

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 25, 1986

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

I have taken careful note of the proposals your negotiators made during the recent round in Geneva. I have also continued to ponder our discussion in Geneva last November and our subsequent correspondence, including your June 19th letter. As you may have guessed from our earlier exchanges, I heartily agree with the statement you made in your address to the last plenary session of the CPSU Central Committee about the need to "search for new approaches to make it possible to clear the road to a reduction of nuclear arms." That is certainly the most urgent task before us.

In Geneva, you expressed to me your concern that one side might acquire the capability to deliver a disarming first strike against the other by adding advanced strategic defenses to a large arsenal of offensive nuclear weapons. The United States does not possess the numbers of weapons needed to carry out an effective first strike; nor do we have any intention of acquiring such a capability. Quite the contrary, you well know my strong view that we both should immediately and significantly reduce the size of our nuclear arsenals. Nevertheless, since this remains a particular concern from your point of view, I agree that the "new approach" you have called for should address this concern directly. Neither side should have a first strike capability.

We have both focused on the issue of advanced systems of strategic defense in connection with a "new approach." Research and exploration on the feasibility of such advanced strategic defenses is a subject we have discussed together. I want to address it now, at the very outset of this letter, because I am aware that this is a matter of great

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concern to both of us. We both agree that neither side should deploy systems of strategic defense simply to augment and enhance its offensive capability. I have assured you that the United States has no interest in seeking unilateral advantage in this area. To ensure that neither of us is in a position to do so, we would be prepared immediately to conclude an agreement incorporating the following limits:

(a) While it may take longer to complete such research, both sides would confine themselves for five years, through 1991, to a program of research, development and testing, which is permitted by the ABM Treaty, to determine whether, in principle, advanced reliable systems of strategic defense are technically feasible. Such research and development could include testing necessary to establish feasibility. In the event either side wishes to conduct such testing, the other side shall have the right to observe the tests, in accord with mutually agreed procedures.

(b) Following this five year period, or at some later future time, either the United States or the Soviet Union may determine that advanced systems of strategic defense are technically feasible. Either party may then desire to proceed beyond research, development, and testing to deployment of an advanced strategic defense system. In anticipation that this may occur, we would be prepared to sign a treaty now which would require the party that decides to proceed to deploy an advanced strategic defense system to share the benefits of such a system with the other providing there is mutual agreement to eliminate the offensive ballistic missiles of both sides. Once a plan is offered to this end, the details of the sharing arrangement and the elimination of offensive ballistic missiles would be the subject of negotiations for a period of no more than two years.

(c) If, following the initial five year period and subsequent to two years after either side has offered a plan for such sharing and the associated mutual elimination of ballistic missiles, the United States and Soviet Union have not agreed on such a plan, either side will be free to deploy

unilaterally after six months notice of such intention is given to the other side.

You also continue to express concern that research on advanced defensive systems could lead to the deployment of spaceborne systems designed to inflict mass destruction on earth. This is certainly not our intention, and I do not agree that such an outcome is a necessary result of such research. We already are both party to agreements in force that address this subject. And, quite the contrary to your concern, U.S. research into advanced defenses is focused on finding ways to defend directly against offensive ballistic missiles that transit through space and are specifically designed to produce such mass destruction. However, in the context of the approach outlined above, I would also be prepared to have our representatives discuss additional assurances that would further ban deployment in space of advanced weapons capable of inflicting mass destruction on the surface of the earth.

I believe you would agree that significant commitments of this type with respect to strategic defenses would make sense only if made in conjunction with the implementation of immediate actions on both sides to begin moving toward our common goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Toward this goal, I believe we also share the view that the process must begin with radical and stabilizing reductions in the offensive nuclear arsenals of both the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the area of strategic offensive nuclear forces, we remain concerned about what we perceive as a first-strike capability against at least a portion of our retaliatory forces. This is a condition that I cannot ignore. I continue to hope that our efforts in pursuit of significant reductions in existing nuclear arsenals will help resolve this problem. I remain firmly committed to our agreement to seek the immediate implementation of the principle of a fifty percent reduction, on an equitable and verifiable basis, of existing strategic arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union. The central provision should be reduction of strategic ballistic missile warheads.

However, if necessary, I am prepared to consider initial reductions of a less sweeping nature as an interim measure. In this context, along with specific limits on ballistic missile warheads, we are prepared to limit long-range air-launched cruise missiles to below our current plan, and to limit the total number of ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers to a level in the range suggested by the Soviet side. Such reductions should take into account differences among systems in a manner which enhances stability. These reductions should begin as soon as possible and be completed within an agreed period of time.

At the same time, we could deal with the question of intermediate-range nuclear missiles by agreeing on the goal of eliminating this entire class of land-based, LRINF missiles world-wide, which is consistent with the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, and by agreeing on immediate steps that would lead toward this goal in either one step, or, if you prefer, in a series of steps. Your comments regarding intermediate range nuclear missile systems suggest to me that we were heading in the right direction last November when we endorsed the idea of an interim INF agreement. While an immediate agreement leading to the elimination of long range INF missile systems throughout the world would be the best outcome, an interim approach, on a global basis, may prove the most promising way to achieve early reductions.

Both sides have now put forward proposals whose ultimate result would be equality at zero for our two countries in long range INF missile warheads. If we can also agree that such equality is possible at a level above zero, we would take a major step towards the achievement of an INF agreement.

We should seek such an interim agreement without delay. I would be interested in any specific suggestions that you may wish to offer towards this end. It is important that reductions begin immediately and that significant progress be achieved within an agreed period of time.

Of course, I hope that we can also agree now that once we have achieved a fifty percent reduction in

the U.S. and Soviet strategic arsenals and make progress in eliminating long-range INF missiles, we would continue to pursue negotiations for further stabilizing reductions. The overall aim should be the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

I will be instructing our negotiators to present these proposals, along with appropriate implementing details, when the next round of negotiations begins in Geneva in September. I hope that your negotiators will be prepared to respond in a positive and constructive fashion so that we can proceed promptly to agreement.

Mr. General Secretary, I hope that you will notice that I have tried explicitly to take into account the concerns you expressed to me in Geneva and in our correspondence, as well as key elements of your recent proposals. I believe you will see that this approach provides assurance that neither country would be able to exploit research on strategic defense to acquire a disarming first-strike capability, or to deploy weapons of mass destruction in space. The framework I propose should permit us to proceed immediately to reduce existing nuclear arsenals as we have agreed is desirable, and to establish the conditions for proceeding to further reductions toward the goal of total elimination.

With respect to nuclear testing, as you know, we believe a safe, reliable and effective nuclear deterrent requires testing. Thus, while a ban on such testing remains a long-term U.S. objective, I cannot see how we could move immediately to a complete ban on such testing under present circumstances. We are, however, hopeful that with the initiation of discussions between our respective experts, we can make progress toward eliminating the verification uncertainties which currently preclude ratification of the treaties signed in 1974 and 1976.

Upon ratification of these treaties, and in association with a program to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons, we would be prepared to discuss ways to implement a parallel program to achieve progress in effectively limiting and ultimately eliminating nuclear testing in a step-by-step

fashion. The immediate next step needed is our agreement on verification procedures which would permit ratification of the 1974 and 1976 treaties. I would hope that the exchanges between our experts will permit us to take this step promptly.

With regard to conventional and chemical forces, I fully agree that the existing fora and channels should be used more actively. As you know, it is our view that the correction of conventional and other force imbalances is one of the vital requirements for achieving the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Confidential exchanges between our negotiators and experts, away from the glare of publicity, might be useful. I would suggest that such discussions could first profit by preliminary exchanges to clarify and focus the agenda of such meetings. When we have been able to make some preliminary progress on this point, we may wish to consider having our respective ambassadors to the negotiations in Vienna and Stockholm, and at the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, get together in capitals for bilateral exchanges.

It will be particularly important to ensure a successful conclusion of the Conference on Disarmament in Europe before the CSCE review conference convenes in Vienna. We are seriously considering your recent proposals for limiting conventional weapons in Europe. A more forthcoming response by the Warsaw Pact to the NATO proposal of last December in the MBFR negotiations in Vienna would be helpful.

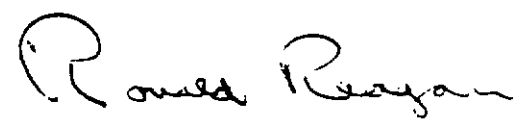
Regarding other issues, I agree with you that a number of possibilities exist for joint action. You have my earlier message regarding nuclear power plant safety, and I am pleased that our representatives are working actively in the International Atomic Energy Agency to develop more effective means of international cooperation. The exploration of space is also a potentially fruitful area for U.S.-Soviet cooperation, and I would propose that our specialists meet soon to discuss the possibilities of an agreement in this area.

Your proposal for organizing our work in the coming weeks seems sound to me. We have already agreed on

several meetings by specialists, and we look forward to consultations with one of your Deputy Foreign Ministers shortly. Should either of us consider other meetings by specialists desirable, we should be able to arrange these, as needed, through normal diplomatic channels. Thus, it would appear that Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze will have a well prepared agenda when they meet in September.

There are, of course, a number of important questions in addition to those I have mentioned in this letter which we must continue to address if we are to create the most propitious conditions for your visit to the United States. I believe we have now established a framework to deal with them, and I hope that we can move rapidly toward that "decisive turn" in relations between our countries which we both agree is overdue.

Sincerely yours,



His Excellency
 Mikhail S. Gorbachev
 General Secretary of the Central Committee
 of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
 The Kremlin
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