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by Russ Shultz
today. W.S.*

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

January 14, 1986

Dear Mr. President,

After our meeting in Geneva where we agreed that the questions of security are central for our relations, I have carefully thought through the ways to implement the decisions of principle, which were taken as a result of our meeting.

I am convinced that we should work for packing the period till the next planned Soviet-American summit with constructive efforts of both sides aimed at achieving concrete agreements, first of all, on the urgent problems of arms limitation and reduction. I am, certainly far from being forgetful about the major differences which remain between our approaches to the resolution of these problems. But all these things notwithstanding, it is also impossible to deny that there exist now serious prerequisites to overcome the difficulties we face and, without wasting time, to arrive at mutually acceptable agreements in the interests of enhancing the security of all the peoples. A foundation for that is the joint document in which we clearly expressed ourselves in favor of preventing nuclear as well as conventional war between our countries, reaffirmed our mutual willingness to follow the path of policy ruling out the seeking of military superiority.

Now this declaration has to be substantiated by concrete actions. A whole series of opportunities exists in this regard. The task is to make use of them in practice. We are for casting aside the stereotypes and outdated modes of thinking, hindering the advance movement, and for tackling in a bold and new manner the resolution of issues which you and I simply do not have the right to postpone.

In your New Year address to the people of the Soviet Union you said that it was your dream to one day free mankind from the

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threat of nuclear destruction. But why make the realization of this dream conditional on the development of new types of weapons - space weapons in this case? Why take this extremely dangerous path - which does not hold a promise for disarmament, when it is possible already now to get down to freeing the world from the existing arsenals?

We propose a different path, which will really enable us to enter the third millenium without nuclear weapons. Instead of spending the next 10-15 years developing new sophisticated weapons in space, which are allegedly intended to make nuclear weapons "obsolete" and "impotent", wouldn't it be better to address those weapons themselves and take that time to reduce them to zero? Let us agree on a stage-by-stage program which would lead to a complete nuclear disarmament everywhere already by the turn of the next century.

The Soviet Union envisages the following procedure of the reduction of nuclear weapons - both delivery vehicles and warheads - down to their complete liquidation.

The first stage. It would last approximately 5-8 years. During this period the USSR and US would reduce by half their nuclear weapons reaching the territories of each other. There would remain no more than 6000 warheads on the delivery vehicles still in their possession.

It goes without saying that such reductions take place on the basis of the mutual renunciation by the USSR and US of the development testing and deployment of attack space weapons. As the Soviet Union has repeatedly warned, the development of space weapons will dash the hopes for reductions of nuclear weapons on Earth.

The Soviet Union, as is known, has long been proposing that Europe be freed from nuclear weapons, both medium range and tactical. We are in favor of reaching and implementing already at the first stage a decision to eliminate completely the medium range missiles of the USSR and US in the European zone - both ballistic and cruise missiles - as the first step towards freeing the European continent from nuclear weapons. In this context, naturally, the US would have to assume the obligation not to transfer its strategic and medium range missiles to other countries, and Britain and France - not to build up their corresponding nuclear weapons.

From the outset, in our view, it is necessary for the USSR and US to agree to cease all nuclear explosions and to call upon other states to join such moratorium as soon as possible. I shall return to this issue later.

The second stage. It has to start no later than 1990 and last 5-7 years. Britain, France and China start to join nuclear disarmament. To begin with they could assume the obligation to freeze all their nuclear armaments and not to have them on the territories of other countries.

The USSR and US continue the reduction on which they agreed at the first stage and carry out further measures to liquidate their medium range nuclear weapons, and freeze their tactical nuclear systems. After the USSR and US complete the reduction by 50 percent of their relevant armaments, another radical step is taken - all nuclear powers liquidate their tactical nuclear weapons, that is, systems with ranges (radius of action) of up to 1000 kilometers.

At this stage the Soviet-American agreement to ban attack space weapons must become multilateral, necessarily involving all leading industrial powers.

All nuclear powers would cease nuclear testing.

A prohibition would be introduced on the development of non-nuclear weapons based on new physical principles, which by their destructive capabilities come close to nuclear or other systems of mass destruction.

No later than 1995 the third stage will start. During this stage the liquidation of all still remaining nuclear weapons is completed. By the end of 1999 no more nuclear weapons remain on Earth. A universal agreement is worked out that these weapons shall never be resurrected again.

It is envisaged that special procedures will be worked out for the destruction of nuclear weapons as well as for the dismantling, conversion or destruction of their delivery vehicles. In this context agreement will be reached on the quantities of weapons to be destroyed at each stage, the places where they will be destroyed, etc.

The verification of the weapons destroyed or limited would be carried out both by national technical means and by on-site inspection

The USSR is prepared to come to terms on any other additional verification measures.

All this'll become possible if we close the way for the arms race in outer space. I would like to hope, that you, Mr. President, will consider this question with all the attention it deserves.

In connection with the problem of nuclear arms, I would like to address once again the question of the cessation of nuclear explosions. We have already discussed it with you at length, in particular in our correspondence. In your letter of December 24 you say that nuclear tests are "important to ensure the safety, reliability and effectiveness of nuclear weapons". Such is your argument. It appears to us, however, that a different approach is required. It should be considered: what would provide greater security - the cessation or the continuation of nuclear explosions? Our conclusion is that it is the cessation of explosions, which would bring enormous, really tangible benefits both for enhancing the security of the USSR and USA and for strengthening strategic stability.

Guided by the objective of facilitating the termination of the nuclear arms race, the Soviet Union has taken the decision to prolong its unilateral moratorium on any nuclear explosions for three more months. I think, there is no need to prove the significance of this action. Moreover, this is a practical demonstration of the restraint on the need to exercise which we agreed with you in Geneva. I will be frank, we made this step intending to give to the American side additional time for taking a decision, which is expected from Washington by world public, a decision that the American side, too, will stop its nuclear tests.

Should the moratorium become mutual, it would give a powerful impetus to reaching agreements on the limitation and reduction of nuclear armaments, to strengthening and broadening the mutual trust. The questions of verification do not represent an obstacle. Here we could go far - up to, if necessary, mutual on-site inspections for verifying the non-conducting of the explosions. The Soviet side is ready in principle to discuss the questions of verification on the level of experts, but of verification precisely of the non-conducting of nuclear explosions, and not of anything else.

As to the question you raised of centers to reduce nuclear risk, it could become a subject for discussion at the upcoming round of the Soviet-American negotiations on nuclear and space weapons.

We are convinced that there exist good opportunities for moving forward as regards the banning and non-proliferation of chemical weapons, the resolution of the issues discussed in Vienna and Stockholm. The Soviet delegations to the relevant fora have clear-cut instructions to work towards successful accomplishments there through joint efforts of all the participants in the talks. We proceed from the assumption that the American side, too, will act in the same direction.

I hope that the new major initiatives I outlined will be considered by you, Mr. President, with all the seriousness and favorably and that a positive response to them will follow.

I also would like to hope that agreements on the range of problems I addressed would become a weighty asset of our upcoming meeting with you. We are ready - at various levels - to work together for the sake of ensuring its success. Such a success, of course, will be possible if the striving for it is shown by practical deeds on both sides.

Sincerely,

M. GORBACHEV