

SECRET/SENSITIVE

Translation from the Russian

His Excellency  
Ronald W. Reagan  
President of the United States of America  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I have carefully read your letter of July 2, 1984. Let me say frankly that I was looking in it for a positive response to our proposal to hold Soviet-American negotiations this September on preventing the militarization of outer space. Regrettably, there is no such response in the letter.

One has to reach such a conclusion despite the fact that you express readiness to start negotiations in Vienna. For from your letter it clearly follows that the U.S. is not agreeing to participate in the kind of negotiations which the Soviet side proposes and in which it is prepared to participate.

Let me recall that the Soviet Union favors the adoption of urgent measures which would enable us effectively to block all channels for extending the arms race into space. This can be done by banning all space attack systems, which is precisely what we propose to have negotiations about, and by establishing a moratorium, simultaneously with the start of negotiations, on testing and deployment of such systems.

The American side essentially is talking about conducting not negotiations on space, but some sort of "conference" without a definite agenda, i.e. there would be a conversation about everything and about nothing specifically.

We are far from underestimating the importance of questions of nuclear armaments, which in your letter are linked with the problem of space. You know our position with regard to how to solve these questions. But as before, nothing points to the readiness of the American side to take into account this position and open the way out of the present impasse. Banning space weapons is a problem of great importance in its own right. To tie it to questions of limiting and reducing nuclear arms, which are in fact currently blocked, would be to put negotiations on space attack weapons into a stalemated position as well. At the same time, the deployment of space attack weapons would inevitably lead to a sharp escalation of the arms race on earth too, and would complicate all the more the possibility of undertaking effective measures for limiting and reducing armaments in general. We are convinced that such a development of events would serve nobody's interests.

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As for space weapons themselves, the emphasis here should, of course, not be on studying something. It is necessary to reach agreement on practical measures in order to prevent the appearance of space attack weapons of any kind. This is also what determines the concrete questions put forward by the USSR for negotiations, in order to resolve the problem in all its aspects and in a radical way.

We approach these negotiations seriously and responsibly, and we expect the same attitude from the American side. If, however, for some reason it is difficult for you to give consent to such negotiations at the time we suggested, we would have to take that into account. It is important that we be in agreement that such negotiations are necessary, and that we will conduct them without unjustifiable delays.

In conclusion I wish to emphasize the main point once again. There cannot be any doubt that it is more sensible to exclude space from military competition in advance, rather than trying later on to eliminate the otherwise inevitable, serious and perhaps even irreparable damage to stability and security. I appeal to you, Mr. President, to look at this whole problem once again from this perspective. I would like to hope that you could give a positive reply to our proposal, which remains in force.

Sincerely,

K. Chernenko.

Moscow  
July 7, 1984

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

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July 7, 1984

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: Kenneth W. Dam, Acting *KWD*  
SUBJECT: Chernenko's Response to Your July 2 Letter  
on the Vienna Talks

Soviet Chargé Isakov came in to see Rick Burt Saturday afternoon under urgent instructions from Moscow to hand over a reply from Chernenko to your July 2 letter on the Vienna talks. An unofficial translation, as well as the Russian original, are attached.

Chernenko's letter stresses the following points:

-- It insists that you have not yet given a positive response to the Soviet proposal to negotiate on preventing "the militarization of space" in September, and that "the American side" is still talking about some "conference" without a definite agenda.

-- It very forcefully makes the point that nuclear negotiations are frozen, and that linking them to negotiations on outer space is therefore a recipe for deadlock on outer space too. The resulting arms race in space would accelerate the arms race on earth as well, Chernenko says, and would make it harder to limit and reduce armaments in general.

-- As a result of these two factors, the letter goes on, "it is necessary to come to a clear understanding as to the subject of these negotiations" before our delegations meet at the negotiating table. If it is hard for us to agree to such negotiations in September, they will "take that into account."

In response, Burt first recalled that it was we who had suggested beginning talks later if the Soviets preferred. He said we would study the letter and reply soon, but stressed that both you and the Secretary have told the Soviets we are prepared to come to Vienna with clear substantive ideas on outer space arms control. At the same time, we believe that if we are going to address this topic we must also discuss related issues like offensive nuclear weapons. In any event, however, we are prepared to enter into diplomatic discussions of the agenda for talks, and Burt invited the Soviets to begin such preparatory discussions without delay.

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Isakov replied by asking again whether we are ready to negotiate on "preventing the militarization" of outer space. If we were making an announcement, would we be willing to say that, he asked. Burt said that in discussing the agenda for a Vienna meeting, we could address the issue of what any announcement might say. Isakov concluded that he would report the exchange, and the specific question of initiating a discussion of the Vienna agenda, to Moscow.

On the way out, Isakov commented to the State Department official accompanying him that the Soviets are offering the Administration a political "bumper harvest" if negotiations on outer space begin in September; all that was being asked was that the agenda be fixed before the two delegations sat down. The official replied that you do not need Soviet help to get reelected, and that the Administration is approaching the talks on the assumption that they must be to mutual benefit, without regard to such considerations.

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