

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 21, 1986

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

DISARMAMENT

ARMS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, over our Thanksgiving weekend, the eyes of the world were focused on Reykjavik. There, the Leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union met to reinvigorate the summit process begun last year in Geneva and to narrow some of the many differences which divide them. Their goal was to give the process impetus, and they succeeded.

Arms control and security are the central international issues of our time and the manner of their resolution will shape the global outlook for decades to come.

It is still too early to provide a final assessment of this latest meeting. The task now in Washington and in Moscow is to ensure that the progress which appears to have been made is not wasted. All Governments share in this responsibility and we in Canada must do our part.

Today, as a contribution to our own discussion and debate within this House, and in the country at large, I would like to make some brief observations about the nature of the Reykjavik meeting in the broad context of East-West relations.

[*English*]

First, Sir, it would be well to remember that Reykjavik was but one staging point in the difficult and unending process of managing the relations between East and West. During the meeting, both sides moved more than anyone had thought possible. Immediately after the meeting, both sides reflected their disappointment that the breakthrough that was so close did not occur. Now, reflecting on that progress, both sides agree that the proposals made in Iceland are still on the table, still in negotiation.

This process of building East-West relations has been proceeding with renewed intensity since January, 1985. Reykjavik was designed not to conclude new agreements but to lay the ground for them. Whether history will judge it a success depends entirely on the use that is made of the progress in Iceland.

The most notable aspect of the Reykjavik meeting is the extent to which both sides were able to reach understandings

on the whole range of nuclear weapons and testing. They agreed provisionally to reduce by 50 per cent within five years the main components of their strategic nuclear arsenals: land-based missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. At one point in their discussion, they also agreed to eliminate ballistic missiles completely in 10 years.

On intermediate-range nuclear weapons, there was similar provisional agreement on their complete elimination from Europe within five years, with the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. each retaining only 100 warheads in Soviet Asia and the continental U.S.A. respectively. The U.S.A. and the Soviet Union also agreed on the need to negotiate reductions in short-range nuclear arsenals.

There was mutual acceptance of a step-by-step process for reducing nuclear tests, leading eventually to a complete cessation of tests once nuclear weapons had been abolished. There was a broad convergence of views on the verification procedures to be applied to the various measures.

The fact that such detailed discussions occurred and resulted in such wide-ranging, if tentative, agreement attests to the seriousness and dedication with which the two sides have been approaching their task. The main significance lies in the demonstration that major, negotiated reductions in nuclear arsenals need not be an impossible dream.

At Reykjavik three lessons were reinforced. The first two are: both sides are serious; and arms control is possible. But the third lesson is that arms control will not come easily. It is a deliberate and difficult process.

The more sobering element of reality as it has emerged from Reykjavik lies in the fact that the two sides remain far apart in their views on the future role of strategic defences. This is not a question of saying yes or no to SDI but of finding a way of managing the research on defensive weapons in which both sides are engaged.

A key issue between the two Governments is whether research is limited to the laboratory under the existing ABM Treaty. That, Sir, is a treaty with two signing parties: the United States and the Soviet Union. Its text does not refer directly to research, although the private negotiating record of either side may mention research. The agreement on what precisely is intended in that treaty is for these two Governments which are the parties to the agreement to work out.

It is important to note that this is a different issue from the debate we have seen in recent months over what is allowed by agreed statement "D" of the ABM treaty referring to ABM systems based on other physical principles. Our interest in