

Gorbachev Message no

Unofficial translation

President Reagan.

28/9. CDD

Return to
Charles Powell

Dear Mr. President,

I would like to communicate some thoughts and considerations in continuation of the correspondence between us and specifically with a view to our forthcoming personal meeting.

I assume that both of us take this meeting very seriously and are thoroughly preparing for it. The range of problems which we are to discuss has been fairly clearly recognized. They rival each other in their importance.

Sure, the distinctions between our two countries are not minor and our approaches to a number of matters of principle are different. That is true. But at the same time the reality is such that our nations have to coexist whether we like each other or not. If things ever come to a military collision that would entail catastrophe for our countries, for the world as a whole. Judging by what you have said, Mr. President, you also accept the impermissibility of military collision between the USSR and the USA.

Since that is so, in other words, if preventing nuclear war, removing military threat is our mutual and, for that matter dominant interest, it is imperative, we believe, to use it as the main lever which can help to bring cardinal changes into the nature of the relationship between our nations, to make it constructive, stable and thus contribute

His Excellency
Ronald Reagan
President of the United
States of America

to the improvement of the world situation in general. It is this central component of our relations that should be put to work in the period left before the November meeting, during the summit itself and afterwards.

There, we are convinced, lie considerable opportunities. My meeting with you may serve as a potent catalyst for their realization. As it seems, we could indeed reach a clear mutual understanding on the impermissibility of nuclear war, on the fact that there could be no winners in such war, we could resolutely speak out against seeking a military superiority, against attempts to infringe upon the legitimate security interests of the other side.

At the same time we are convinced that a mutual understanding of this kind should be organically complemented by clearly expressed intentions of the sides to take actions of material nature in terms of the limitation and reduction of weapons, of terminating the arms race on Earth and preventing it in space.

It is such an understanding that would be an expression of the determination of the sides to act in the direction of removing the military threat. Given an agreement on this central issue it would be easier for us, I think, to find mutual understanding and solutions of other problems.

What specific measures should get priorities? Naturally those relating to the solution of the complex of questions concerning nuclear and space arms. An agreement on non-militarisation of space is the only road to very radical reductions of nuclear arms. We favour to follow this road

unflinchingly and are determined to search for mutually acceptable solutions. I think that in this field both sides should act energetically without postponing decisions. I would like to count upon having obtained some positive results by the time of our meeting with you.

In connection with certain provisions contained in your letter of the 27th of July I would note that our attitude to the American programme of the development of strike space weapons and a large-scale anti-ballistic missile system we have made explicit on several occasions. That opinion is based not on emotions or personal biases but on facts and realistic assessments. I would stress once again--the implementation of this programme would not solve the problem of nuclear arms, it will only aggravate it and at that with most negative consequences for the whole process of the limitation and reduction of nuclear arms.

On the other hand, quite a lot could be done through parallel or joint efforts of our countries in order to slow down and bring to a halt the arms race above all in its main, nuclear field. It is indeed for this and no other purpose that we made a number of unilateral steps of practical nature.

Mr. President, both you and I understand perfectly well the importance of conducting nuclear explosions from the point of view of the effectiveness of existing nuclear weapons and the development of their new types. Consequently the termination of nuclear tests would act in the opposite direction. This is what we were guided by in making our decision to stop any

nuclear explosions and appealing to the USA to join us in this. Look at the matter unbiasedly. Now it is quite clear that at the present level of nuclear arms our countries possess, a mutual termination of nuclear tests would not hurt the security of either of them.

Therefore if there is a true intention to move to halting the arms race, then the mutual moratorium cannot raise objections, while the benefit it brings could be great. But the continuation of nuclear tests--though in the presence of somebody's observers--would be nothing else but the same arms race. The US still has time to take the right decision. Imagine how much it would mean. And not only for Soviet-American relations.

However the moratorium on nuclear tests is, of course, not yet a radical solution to the problem of preventing nuclear war.

For that it is necessary to solve the whole complex of interrelated matters which are the subject of the talks between our delegations in Geneva.

It is quite obvious that in the final run the outcome of these talks will decisively determine whether we shall succeed in stopping the arms race, solving the task of eliminating nuclear weapons as such. Regrettably the state of affairs at the Geneva talks gives rise to serious alarm.

We have thoroughly and from every point studied once again what could be done there. And I want to propose to you the following formula: the two sides agree to ban completely strike space weapons and to reduce really radically, say, by 50 percent their relevant nuclear arms.

In other words, we propose a practical solution of the tasks which were agreed upon as objectives of the Geneva negotiation--not only would the nuclear arms race be terminated, but also drastically reduced would be the level of nuclear countervalance, and at the same time an arms race in space would be prevented. As a result the strategic stability would be strengthened multifold, mutual confidence would grow significantly. Such a step by the USSR and the USA would be, I believe, an incentive for other powers possessing nuclear arms to participate in nuclear disarmament, which you pointed out as important in one of your letters.

We view things realistically and realise that such a radical solution would require time and efforts. Nonetheless we are convinced that this problem can be solved. For this, first of all, a coincidence in principle of political approaches is needed. And, second, given such a coincidence, it is important to agree on practical measures which facilitate the achievement of these goals, including a halt in the development of strike space weapons and a freeze on nuclear arsenals at their present quantitative levels with a prohibition of the development of new kinds and types of nuclear weapons.

Alongside with that major practical measures to be taken could include: making non-operational and dismantling of an agreed number of strategic weapons of the sides as well as the mutual undertaking to refrain from the deployment of any nuclear weapons in the countries which are now nuclear-free, and not to increase the stock of nuclear weapons and not to replace them by new ones in the countries where such weapons are deployed.

Naturally, the issue of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe also requires solution. I would like to emphasize once again: the Soviet Union favours its radical solution whereby, as we proposed in Geneva, the USSR would retain in the European zone not more weapons of this type, counting the warheads, than Britain and France have.

Our delegation at the Geneva negotiation has due instructions, and it intends to present in the nearest future our specific proposals on this whole range of issues and to give exhaustive clarifications. We count on the positive reaction of the American side and hope that it will be possible to reach certain results already at the present round of talks.

Meaningful practical steps could and should be taken in the field of confidence-building and military measures aimed at easing tensions. I have in mind, in particular, that our two countries together with other participants of the Stockholm Conference should make a maximum effort to turn the work of the Conference to a successful completion. Such an opportunity, as it seems, has now emerged. I would like to repeat what has already been said by our Minister of Foreign Affairs to the US Secretary of State--we are in favour of making the subject matter of the Stockholm Conference an asset at our meeting with you.

It largely depends on our two countries if an impetus is given to the Vienna talks. During the meeting in Helsinki the Secretary of State promised that the American side would once again closely look at the possibility of initial reduction of Soviet and American troops in Central Europe as we have

proposed. I am sure that such an agreement would make a favourable impact on the development of the all-European process as well. I see no reasons why it should not be in the interests of the USA.

Proposing practical measures of arms limitation and disarmament we, of course, have in mind that they should be accompanied by relevant agreed verification procedures. In some cases it would be national technical means, in other cases, when it is really necessary, they could be used in conjunction with bilateral and international procedures. We would listen with interest to the proposals of the American side on this score. The main thing is for both sides to be ready to act in constructive direction in order to build up useful basis, including, if possible, the one for the summit meeting.

Mr. President, for obvious reasons I payed particular attention to central issues facing our countries. But of course we do not belittle the importance of regional problems and bilateral matters. I assume that these questions will be thoroughly discussed by E.A. Shevardnadze and G. Shultz with a view to bringing closer our positions and, better still, finding wherever possible practical solutions.

We hope that in the course of the meetings which our Minister of Foreign Affairs will have with you and the Secretary of State, as well as through active work at the Geneva talks, in Stockholm, in Vienna, by exchanges in diplomatic channels it will be possible in the time left before our meeting with you to attain such a situation that the meeting will be really productive.

We believe that the outcome of this preparatory work as well as the results of our discussions with you at the meeting itself could be incorporated in the relevant joint document. If you agree, it would be worthwhile, I think, to ask our Ministers to figure out how the work over such final document could be best organized.

Sincerely yours,

M. GORBACHEV

12 September 1985