

March 7, 1986

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I appreciate your message of October 24, in which you and the other signatories of the New Delhi Declaration expressed hope for progress during my November 19-21 meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev. While the talks were, of course, bilateral, I went to Geneva deeply conscious of their implications for the future of all mankind.

I believe the Geneva discussions have set the right course, and that we have strengthened the prospects for peace, stability, and arms control. I was particularly pleased that you were able to meet with my envoy, Assistant Secretary of State Murphy, for an in-depth review of all aspects of the Geneva talks. As you know, I have consistently said that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. At Geneva Mr. Gorbachev joined me in affirming this cardinal principle. He also joined in supporting my firmly held view that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union should seek military superiority over the other. While neither of us underestimates our continuing differences, we agreed to work hard to resolve problems and build a more constructive long-term relationship. Our agreement to a process of intensified dialogue at all levels, including summit meetings in Washington and Moscow, will provide a framework for those efforts.

Prior to my meeting with Mr. Gorbachev, I authorized the presentation of significant new U.S. arms control proposals in all three areas under consideration in Geneva. Those proposals built on aspects of the counterproposals the Soviet Union had advanced in the fall, and were designed to open the path to rapid progress in the negotiations. As a result of those U.S. proposals, it was possible at the Geneva meeting to agree on the principle of 50 percent reductions in offensive nuclear arms, the goal of a separate interim agreement on intermediate-range nuclear forces, and on the need to accelerate work to these ends. Now that the negotiations have reconvened, the United States will be working to make rapid progress towards fair agreements that will improve international security and stability as well as achieve deep, verifiable and equitable reductions in offensive nuclear arms. These are priority goals that reflect the interests of people everywhere.

General Secretary Gorbachev and I reaffirmed our commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, including our commitment to pursue negotiations in good faith on matters of nuclear

arms limitation and disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the treaty. In addition, we reaffirmed our interest in strengthening the non-proliferation regime, among other things by enlarging its membership.

If the world is eventually to be freed of the dangers of nuclear weapons, we must also continue to explore the possibilities of defenses against nuclear attack. In Geneva I made clear to General Secretary Gorbachev my commitment to the strategic defense initiative (SDI) in which we are examining whether it is possible to develop technologies that can protect people by defending them, rather than by threatening to avenge them. I stressed that our efforts in this area are in full compliance with international agreements, including the ABM Treaty. Also, as part of our "open laboratories" initiative, I have offered to permit Soviet experts to see first hand that the SDI does not involve offensive weapons. I hope that this offer will be accepted. It remains on the table.

There is another area where I have advanced far-reaching proposals for verification which have yet to be accepted. That is in the field of nuclear testing, which I know is a major concern of yours. As you note in your letter, the issue of verification has long been a difficult one. My position on verification is well known. Simply put, the United States has learned through experience to be cautious regarding uninspected and unverifiable nuclear testing moratoria. The Soviet Union broke a nuclear testing moratorium a quarter of a century ago with the most intensive nuclear test series in history--some 40 explosions over a period of several weeks. In speaking of this, President Kennedy said, quote we know now enough about broken negotiations, secret preparations, and the advantages gained from a long test series never to offer again an uninspected moratorium. unquote. Since then, the Soviets on several occasions have violated the 1963 limited test ban treaty and have likely violated the 1974 threshold test ban treaty.

While we are actively investigating technologies that may one day make us less dependent on offensive nuclear weapons for our security, nuclear weapons will remain for the foreseeable future the key element of our deterrent. In such a situation, where both the U.S. and our allies must rely upon nuclear weapons to deter aggression, nuclear testing will continue to be required.

Nonetheless, a comprehensive test ban remains a long-term objective of the United States in the context of achieving broad, deep, and verifiable arms reductions, substantially

3

improved verification capabilities, expanded confidence building measures, greater balance in conventional forces, and at a time when a nuclear deterrent is no longer as essential an element as currently for international security and stability. The United States is currently involved in discussion with the Soviet Union in most of these areas.

The United States places the highest priority in the nuclear testing area on finding ways to enhance the means of verification of the threshold test ban treaty and the peaceful nuclear explosions treaty. I proposed over a year ago that the United States and the Soviet Union find a way for Soviet experts to come to the U.S. nuclear test site and for ours to go to theirs to measure directly the yields of tests of nuclear weapons. When this initiative was not accepted, I made a further proposal last summer, inviting the Soviet Union to send experts to the U.S. test site to measure the yield of a U.S. test with any instrumentation devices they deemed necessary. There was no requirement for a reciprocal U.S. visit. Unfortunately, that proposal has also not been accepted. It, too, remains on the table.

I very much welcome your assistance and support in the vital effort to create a safer world. I feel my talks in Geneva with General Secretary Gorbachev encouraged continuing dialogue, which represents a good beginning in building a more constructive U.S.-Soviet relationship not just involving arms control but also important questions of regional security, human rights, and bilateral issues.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

His Excellency
Rajiv Gandhi
Prime Minister of India
New Delhi

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