

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

SYSTEM II
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April 6, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: George P. Shultz *GB*
SUBJECT: Response to Chernenko's March 19 Letter

We have drafted a response to Chernenko's March 19 letter (attached), taking into account my meeting with Dobrynin last Monday, Art Hartman's exchange with Gromyko last Tuesday, and the guidance you provided in NSDD-137 on nuclear arms control strategy.

The letter serves a number of the policy objectives you stressed at the March 27 NSC meeting:

-- it counters the Soviets' arguments about an alleged U.S. "threat" by describing some of the Soviet actions and military programs which make them appear a threat to us;

-- it reaffirms the U.S. commitment to arms control and our readiness to be flexible in the search for agreements; and

-- it attempts to reassure the Soviets we are not a threat, and to "get Chernenko's attention," by expressing our readiness to consider in the CDE a non-use of force undertaking if the Soviets agree to some of the specific confidence-building measures we have proposed.

On this last point, the Soviets at all levels have been asking for just such a "concrete signal" from us. Although they are now giving somewhat more attention to outer space arms control, they also have been signalling for months that they consider our attitude toward non-use of force as a kind of litmus test of U.S. "seriousness" in the arms control field. Chernenko's April 4 message to the Socialist International cited non-use of force once again. By highlighting our willingness to move in reciprocal fashion on this issue, therefore, our proposed letter provides tangible evidence for Chernenko of your commitment to moving the relationship forward.

The Soviets today invited Jim Goodby to Moscow for consultations with his Soviet counterpart; we are now working on the dates. This would be an opportunity to begin exploring the idea.

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Jim Goodby is confident that our Allies will support our pursuit of a trade between non-use of force and CBMs at the next round of the CDE. In fact, the Allies and he have been planning on the Western countries agreeing to a working group discussion of non-use of force -- which would represent implicit acceptance of it. Gromyko, however, may try to obscure the significance of our willingness to have working group discussions unless we broach the idea directly with Chernenko -- only through the letter can we ensure that you will get credit for our move.

Without this language on CDE, there will be nothing in this letter to get Chernenko's attention. Pending your approval of the proposal, we have put the relevant language in brackets.

In addition to the above, our proposed reply reviews the rest of our arms control agenda (our paramount interest in START and INF; our disappointment that the Soviets have failed to take up the offer of private exploratory exchanges; and our desire for progress on CW and MBFR). The subsequent discussion of regional problems takes into account Gromyko's interesting démarche on southern Africa and my agreement with Dobrynin to more intensive exchanges on regional issues, including the Mideast and Persian Gulf. The letter concludes with paragraphs on bilateral issues and human rights, noting in particular your regret at Chernenko's failure to respond to your appeals for humanitarian gestures.

I would delete this part.

Bureaucratic Considerations: In NSDD-137, you requested a letter to Chernenko be drafted focusing on START and INF -- the flexibility we have shown to date, our readiness to reopen talks anytime, anywhere, etc. -- and refuting Soviet allegations about the U.S. threat. We believe our draft, while perhaps not going into all the detail envisaged in the NSDD, fulfills its main requirements without neglecting other areas of our agenda. For this reason, we believe that this letter should be sent now, and that it not be coordinated with the other agencies. Based on previous experience, reaching consensus in the SACPG on anything specific will take weeks if not months. Moreover, I believe strongly that, as a general rule, the drafting of Presidential correspondence should not become the province of the bureaucracy. Of course, as constructive ideas develop from the process launched by the NSDD, they can be incorporated into other letters to Chernenko.

A Final Point: A Supreme Soviet session has been called for early next week, and it is widely anticipated in Moscow that the meeting will "elect" Chernenko as Chairman of the Presidium, the titular Head of State. Thus our draft includes bracketed language congratulating Chernenko on his new appointment, and addressing him as "Mr. Chairman."

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If you approve our proposed reply, I would envisage having Art Hartman deliver it in Moscow next week. I would at the same time call in Dobrynin to give him a copy, as well as to continue our discussions of last Monday.

Recommendation

That you approve the attached reply to Chernenko's March 19 letter.

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