

Unofficial translation

*The below with
sentences are mine
RD*

Dear Mr. President,

I chose to send this letter with E.A. Shevardnadze, who is leaving for the United States to attend the session of the United Nations General Assembly. He is also planning, as has been agreed, to visit Washington and to discuss thoroughly the questions of interest to both sides.

After we received your letter of July 25, 1986, which has been given careful consideration, certain developments and incidents of a negative nature have taken place. This is yet another indication of how sensitive relations between the USSR and the United States are and how important it is for the top leaders of the two countries to keep them constantly within view and exert a stabilizing influence whenever the amplitude of their fluctuations becomes threatening.

Among such incidents - of the kind that have happened before and that, presumably, no one can be guaranteed against in the future - is the case of Zakharov and Daniloff. It requires a calm examination, investigation, and a search for mutually acceptable solutions. However, the US side has unduly dramatized that incident. A massive hostile

HIS EXCELLENCY
RONALD W. REAGAN,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA,
Washington, D.C.

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campaign has been launched against our country, which has been taken up at the higher levels of the United States administration and Congress. It is as if a pretext was deliberately sought to aggravate Soviet-American relations and to increase tension.

A question then arises: what about the atmosphere so needed for the normal course of negotiations and certainly for preparing and holding the summit meeting?

Since the Geneva meeting, the Soviet Union has been doing a great deal to ensure that the atmosphere is favorable and that negotiations make possible practical preparations for our new meeting.

On the major issues of limiting and reducing arms - nuclear, chemical and conventional - we have undertaken intensive efforts in a search for concrete solutions aimed at radically reducing the level of military confrontation in a context of equivalent security.

However, Mr. President, in the spirit of candidness which is coming to characterize our dialogue, I have to tell you that the overall character of US actions in international affairs, the positions on which its representatives insist at negotiations and consultations, and the content of your letter, all give rise to grave and disturbing thoughts. One has to conclude that in effect no start has been made in implementing the agreements we reached in Geneva on improving Soviet-American relations, accelerating the negotiations on nuclear and space arms, and renouncing attempts to secure military superiority. Both in letters and publicly we have made known our views as to the causes of such development, and for my part I do not want to repeat here our assessment of the situation.

First of all, a conclusion comes to mind: is the U.S. leadership at all prepared and really willing to seek agreements which would lead to the termination of the arms race and to genuine disarmament? It is a fact, after all, that despite vigorous efforts by the Soviet side we have still not moved an inch closer to an agreement on arms reduction.

Having studied your letter and the proposals contained therein, I began to think where they would lead in terms of seeking solutions.

First. You are proposing that we should agree that the ABM Treaty continue to exist for another 5 to 7 years, while activities to destroy it would go ahead. Thus, instead of making headway, there would be something that complicates even what has been achieved.

We have proposed that any work on anti-missile systems be confined to laboratories. In response, we witness attempts to justify the development of space weapons and their testing at test sites, and declarations, made in advance, of the intention to start in five to seven years deploying large-scale ABM systems and thus to nullify the Treaty. It is, of course, fully understood that we will not agree to that. We see here a bypass route to securing military superiority.

I trust, Mr. President, you recall our discussion of this subject in Geneva. At that time I said that should the United States rush with weapons into space, we would not help it. We would do our utmost to devalue such efforts and make them futile. You may rest assured that we have every means to achieve this and, should the need arise, we shall use those means.

We favor the strengthening of the ABM Treaty regime. This is precisely the reason for our position that work should be confined to laboratories and that the Treaty should be strictly observed for a period of up to 15 years. Should this be the case, it would be possible - and this is our proposal - to agree on significant reduction in strategic offensive arms. We are prepared to do this without delay, and it would thereby be demonstrated in practice that neither side seeks military superiority.

Second. As far as medium-range missiles are concerned the Soviet Union has proposed an optimum solution - complete elimination of U.S. and Soviet missiles in Europe. We have also agreed to an interim option - and that, without taking into account the modernization of British and French nuclear systems.

Following our well-known steps towards accommodation, the issue of verification would seem no longer to be an obstacle. Yet, the U.S. side has now "discovered" another obstacle, namely, Soviet medium-range missiles in Asia. Nevertheless, I believe that here, as well, a mutually acceptable formula can be found and I am ready to propose one, provided there is certainty that a willingness to resolve the issue of medium-range missiles in Europe does exist.

Third. The attitude of the United States to the moratorium on nuclear testing is a matter of deep disappointment - and not only in the Soviet Union. The United States administration is making every effort to avoid this key problem, to subsume it in talk of other issues.

You are aware of my views in this regard: the attitude of a country to the cessation of nuclear testing is the touchstone of its policy in the field of disarmament and international security - and, indeed, in safeguarding peace in general.

Arguments to the effect that nuclear testing is needed to ensure reliability of nuclear arsenals are untenable. Today there are other methods to ensure this, without nuclear explosions. After all, the United States does not test devices with yields in excess of 150-200 kilotons, although 70 per cent of the U.S. nuclear arsenal - and in our case the percentage is not smaller - consists of weapons with yields exceeding that threshold.

Modern science combined with a political willingness to agree to any adequate verification measures, including on-site inspections, ensure effective verification of the absence of nuclear explosions. So here too there is room for mutually acceptable solutions.

I have addressed specifically three questions which, in my opinion, are of greatest importance. They are the ones to which positive solutions are expected from the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. They are a matter of concern to the whole world, they are being discussed everywhere. Naturally, we are in favor of productive discussions of other major issues as well, such as reductions of armed forces and conventional armaments, a chemical weapons ban, regional problems, and humanitarian questions. Here too, common approaches and cooperation should be sought. Yet, the three questions mentioned above remain the key ones.

But in almost a year since Geneva there has been no movement on these issues. Upon reflection and after having given thought to your last letter I have come to the conclusion that the negotiations need a major impetus; otherwise they would continue to mark time while creating only the appearance of preparations for our meeting on American soil.

They will lead nowhere unless you and I intervene personally. I am convinced that we shall be able to find solutions, and I am prepared to discuss with you in a substantive way all possible approaches to them and identify such steps as would make it possible - after prompt follow-up by appropriate government agencies - to make my visit to the United States a really productive and fruitful one. This is exactly what the entire world is expecting from a second meeting between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States.

That is why an idea has come to my mind to suggest to you, Mr. President, that, in the very near future and setting aside all other matters, we have a quick one-on-one meeting, let us say in Iceland or in London, may be just for one day, to engage in a strictly confidential, private and frank discussion (possibly with only our foreign ministers present). The discussion - which would not be a detailed one, for its purpose and significance would be to demonstrate political will - would result in instructions to our respective agencies to draft agreements on two or three very specific questions, which you and I could sign during my visit to the United States.

I look forward to your early reply.

Respectfully,

M. GORBACHEV

September 15, 1986