

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 18, 1984

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your prompt reply to my letter of July 2. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify my reaction to your proposal for a meeting of delegations in Vienna in September, as my earlier statements seem to have been misunderstood.

It is certainly not my intention to propose a "conference without a definite agenda," involving "a conversation about everything and about nothing specifically." Of course, agreement on the content and objective of these talks is desirable, and both sides should have a clear idea of the issues the other considers relevant and important, so that the interchange can be concrete and productive.

It is also not my desire to have a conference merely to "study something," as you put it in your letter. As I stated in my previous letter, there should be a clear mandate to seek out and find mutually acceptable negotiating approaches which hold promise for concrete results.

Defining the agenda should be the immediate task of our diplomatic representatives. As you know, yours have been invited to present Soviet views on this question. I have no objection to making presentation of the Soviet proposals the first item, and my delegation will be instructed to respond to them promptly and constructively.

As we consider the agenda, I think you will agree that neither of us can assert the right to define for the other those issues which are relevant to the questions being discussed. To attempt to do so would not reflect a serious and responsible approach to solving problems and would hardly be consistent with the indispensable principle of dealing on the basis of equality.

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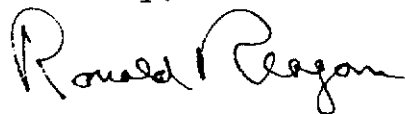
BY amf, NARA, DATE 10/16/00

The fact is that, if we are to negotiate effectively regarding weapons in space -- or as you would put it, "the militarization of outer space" -- we must take into account the overall strategic environment of which these weapons are but one element. Many military activities in space, after all, involve efforts to monitor, to communicate with, to warn against, or to counter offensive nuclear systems, while many of those offensive weapons pass through outer space to reach their targets. Problems involving strategic systems, including anti-satellite weapons, therefore, must encompass existing offensive systems. This is not a matter of policy preference, but a practical fact of life. I am sure you recognize this since, in your last letter, you noted the close relationship between the question of weapons in space and the arms competition on earth.

Is it reasonable to assume that we can make significant progress in solving part of the problem, while ignoring other parts? I think not, and this is the reason I have suggested that we try to find ways to resume negotiations on offensive nuclear arms. These are in fact the most destructive weapons in our hands, and if we cannot find ways to reduce the dangers they present, whatever efforts we make in other areas will be severely hampered. This is the reason I feel strongly that we must also discuss ways to resume negotiations on offensive nuclear arms while at the same time we turn our attention to arms control of weapons in space.

Mr. Chairman, I can reiterate to you that I accept your Government's proposal to begin talks in Vienna on September 18. My acceptance is without any precondition -- as I assume your proposal was. I am confident that our representatives can rapidly work out an agreed statement of the meeting's content and objectives, so long as my interest in making concrete progress is matched on your part.

Sincerely,



His Excellency
Konstantin Chernenko
Chairman of the Presidium of the
Supreme Soviet of the Union of
Soviet Socialist Republics
Moscow