

should not only eliminate very big asymmetries, but also – and this is my personal view – agree on the remaining asymmetries that would be satisfactory to both sides.

P&S: Regarding the Arctic zone of peace proposal made last fall in Murmansk: what was the motivation for including items that made a serious proposal seem like a joke. For example, it excludes the Barents Sea but includes places like the English Channel?

TROFIMENKO: It is the fault of both our countries. No country makes proposals for disarmament which are initially harmful to its own interests ... let's start talking. Let's see what's really feasible. If your side would make some really appealing move for us, we might yield on something else, but initially Gorbachev described the situation as he saw it. And you understand that Murmansk is a very important nuclear submarine base for the Soviet Union, and it's the only really open port from which we can get into the Atlantic ocean.

... The idea of the peaceful Arctic is very good idea, but we are now starting a conventional arms race in this part of the world. Your country is thinking about doing something, we will have to do something, not because we are really eager for a new naval buildup, but because of the new military strategy of the United States, which is to press on the flanks in the north Atlantic bordering the Arctic and in the north Pacific.

... We've made the Antarctic a peaceful continent. Can we make the North Polar Ocean a peaceful area? When I look at the map in polar projection I see your north passage and our northern maritime passage; I see a large round transportation belt at the edges of the Arctic Ocean, touching on the littoral states and perhaps spreading into the North Pacific and North Atlantic. Maybe this would be a much better use for our efforts, than for you to build nine or twelve nuclear submarines, which would be no good for anything.

P&S: Are you frightened?

TROFIMENKO: I'm not frightened; twelve submarines on the Canadian side would not make a difference, especially when you consider that if we conclude a START agreement we would have to cut something like fifty to sixty submarines from our navy.

The Arctic Ocean is not only important for the littoral states of the Arctic Ocean – but it's a tremendous climate generating factor worldwide. And by polluting it – and another arms race in this region would definitely have adverse ecological consequences – we would be really doing damage not only to our northern lands but to the health of the world. So it is very important that we talk about this.... The initiative of Comrade Gorbachev in Murmansk was the first ball thrown out.

P&S: During the dark days of the Vietnam War there was a US Senator who said what the US should do is declare the war won and leave, is that what Gorbachev did in Afghanistan, let's say we won it, and we'll go home?

TROFIMENKO: How we will explain this to ourselves and to our population is another story, but I accept what you're saying.

P&S: Was it a bad idea, Afghanistan?

TROFIMENKO: There is no very simple answer to that. If you think about what the situation was in 1979 when the United States really started to pressure us from different angles – when they were making military preparations against Iran, increasing the military budget, ganging up with China which was at that time very hostile to us, and many other factors – you should understand that the situation in Afghanistan, the foreign interference, and the pleading of the local government for help, all combined together. I am not saying that because we are now withdrawing troops that the original decision was unacceptable. But even at that time there were people who were thinking that we really should not do this thing. There were differences of opinion. And of

course from the historical perspective it would have been better had we not deployed our forces in Afghanistan.... The main thing is that now we are withdrawing from Afghanistan, whatever were the initial merits and non-merits of going into it militarily.

P&S: Regarding *glasnost* and *perestroika* and how it influences your East European allies: will the East European countries be allowed to interpret these ideas in their own way, and to go their own way; to structure their economies the way they see fit? Or are we going to see a clampdown like we did in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968?

TROFIMENKO: No. The answer is no. We are now saying that the model of socialism that we inherited from the thirties and forties is not sacrosanct, because nobody said that whatever Stalin did was the ultimate in Marxist thinking. We are now talking about our own model. Even before the change of leadership in the Soviet Union, we looked with quite a neutral eye on all the experiments going on in Hungary, in Poland, and in D.D.R. They have their own ways of developing their economies, and now in the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* they have still more possibilities. We will not be interfering in their affairs ...

P&S: Including how they make their foreign policies?

TROFIMENKO: The thing is that these countries are in the Warsaw treaty alliance, so there are consultations and some common goals on foreign policy. We paid with our blood for this "cordon sanitaire" that was absolutely hostile to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It was built as a staging ground for anti-Soviet military moves, and now has been turned into a

belt of friendly states. So of course the foreign policies of those countries are not irrelevant to us, but so far the alliance gives our side the assurance that we have a common foreign policy.

P&S: You are a Soviet expert on the West and there's a growth industry in the west in Sovietology. Everybody wants to learn Russian to become a Sovietologist. What do you think of how the West understands the Soviet Union?

TROFIMENKO: It's a joke you see. I would say to become a Sovietologist in the United States, first of all, you don't have to learn Russian. That's the main prerequisite, then you are good Sovietologist; if you know Russian, you are a bad one. I don't say there are some of them who don't know Russian, but those who know Russian are usually of some East European extraction. But they say, you know, Mr. Trofimenko, you don't express your thoughts correctly; they are always beating up on us for our poor English. So I say, all right if you want to hear all the nuances let's talk Russian for a change. With all our colleagues on the other side of the table, the top Sovietologists in America, why should we always talk English? I have never succeeded to have a conference on Soviet matters with American Sovietologists in Russian.

... It is paradoxical that, for instance, all American Sinologists love China and have treated China from this perspective. The bulk of American Sovietologists or Kremlinologists have hated the Soviet Union from the start, and developed their theories from this attitude. And so it's very difficult to have any dealings with them. □

