

Soviet-American Relations: As I See It

by Armand Hammer

The Bray Lecture was delivered October 20, the week following the summit at Reykjavik. David Goldfarb, a molecular biologist and Jewish dissident, had long been denied permission to emigrate and was one of the most prominent of the Soviet refuseniks.

I AM HONORED to have been invited to deliver the Ulric B. Bray Lecture in such distinguished company that includes Mrs. Bray, my colleagues of the Executive Forum, as well as members of the faculty and the student body of Caltech. I feel very comfortable in this role since Ulric Bray was an oilman — at least at heart — and one of the pioneers in the chemical engineering end of the petroleum industry. My subject for the Bray Lecture is “Soviet-American Relations: As I See It,” and I can tell you “I see it” a lot better tonight that I did a week ago in the aftermath of Reykjavik.

I went to Moscow while the mini-summit was still going on in Reykjavik, to discuss business matters with top Soviet trade officials. Then I planned to fly to Kiev on Thursday of that week to attend the opening of my art collection at the Kiev State Museum, which was part of the first cultural exchange negotiated after the Geneva summit. I also intended to be at the John Denver concert I helped to organize for the benefit of the victims of the Chernobyl disaster.



But my plans changed dramatically thanks to an old friend, Anatoly Dobrynin, the long-time Soviet ambassador to the U.S. and current Secretary of the Central Committee. We had a meeting last Wednesday evening, the day I arrived in Moscow, to discuss various subjects, and as we were finishing I suddenly said: “Anatoly, I want to take David Goldfarb back to the United States with me.”

“Armand,” he said, “that’s impossible. Matters of this kind take a great amount of time to decide and arrange.”

I said, “Well, you have known me, Anatoly, for 25 years and you know that I’m accustomed to doing the impossible. Why don’t you try?” Reluctantly he said he would look into it.

Several hours later I had a meeting with a Soviet Deputy Prime Minister when a call came from Mr. Dobrynin, who said “Armand, permission has been granted, providing Dr. Goldfarb wants to go, and his doctors think he is well enough to travel.” I asked where he was and was given the address of the Vishnevsky Institute for Surgery.



I immediately drove there and was warmly welcomed by the director, a distinguished surgeon named Dr. Kuzin. He said the patient's condition had improved remarkably over the past few weeks. Dr. Goldfarb had lost one of his legs in the Battle of Stalingrad during World War II, and he was in danger of losing the other because gangrene had set in. Two of his toes had to be amputated.

I was taken to the ward to see him, and it was a sad sight. He was in intensive care. There were three other post-operative patients there, and he was huddled up in one corner of the room. My first words to him were, "Dr. Goldfarb, I've come to take you to the United States tomorrow. Are you ready to go?" His eyes filled with tears. But they were tears of joy. He said, "This is my dream, but can my wife go with me? I can't go without her."

I tried to reach Mr. Dobrynin, and it was only late at night that I found him at his country home. And I said, "Anatoly, Dr. Goldfarb cannot leave without his wife."

There was a pause for several minutes. Then he answered, "Go ahead, you have permission to take his wife as well."

Mrs. Goldfarb lived in a two-flight walk-up apartment in an isolated section on the outskirts of the city. I climbed the flights up to the apartment and knocked on the door, and she let me in. I gave her the news. Her first remark was "What shall I do about my job at the Polyclinic?" I said, "Mrs. Goldfarb, you are going to America. You do not need any job. Your son will take care of you." She said, "Would you drive me to the Metro so I can go and see David." And I said, "Certainly."

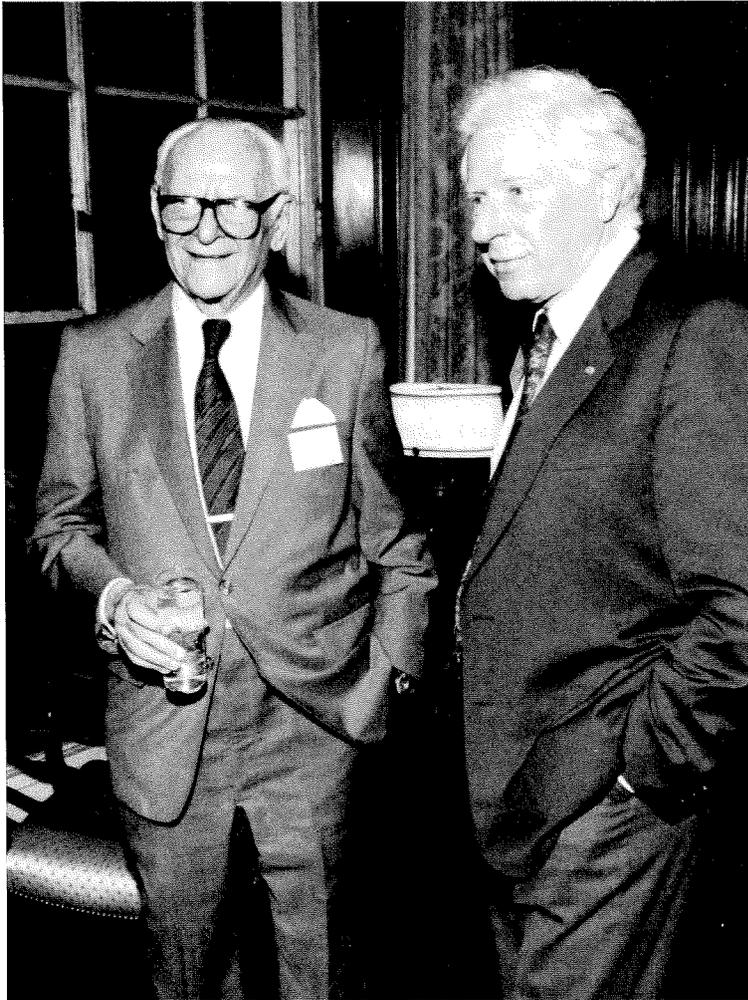
The next morning, I picked her up at her home and we drove to Ovir, the passport office, where a three-star general received us cordially. He already had new immigration passports made up for her and her husband. We then drove back to her apartment, where her daughter, her son-in-law, her grandchildren, and a host of friends had assembled. We loaded 19 pieces of luggage into two automobiles.

We then went to the hospital, where we found David Goldfarb sitting in bed with a big smile on his face, decked out in a brand new set of pajamas his wife had brought him the night before. The doctors and the staff helped me to take his wheelchair and wheel it to the stairway, and then they even carried him down in his wheelchair. Dr. Kuzin and Dr. Vishnevsky were there to see him off. His relatives and friends were gathered, and there was an ambulance waiting for him. We loaded him in the ambulance, and his wife went with him. I started for the airport, followed by the ambulance and by a flock of cars belonging to his friends.

When we got to the airport, the gates opened as if by magic, and we were allowed to go right to the steps of the plane, without any customs or emigration check-up. He said goodbye to his daughter and his grandchildren, and my crew helped to carry him up the steps of the plane. We put him in my study in the plane, where Mrs. Hammer made a bed for him and for Mrs. Goldfarb. I watched the expression on his face as we cleared Russian airspace, and if there was ever a happy man, David Goldfarb was such a man.

While we rejoice that the Scharanskys, the Orlovs, and the Goldfarbs are free, we must be mindful of the thousands of others who are still being refused permission to emigrate.

Before the lecture Armand Hammer greets Evelyn Bray, who endowed the lectureship in her late husband's honor.



Hammer and Caltech President Marvin Goldberger, who had met previously in Moscow, talk with guests at the Executive Forum.

I'm sure the decision to release Dr. Goldfarb went right to the top — to General Secretary Gorbachev — and I believe that this expression of goodwill is significant at this critical moment in the aftermath of Reykjavik.

Postmortems on Reykjavik have come by the droves, but the fact remains that there were some major breakthroughs explored over those 36 hours of marathon negotiations, most of which were on a one-to-one basis between the President and Mr. Gorbachev. There was one thing lacking, I feel, and that was an agreement on the Strategic Defense Initiative.

In my conversations in Moscow and in Washington on my return to the States, I found an upbeat mood, which leads me to expect that there will be further progress after Reykjavik. Senior officials of both governments feel that much was accomplished, and they point beneath the headlines to something that you may find of interest — the need to really understand the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and what is permitted and what is not permitted under its charter.

I was told that throughout the years there has never really been a comprehensive understanding of that document. The heads of state agreed and the treaty was signed, although never ratified by the Senate. Various officials no longer in power have negotiated certain understandings, but there has never been a serious meeting on each side going over the treaty line by line to try to understand what was meant. It is hard to think that the future security of the world may depend on such negotiations, but I am told that this is very true and vital in the next step in the arms negotiations. It was also pointed out to me that both sides did agree in Iceland not to exercise their existing right of withdrawal from the ABM Treaty for 10 years — which again underlines the importance of understanding that document.

I was told — on both sides of the Atlantic — that there is no desire to halt laboratory work on SDI, which indeed may already exist in the Soviet Union, as well as in the United States. The issue is really not to extend it into an arms race in space.

And by laboratory, what do we mean? Is it a cinderblock building with test tubes bubbling away? Or can it mean a vast laboratory complex with full-fledged field test activities to conduct laser experiments and so forth?

I thought it was particularly interesting when one of the Moscow officials said to me, "I don't particularly care if you test these missiles under your SDI, or how you shoot them down, as long as you don't go into space."

I was told by both sides — from men who attended the meetings in that small, spare house on the coast of Iceland — that the chemistry between Mr. Gorbachev and President Reagan was very good, laced with candor and sometimes with humor.

I am pleased to hear that, because I have been a long-time advocate of having the leaders of the two superpowers meet so they can get to know each other regardless of their differences and ideology.

I remember before the meeting in Geneva last year, I had a meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. I asked him then — because no date or place had yet been set for the Reykjavik meeting — what he thought about the meeting with Mr. Reagan. He said, "I think it would be a good idea to have such a meeting, but your president doesn't want peace. He wants war." I said, "Mr. Gorbachev, you are mistaken. If you read President Reagan's speech in January, you would see that he said

we must have peace with the Soviet Union. Why don't you meet him and size him up yourself?"

Later I was told when I met Mr. Reagan at the Oval Office, that things were moving quickly and that they thought the meeting would be held in Geneva in November, which did take place. The editor of *Pravda* said to some correspondents that he thought that my intervention with Mr. Gorbachev helped. I hope it did.

When I was in Moscow on the first day of the recent mini-summit, I turned on the radio and heard the news and saw that they were making good progress. The next day I was shocked when I heard that the meeting had broken up, and that everyone had said it was a failure with nothing concrete accomplished about setting up a full-set summit in Washington. I thought how sad it was that these two men had fallen apart. I heard Mr. Gorbachev's press conference on the air. The man was so emotional that at one time he had to stop; he could not go on. And I believe he was thoroughly sincere and shaken up over the fact, as he said, that we were so close to an agreement and we fell apart on one thing — insistence on the American side that SDI should continue.

I have made a proposal which I hope will help get us back on the track. Mr. Reagan told Mr. Gorbachev at the conference that once we have developed SDI, we will share it with the Soviets. And according to the information I received (this has been published), Mr. Gorbachev answered, "You will not even share how to measure milk with us, much less the secrets of the cosmos. So let's not waste time talking about that."

Mr. Reagan also said, "Well, if a third party or madman got control of nuclear weapons that threatened both of us, wouldn't we have a shield to be protected?" And Mr. Gorbachev is said to have answered, "Do we have a trillion dollars for that? There are other ways to handle a madman."

Since I am convinced that President Reagan is sincere in offering to share with the Russians when or if SDI is ever developed to the point of deployment, why not share it immediately? Why not invite the Russian scientists to come over and participate in a U.S. laboratory which we will set up? There is a precedent — not as big — but several years ago we had a joint mission to space together. We shared a lot of information and a lot of secrets at that time.

Dr. Goldberger, whom I have discussed this with just now at the table, reminded me that he had had a meeting with his counterpart in Russia and found the Soviet scientists open and ready to discuss all matters of mutual cooperation.

Now, I know there are a lot of skeptics who will say that you can't trust the Russians. But Gorbachev has offered inspection on the ground, inspection in the air. We can verify what they have done. I understand they have been working on SDI. We can make it a condition that their laboratories must be open to us as well.

I think at least it deserves our setting up a team of experts at a think tank — perhaps the Rand Corporation or some other body like that — to study this question. It's worth studying to find out if it is impossible to work cooperatively with the Russians. They think we want to gain superiority. They think we want to be able to protect ourselves so we can launch a first strike on them. Now it sounds absurd, but that's what they fear. I hope that same thought will be given to the suggestion that I have made to allay those fears.

And now, I would just like to close by saying that I have had two dreams in my life. One has been to find a cure for cancer, and I think we are making great progress. Dr. Steve Rosenberg, with whom I have been working closely, has done remarkable things. About half of the 60 patients he has treated have had more than 50 percent of their tumors disappear or shrink. And just lately he has developed a new product which is a hundred times more powerful than interleukin-2, and as soon as he gets permission to test it on humans, I think he'll make further progress.

But my greatest dream of all, of course, is to be able to bring the two superpowers together and establish a meaningful peace, so that we will not be at war with the Russians, but will compete with them in trade, science, cultural activities — and let history decide. We don't buy their ideology. Gorbachev said to me, "You will never destroy socialism." I said, "Socialism doesn't work. The only country it works in is Hungary where they mix it with capitalism." He smiled. I think he'll find that out.

In the meanwhile we have to avoid an accident. We have to avoid a possibility of war of any kind that could lead to a nuclear action, which could lead to the destruction of all of us. □