a major breakthrough in the field of actual nuclear disarmament. If it happens, it will be the first such breakthrough to be achieved in the post-war years. So far, the arms race has proceeded either unimpeded or with some limitations, but no concrete move has as yet been made towards disarmament, towards eliminating nuclear weapons.

The road to the mutual Soviet-American decision was hard. Reykjavik was a crucial event along that road. Life has confirmed the correctness of our assessment of the meeting in the Icelandic capital. Contrary to panic wavering of all sorts, sceptical declarations and the propaganda talk about the "failure", developments have started moving along the path paved by Reykjavik. They have borne out the correctness of the assessment we made, as you remember, just 40 minutes after the dramatic end of the meeting.

Reykjavik indeed became a turning point in world history, it showed a possibility of improving the international situation. A different situation has developed, and no one could act after Reykjavik as if nothing had happened. It was for us an event that confirmed the correctness of our course, the need for and constructiveness of new political thinking.

Full use of the potential created in Reykjavik is yet to be made. Gleams of hope have emerged, however, not only in the field of medium- and shorter-range missiles. Things have started moving in the field of banning nuclear testing. Full-scale talks on these problems will soon be held. It is obvious that our moratorium was not in vain. This was not an easy step for us either. It engendered and intensified worldwide demands for an end to the tests.

I can't undertake to predict the course of events. By no means everything depends on us. There is no doubt that the first results achieved in Washington recently and the forthcoming meeting with the President of the United States may cause a kind of peaceful "chain reaction" in the field of strategic offensive arms and non-launching of weapons into outer space as well as in many other issues which insistently call for international dialogue.

So, there are signs of an improvement in the international situation but, I repeat, there are also disquieting factors that threaten to aggravate sharply the world situation.

It would be irresponsible on our part to underestimate the forces of resistance to change. Those are influential and very aggressive forces blinded by hatred for everything progressive. They exist in various quarters of the Western world, but the largest concentration of them is observed among those who cater directly for the military-industrial complex, both ideologically and politically, and who live on it.

Here is a recent and fine example. A series of hearings on the subject "Gorbachev's Economic Reforms" began at the Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress on September 10, with Senators and Congressmen participating. The hearings are both open and closed-door ones. Speakers include representatives of the Administration and Sovietologists from the Central Intelligence Agency, the US Defence Department and from various scientific centres. In general, it is quite normal and even good that in America officials of such a level should want to gain a thorough understanding of what is taking place in the Soviet Union and what our restructuring means for the rest of the world and for the United States itself.

Various views are being expressed, including diametrically opposed ones. There is a good deal that is sensible and objective in them. Some can be debated in earnest and it would not be bad, I would say, to pay attention to some of the things in them. The committee members also heard an opinion that the United States "should welcome the restructuring" because it will reduce a risk of a nuclear clash.

But different kinds of recommendation are also being made at these hearings to the Administration and to Congress. Here is one such, almost word for word: if the Soviet Union attains the targets planned by the 27th Congress of the CPSU, that will, first of all, raise its prestige in the international arena and heighten the CPSU authority in the country and abroad and..., thereby, increase the threat to US national security. Who would ever have thought of such a conclusion? Moreover, success of the restructuring may weaken the political and economic unity of Western Europe, for the USSR will reach its market. The USSR will exert greater political influence on the developing countries, since Soviet military and other aid to them may be increased, and some of them will want to adopt the model of the Soviet economy if it proves competitive vis-a-vis the US economy.

And still further: the restructuring is dangerous because it will strengthen the Soviet Union's positions in international financial and economic organizations. Those analysts see a particular threat in the Soviet Union's increased influence in the world arena due to its initiatives in the field of arms control and the prospect of signing a treaty on medium-range missiles.

Just listen what conclusion they draw as a result: the failure of the socio-economic policy being pursued by the Soviet Union under the leadership of the CPSU and the Soviet government would accord with US national interests.

In order to "facilitate" such a failure the following is recommended: to speed up the programmes of costly ABM systems under SDI and draw the USSR into the arms race in order to hinder its restructuring; to allocate still more funds for the development of expensive high-accuracy weapons and space-based military systems; for the same purpose to increase the amount of military and other aid to groups and regimes which are actively fighting against the governments of the countries supported by the Soviet Union; to hinder the establishment of economic and trade contacts by the

USSR with other countries and international organizations; fully to rule out the possibility of the transfer of advanced technology to the USSR and other socialist countries, and to tighten control over the activities of COCOM and of its member countries.

Such are the views expressed overtly and cynically. We cannot but take into account such a stance. The more so as assurances of peace intentions, which we often hear from US officials are immediately accompanied, at one go, so to speak, by the lauding of "power politics" and by arguments very similar to those being used by the authors of the recommendations which I just mentioned.

Militarist and anti-Soviet forces are clearly concerned lest the interest among the people and political quarters of the West in what is happening in the Soviet Union today and the growing understanding of its foreign policy erase the artificially created "image of the enemy", an image which they have been exploiting unshamedly for years. Well, it's their business after all. But we shall firmly follow the road of restructuring and new thinking.

Comrades, speaking in Murmansk, the capital of the Soviet Polar Region, it is appropriate to examine the idea of cooperation between all people also from the standpoint of the situation in the northern part of this planet. In our opinion, there are several weighty reasons for this.

The Arctic is not only the Arctic Ocean, but also the northern tips of three continents: Europe, Asia and America. It is the place where the Euroasian, North American and Asian Pacific regions meet, where the frontiers come close to one another and the interests of states belonging to mutually opposed military blocs and nonaligned ones cross.

The North is also a problem of security of the Soviet Union's northern frontiers. We have had some historical experience which cost us dearly. The people of Murmansk remember well the years 1918-1919 and 1941-1945.

The wars fought during this century were severe trials for the countries of Northern Europe. It seems to us they have drawn some serious conclusions for themselves. And this is probably why the public climate in those countries is more receptive to the new political thinking.

It is significant that the historic Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was held in one of the northern capitals--Helsinki. It is significant that another major step in the development of that process--the first ever accord on confidence-building measures--was achieved in another northern capital--Stockholm. Reykjavik has become a symbol of hope that nuclear weapons are not an eternal evil and that mankind is not doomed to live under that sword of Damocles.

Major initiatives in the sphere of international security and disarmament are associated with the names of famous political figures of Northern Europe. One is Urho Kekkonen. Another is Olof Palme, whose death at the hand of a vile assassin shocked Soviet people. Then there is Kalevi Sorsa, who has headed the Socialist International Advisory Council for many years now. And we applaud the activities of the authoritative World Commission on Environment and Development headed by Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway.

The Soviet Union duly appreciates the fact that Denmark and Norway, while being members of NATO, unilaterally refused to station foreign military bases and deploy nuclear weapons on their territory in peacetime. This stance, if consistently adhered to, is important for lessening tensions in Europe.

However, this is only part of the picture. The community and interrelationship of the interests of our entire world is felt in the northern part of the globe, in the Arctic, perhaps more than anywhere else. For the Arctic and the North Atlantic are not just the "weather kitchen", the point where cyclones and anticyclones are born to influence the climate in Europe, the USA and Canada, and even in South Asia and Africa. One can feel here freezing breath of the "Arctic strategy" of the Pentagon. An immense

potential of nuclear destruction concentrated aboard submarines and surface ships affects the political climate of the entire world and can be detonated by an accidental political-military conflict in any other region of the world.

The militarization of this part of the world is assuming threatening dimensions. One cannot but feel concern over the fact that NATO, anticipating an agreement on medium- and shorter-range missiles being reached, is preparing to train military personnel in the use of sea- and air-based cruise missiles from the North Atlantic. This would mean an additional threat to us and to all the countries of Northern Europe.

A new radar station, one of the Star Wars elements, has been made operational in Greenland in violation of the ABM Treaty. US cruise missiles are being tested in the north of Canada. The Canadian government has recently developed a vast programme for a build-up of forces in the Arctic. The US and NATO military activity in areas adjoining the Soviet Polar Region is being stepped up. The level of NATO's military presence in Norway and Denmark is being built up.

Therefore, while in Murmansk, and standing on the threshold of the Arctic and the North Atlantic, I would like to invite, first of all, the countries of the region to a discussion on the burning security issues.

How do we visualize this? It is possible to take simultaneously the roads of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. I have had the opportunity to speak on the subject of "our common European home" on more than one occasion. The potential of contemporary civilization could permit us to make the Arctic habitable for the benefit of the national economies and other human interests of the near-Arctic states, for Europe and the entire international community. To achieve this, security problems that have accumulated in the area should be resolved above all.

The Soviet Union is in favour of a radical lowering of the level of military confrontation in the region. Let the North of the globe, the Arctic, become a zone of peace. Let the North Pole be a pole of peace. We suggest that all interested states start talks on the limitation and scaling down of military activity in the North as a whole, in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.

What, specifically, do we mean?

Firstly, a nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe. If such a decision were adopted, the Soviet Union, as has already been declared, would be prepared to act as a guarantor. It would depend on the participating countries how to formalize this guarantee: by multilateral or bilateral agreements, governmental statements or in some other way.

The Soviet Union simultaneously reaffirms its readiness to discuss with each of the interested states, or with a group of states, all the problems related to the creation of a nuclear-free zone, including possible measures applicable to the Soviet territory. We could go so far as to remove submarines equipped with ballistic missiles from the Soviet Baltic Fleet.

As it is known, the Soviet Union earlier unilaterally dismantled launchers of medium-range missiles in the Kola Peninsula and the greater part of launchers of such missiles on the remaining territory of the Leningrad and Baltic military areas. A considerable number of shorter-range missiles was removed from those districts. The holding of military exercises was restricted in areas close to the borders of Scandinavian countries. Additional opportunities for military detente in the region will open up after the conclusion of the agreement on "global double zero".

Secondly, we welcome the initiative of Finland's President Mauno Koivisto on restricting naval activity in the seas washing the shores of Northern Europe. For its part, the Soviet Union proposes consultations between the Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO on restricting military activity and

scaling down naval and airforce activities in the Baltic, Northern, Norwegian and Greenland Seas, and on the extension of confidence-building measures to these areas.

These measures could include arrangements on the limitation of rivalry in anti-submarine weapons, on the notification of large naval and airforce exercises, and on inviting observers from all countries participating in the European process to large naval and airforce exercises. This could be an initial step in the extension of confidence-building measures to the entire Arctic and to the northern areas of both hemispheres.

At the same time we propose considering the question of banning naval activity in mutually agreed-upon zones of international straits and in intensive shipping lanes in general. A meeting of representatives of interested states could be held for this purpose, for instance, in Leningrad.

The following thought suggests itself in connection with the idea of a nuclear-free zone. At present the Northern countries, that is Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland have no nuclear weapons. We are aware of their concern over the fact that we have a testing range for nuclear explosions on Novaya Zemlya.

We are thinking how to solve this problem, which is a difficult one for us because so much money has been invested in the testing range. But, frankly speaking, the problem could be solved once and for all if the United States agreed to stop nuclear tests or, as a beginning, to reduce their number and yield to the minimum.

Thirdly, the Soviet Union attaches much importance to peaceful cooperation in developing the resources of the North, the Arctic. Here an exchange of experience and knowledge is extremely important. Through joint efforts it could be possible to work out an overall concept of rational development of northern areas. We propose, for instance, reaching agreement on drafting an integral energy programme for the north of Europe. According to existing data, the reserves there of such energy sources as oil and gas are truly boundless. But their extraction entails immense difficulties and the need to create unique technical installations capable of withstanding the Polar elements. It would be more reasonable to pool efforts in this endeavour, which would cut both material and other outlays. We have an interest in inviting, for instance, Canada and Norway to form mixed firms and enterprises for developing oil and gas deposits of the shelf of our northern seas. We are prepared for relevant talks with other states as well.

We are also prepared for cooperation in utilizing the resources of the Kola Peninsula, and in implementing other major projects in various forms, including joint enterprises.

Fourthly, the scientific exploration of the Arctic is of immense importance for the whole of mankind. We have a wealth of experience here and are prepared to share it. In turn, we are interested in the studies conducted in other sub-Arctic and northern countries. We already have a programme of scientific exchanges with Canada.

We propose holding in 1988 a conference of sub-Arctic states on coordinating research in the Arctic. The conference could consider the possibility of setting up a joint Arctic Research Council. Should the partners agree, Murmansk could host the conference.

Questions bearing on the interests of the indigenous population of the North, the study of its ethnic distinctions and the development of cultural ties between northern peoples require special attention.

Fifthly, we attach special importance to the cooperation of the northern countries in environmental protection. The urgency of this is obvious. It would be well to extend joint measures for protecting the marine environment of the Baltic, now being carried out by a commission of seven maritime states, to the entire oceanic and sea surface of the globe's North.

The Soviet Union proposes drawing up jointly an integrated comprehensive plan for protecting the natural environment of the North. The North European countries could set an example to others by reaching an agreement on establishing a system to monitor the state of the natural environment and radiation safety in the region. We must hurry to protect the nature of the tundra, forest tundra, and the northern forest areas.

Sixthly, the shortest sea route from Europe to the Far East and the Pacific Ocean passes through the Arctic. I think that depending on progress in the normalization of international relations we could open the North Sea Route to foreign ships, with ourselves providing the services of ice-breakers.

Such are our proposals. Such is the concrete meaning of Soviet foreign policy with regard to the North. Such are our intentions and plans for the future. Of course, safeguarding security and developing cooperation in the North is an international matter and by no means depends on us alone. We are ready to discuss any counter proposals and ideas. The main thing is to conduct affairs so that the climate here is determined by the warm Gulfstream of the European process and not by the Polar chill of accumulated suspicions and prejudices.

What everybody can be absolutely certain of is the Soviet Union's profound and certain interest in preventing the North of the planet, its Polar and sub-Polar regions and all Northern countries from ever again becoming an arena of war, and in forming there a genuine zone of peace and fruitful cooperation.

Source: Gorbachev, M., The Speech in Murmansk at the ceremonial meeting on the occasion of the presentation of the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star Medal to the city of Murmansk, October 1, 1987 (Novosti Press Agency: Moscow, 1987), pp. 23-31.

