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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 January 1986

MS

Prime Minister
A very thorough &
useful analysis of
Gorbachev's proposals

Dear Charles,

Gorbachev Proposals on Arms Control

In my letter of 15 January, I said we would let you have a fuller assessment of the proposals contained in Gorbachev's message to the Prime Minister of that date, and their implication for current arms control negotiations. Gorbachev set out the proposals in rather more detail during a TV interview, also on 15 January. Individually tailored messages were sent to President Reagan, President Mitterrand and the Prime Minister. I enclose a revised FCO translation of the letter to Mrs Thatcher.

The following general points are worth making about the latest Soviet package:

- (a) It is clearly intended to be a major propaganda initiative - timed, on the eve of the fourth round at Geneva, to put the West on the defensive.
- (b) Gorbachev gives a 15-year timetable for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, thereby picking up President Reagan's vision of a nuclear-free world, but he has made it all conditional on the complete renunciation of space weapons. The idea of the elimination of nuclear weapons by the end of the century will be attractive to much public and political opinion. It echoes initiatives by leading non-aligned nations.
- (c) Gorbachev's approach, with its emphasis on nuclear disarmament, is incompatible with NATO's current strategy of deterrence based on flexible response. The references to conventional arms control are muted and much less ambitious.

The Russian positions on strategic systems and space (SDI) remain unchanged; the link between strategic reductions and renunciation of space weapons is re-emphasised. It remains unclear whether any SDI research is permitted; the most recent Soviet statements indicate that only civil research is acceptable. Linkage between renouncing the SDI and INF cuts may also be implied.

/ On INF,



On INF, a zero-zero solution is proposed, but it is limited to Europe. SS20s in the East are not included. The US and NATO have always insisted on global balance; zero-zero on a global basis is NATO's preferred solution, even though there are serious doubts about the military implications. A more significant shift in the Soviet INF position is the dropping of their demand for compensation for UK/French forces, although only as part of their conditional package offer. The conditions include no increase in British (or French) current forces, and the non-transfer of US missiles. This would prevent Britain acquiring Trident. (The proposals envisage formal British involvement in nuclear arms control negotiations from 1990 onwards.) Gorbachev thereby retains the scope for pressure on Britain and France as the "obstacles" to an INF agreement.

Further points to note are:

- (i) The proposals for a continued moratorium on nuclear testing (preferably to include the UK) and resumption of the trilateral CTB negotiations will appeal to those opposed to testing. They are emphasised in the message to the Prime Minister; the Russians are evidently aware of the differences between the British and the American positions and the vulnerability of the former.
- (ii) The emphasis given to on-site inspection, although couched in general terms, might be built on.
- (iii) In particular, there may now be some greater scope for progress at the separate Geneva negotiations on CW.
- (iv) There is little about conventional forces, although the relatively more forthcoming references to MBFR and CDE (in Gorbachev's TV interview but not in his message to the Prime Minister) may be a hint of Soviet readiness to make some limited progress at Vienna and Stockholm.

The substantive changes in Soviet arms control policy may well turn out, when tested across the negotiating table, to be minimal. The Gorbachev proposals are surrounded by a web of pre-conditions, of which renunciation of space weapons is the foremost. There would be significant strategic implications in being drawn down the path he advocates. Nonetheless, it can only be welcome that the Russians have begun to show flexibility on at least some of the issues which they had previously claimed to be sticking points, eg compensation for British and French nuclear weapons. This is in contrast to the total immobility of the Brezhnev era, when the Western side alone showed flexibility. The extent of genuine Soviet willingness to compromise should now be thoroughly tested in the various negotiations mentioned by Gorbachev.

/ The new

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The new proposals will, however, provide fresh opportunities for the Russians to drive wedges between the Allies. The emphasis in Gorbachev's message to the Prime Minister, and his public statements, on the special concern of Europe to see arms control succeed indicates that he will not be slow to pursue these. There remains a potential rift between the US and Western Europe over SDI, if the Administration stay adamantly wedded to their present position but the Europeans become increasingly attracted to successive Soviet offers of nuclear reductions. On third country forces, we and the French could conceivably find ourselves in difficulties with both our other European partners and the Americans, if the new Soviet preconditions for an INF agreement are maintained.

President Reagan's immediate response has been well judged - "welcome, careful study with allies needed, some elements unchanged but others may be constructive". It accords with the line proposed in my letter of 15 January. Alliance coordination of a more detailed response will be important and we are comparing notes with our close allies. Initial American reactions are similar to ours (Washington telegram No 153 - enclosed). The Foreign Secretary's meeting with Dumas and the Prime Minister's with President Mitterrand will provide occasions for discussion with the French. Meanwhile the current Government line of support for concrete progress in Geneva and on the conditions which would need to be met before the UK reviewed its position on British nuclear weapons and arms control are an adequate basis for public comment.

When Ryzhov saw the Foreign Secretary on 20 January he made it clear that the Russians are looking for a considered and serious response, rather than a quick one. The Foreign Secretary will offer advice once a decision has been made on a message to President Reagan, a draft for which he will be considering next week.

In case it is needed, I enclose a copy of our detailed commentary on the main elements of the Soviet proposals; it is being revised as further information is received.

I am copying this letter to Michael Stark in the Cabinet Office and Richard Mottram in the MOD.

Yours ever,
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(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary

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GORBACHEV'S LETTER OF 14 JANUARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER

NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

First Phase: To last 5-8 years

- US/Soviet reductions of "strategic" weapons (defined as those capable of striking each other's territory) on basis of existing Soviet proposals, ie 50% reduction in launchers, no more than 6,000 nuclear charges on each side.
- Reductions contingent on mutual renunciation of development, testing and deployment of space weapons.
- US and Soviet Union to reduce "medium range" ballistic and cruise missiles in Europe to zero.
- Contingent on no increase in UK/French forces. US would also be prevented from supplying missiles to other countries.
- US and Soviet Union to stop nuclear testing.

Second Phase: 5-7 years from 1990

- Other nuclear weapon states to join process, starting with freeze [although UK/French systems would already be quantitatively frozen in Phase 1], and no deployments in third countries.
- US/Soviet reductions would continue. Once the 50% reductions had been completed, all nuclear powers would eliminate "tactical" weapons, ie less than 1,000 km range.
- Elimination of US and Soviet "medium range" systems (presumably aircraft) to continue.
- A ban on space weapons to include all leading industrial powers.



- All nuclear powers to stop testing.

- A ban on the development of non-nuclear weapons based on new physical principles.

Third Phase: To begin no later than 1995

- Elimination of all nuclear weapons completed before 2000. A "universal agreement" that such weapons should never re-appear.

- Agreement on destruction procedure and verification, including on-site inspection.

Comment

1. The inconsistencies in the Soviet proposals tabled in October remain: their unacceptable "strategic" definition is retained and would include all US systems in range of the Soviet Union. At the same time they are proposing a zero-zero solution to INF in Europe and appear to have dropped the demand for US forward based systems, including carrier-borne aircraft, to be covered although there is no reference to the weapons these aircraft carry. This will need to be clarified. There is no reference to an "interim" INF agreement (mentioned in the joint statement at Geneva) nor to SS20s in Soviet Asia, in contrast to the US insistence on global limits covering LRINF missiles.

2. UK/French forces would be frozen at existing levels in Phase 1. This would preclude modernisation, including UK Trident. But there is no reference to "compensation" or to UK/French forces being "counted in". Gorbachev's TV interview also omitted this point. This marks a major shift in the Soviet position since the demand for compensation/counting in has been an unwavering condition until now. The ban on US transfer of missiles to third parties is presumably designed to catch both UK Trident and US LRINF deployments. There would also be a prohibition at the second stage on the deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of third countries by any nuclear power. This would affect UK TNW deployments in the FRG.

3. The proposal for reductions to include all shorter range nuclear systems under 1,000 km is new but is a necessary element in the concept of complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union failed to produce detailed proposals on shorter-range INF during the 1982/83 INF talks and so far at Geneva has not responded to general US statements on the need to prevent circumvention of the main provisions of an INF agreement. Even now the category is set in the second rather than the first phase of the Soviet plan.

4. The message makes clear at two points that reductions in nuclear weapons remain firmly conditional on a ban on the development, testing and deployment of space weapons. This is fully consistent with Soviet statements since the Summit that SDI is the key to arms control. Research activities are not specifically mentioned and the Russians may therefore be prepared to concede that these should continue on the basis of American agreement not to go beyond clearly defined permissible limits. The reference to "open laboratories" inspections may support this interpretation. This is the firmest statement yet that the Russians are prepared to accept open laboratories, which was hinted at obliquely during Mr Gorbachev's press conference after the Geneva Summit. But President Reagan appears to see his proposal as a means of demonstrating that SDI research is compliant with treaty obligations, whereas the Russians have previously seen open laboratories as a way of demonstrating that such research is not proceeding.

5. A US/Soviet testing moratorium "from the very beginning" has become a central part of the Soviet scheme.

6. The proposed ban in phase two on weapons based on new physical principles is an implicit admission that the ABM Treaty needs to be supplemented even after SDI has been stopped: it also revives a long standing Soviet proposal for a ban on new "weapons of mass destruction".

NUCLEAR TESTING/CTB

- The Soviet moratorium which expired on 31 December to be extended by three months. It would remain in force thereafter if US



also joined in.

- British Government to reconsider position on testing in accordance with its declared aim of limiting/reducing nuclear weapons. UK doubts (expressed in Prime Minister's letter of 10 September to Gorbachev) about adequate verification could be overcome, if necessary by on-site inspection.
- Immediate resumption (in January 1986) of trilateral CTB negotiations.
- Immediate start of multilateral negotiations on test ban involving all nuclear weapon states at CD in Geneva.

Comment

The announcement of the extension of the Soviet moratorium for three months with the assurance that it will continue if the US also cease testing is presumably designed to pin responsibility for a resumption of Soviet testing squarely on the US. The additional but less precise call for the UK (and other nuclear weapon states) to join the moratorium (in contrast to the December appeal, which was directed to the US) is calculated to appeal to anti-testing sentiments here. But it was to be expected that the Soviet Union would continue to make what propaganda mileage it could out of this issue. As with the December appeal for extending the moratorium, the message makes verification arrangements dependent on prior adherence to the moratorium, thereby (once again) putting the cart before the horse. The proposed verification arrangements - the most important of them (on-site inspection) is only allowed "where necessary" - add nothing to earlier proposals. The appeal for an immediate resumption of CTB negotiations harks back to the December appeal, while the proposal to involve the CD machinery and to follow up a suggestion for extending the partial test ban treaty to underground explosions is designed to attract neutral and non-aligned sympathies. Negotiations at the CD are unacceptable to both the UK and the Americans.



SDI PARTICIPATION

- Appeal to UK to reconsider participation.

Comment

This repeats the appeal made to Sir B Cartledge on 23 December and is likely to have been made pro forma.

CW

- Soviet Union will work for complete elimination of CW, and production facilities through negotiations at CD. Verification to include on-site inspection. Urge UK to make own proposals given interest in CW. Need to cover non-proliferation/non-transfer.

Comment

1. The commitment to a total ban and acceptance of international on-site verification of destruction of CW stocks are already part of the Soviet position at Geneva. The reference to non-deployment of CW on the territory of other states is probably directed against US stocks (including possible deployment of binaries) in the FRG; but it is not in terms of Soviet support for a CW free zone in Europe. There is no direct reference to US CW modernisation.
2. Gorbachev's readiness to declare CW production facilities, and allow international inspection of their destruction is new. There were hints of Soviet movement in this direction at Geneva last October; but this clear statement will provide an opportunity to explore whether the Soviet Union can accept verification in this area on terms which will satisfy the West.
3. There is silence on the most crucial verification issue, that of challenge inspection; and on the other issue to which the West attaches importance, verification that CW agents are not being produced in the civil chemical industry. On the latter point, however, the Soviet commitment to work towards the "liquidation of



the industrial base" for CW production (although, in context, a reference to military facilities) will provide useful further leverage to press the Russians to allow inspection of their civil industry.

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS/FORCES

- To be subject of agreed reductions. MBFR/CDE agreements should mark the beginning of this process.

Comment

Relegated to tail-end of the message, reflecting their subordinate position in Soviet arms control policy. The trend of 'positive' statements by the East on the Western MBFR proposal of 5 December is continued. The TV interview of 15 January is more specific referring to 'reasonable verification' through permanent entry points. This represents a slight advance on the Eastern proposal of 14 February 1985 (which spoke of 'temporary' entry points), but it remains a long way from the Western requirements on verification. On CDE, the message is again in line with recent statements. The TV interview clouds what might appear to be concession by ambiguities. Postponement of notification of independent naval activities, which NATO considers to be excluded by the Mandate, to the next session (post-Vienna?) would be traded for Western acceptance of notification of air activities (which raise considerable problems of verification). And reference to the need to reduce the levels of forces notifiable under the Helsinki's provisions can be seen either in terms of lowering the threshold for notification (which NATO is working for) or limits (constraints) on the size of manoeuvres (which raises a fundamental problem).

REGIONAL CONFLICTS

- Rejection of attempt to make implementation of arms control conditional on solution of regional conflicts. Soviet aim to



resolve these conflicts by collective efforts based on just principles.

Comment

1. This passage confirms the Soviet approach at the time of the Summit, that disarmament is the central problem and that other issues must be tackled separately. This is different from the Western emphasis on the equal importance of discussing regional questions and human rights, albeit without imposing any rigid linkage. It is clear that the USSR is continuing its effort to keep arms control at the centre of the East/West agenda. They are more defensive on the other issues, and undoubtedly have some sympathy in Western Europe for their approach.

Defence Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

17 January 1986

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GORBACHEV'S LETTER OF 14 JANUARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER (REVISED FCO TRANSLATION)

Dear Madame Prime Minister

Continuing the established practice of exchanging messages, which both of us consider useful, I would like to share with you some thoughts on the present complex phase of developments in the world and the solution of topical problems of preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on Earth.

In your letter of the 7 of November 1985 you referred to the vital importance of arms control. I believe we have come to a common understanding that an end should be put to the unrestrained arms race that threatens the very existence of mankind.

We are firmly convinced that the time has come to take considered, responsible decisions, and that it is high time to move, at long last, from words to deeds. The situation in the world is far too serious to put off indefinitely measures to rectify it. The key issue of today is whether mankind will pursue the road to survival or the road to mutual destruction. In our opinion the answer to this question is obvious. Mankind should not be disappointed in its hopes with which it entered the new year, a year proclaimed by the UN as the International Year of Peace.

I would like to inform you that the Soviet leadership has taken a decision regarding a number of major foreign policy initiatives of a principled nature. They are intended to promote to the maximum extent possible an improvement in the international situation. The most important among them is a concrete programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, a programme devised for a precisely defined period of time.

We propose, acting in a phased and sequential manner, to carry out and to complete the process of ridding the Earth of nuclear weapons within the next 15 years.

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How in practical terms do we see the process of reducing nuclear arms - both launchers and nuclear charges - up to their complete elimination?

The first phase. This lasts approximately 5-8 years. During this period the USSR and the USA reduce by half their nuclear armaments capable of reaching each other's territory. On such launchers remaining to them no more than 6,000 charges will be left.

It goes without saying that such a reduction is to take place on the basis of a mutual renunciation by the USSR and the USA of the creation, testing and deployment of strike space weapons. As the Soviet Union has warned more than once, the creation of space weapons will demolish hopes for a reduction of the nuclear arms on Earth.

A radical solution concerning medium-range missiles in Europe is proposed by the Soviet Union. We are in favour of eliminating, already in a first phase, the medium-range missiles of the USSR and the USA in the European zone - ballistic and cruise - as a first step on the way to ridding the European continent of nuclear weapons. In doing, in order to ensure a fair solution, the United States would have to undertake the obligation not to supply their strategic and medium-range missiles to other countries. We also proceed from the assumption that Britain and France - which are NATO nuclear powers - will not build-up their own corresponding nuclear armaments.

In our opinion it is necessary from the very outset that the USSR and the USA should agree to stop any nuclear explosions and appeal to other states to join such a moratorium at the earliest possible date. I shall return later to this issue.

The second phase. This should start not later than 1990 and last for 5-7 years. Britain, France and China begin joining in nuclear disarmament. Initially they could undertake an obligation to freeze all of their nuclear armaments and also not to have them on the territories of the third countries.

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The USSR and the USA continue the reductions on which they have reached agreement during the first phase, undertake further measures for the elimination of their medium-range nuclear armaments, and freeze their tactical nuclear systems.

After the USSR and the USA complete the 50% reduction of their corresponding armaments, a further radical step is undertaken by all the nuclear powers - they eliminate tactical nuclear weapons, ie systems with a range of up to 1000 km.

At this stage the Soviet/American agreement on a strike space weapons ban would have to become a multilateral one, with the mandatory participation of the leading industrial powers.

All nuclear powers would have ceased nuclear tests.

A ban would have been introduced on the creation of non-nuclear armaments based on new physical principles, that in their destructive power approach nuclear or other means of mass destruction.

Not later than 1995 a third phase begins. During this phase the elimination of all nuclear armaments still remaining is completed. Before the end of 1999 there will be no nuclear weapons left on Earth. A universal agreement is worked out that such weapons should never reappear.

The intention is that special procedures will be worked out for the destruction of nuclear weapons, and also for the dismantling, conversion or destruction of their launchers. In this framework agreement will be reached on the quantities of weapons which are to be destroyed at each stage, on the sites at which they will be destroyed, etc.

Verification of the armaments being destroyed or limited would be carried out by national technical means as well as by on-site inspections. The USSR is prepared to negotiate agreement on any other additional verification measures.

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We appeal to all states, and in the first place to nuclear states, including of course Great Britain, to support the programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons before the year 2000, and to pool efforts in its realisation. We are dealing with a problem of global significance for mankind, and it can and should be solved only by concerted efforts. The sooner this programme begins to be translated into practical actions, the greater will be the gain for all.

I can inform you that the Soviet Union, guided by the desire to undertake the first practical step in the context of the programme of nuclear disarmament, has taken a further important decision. We are extending for three months our unilateral moratorium on any nuclear explosions, which expired on 31 December 1985. This moratorium will continue to remain in force thereafter if the USA, for its part, also ceases nuclear tests. We are once again proposing that the United States join in this undertaking. That is a first priority task. The reduction of nuclear arsenals by itself, without a ban on nuclear weapon tests, does not provide a way out of the nuclear threat dilemma, since the remainder of those arsenals is modernised, and the possibility remains of creating even more refined and more deadly nuclear weapons and of trying out new types of them at testing sites.

Our appeal is for embarking on the path of sensible decisions, and we hope that the British Government will once more consider its position in connection with this matter. It is a matter of initiating a process of "killing off" nuclear arsenals, and of stopping their up-grading. If the USSR and the USA were to do this, the prospects for reaching agreements on limitations and reductions of nuclear armaments would, undoubtedly improve and confidence would be strengthened. All this, as I understand it, would correspond with the declared aims of the British Government's policies.

Certain doubts as to the possibility of providing the necessary verification have been voiced in the West in connection with the problem of stopping nuclear tests. You also raised this point in your letter of September last. In our view there are no grounds for such doubts. If the USA accepts the cessation of all nuclear

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explosions on a mutual basis, then due verification of observance of the moratorium will be fully ensured through national technical means as well as by international procedures and, where necessary, by on-site inspections. We are interested in reliable verification no less and maybe even more than the West. Thus agreement on this matter is quite realistic.

I think that time has come to resume the previously held negotiations between the USSR, Britain and the USA on the complete and universal prohibition of nuclear tests. We recall and appreciate the efforts of Great Britain aimed at working out and concluding the treaty which banned testing in three environments and believe that the British contribution to achieving an agreement on the complete and universal prohibition of tests could be no less substantial. We are in favour of the trilateral negotiations beginning without delay, this very month, and counting on a positive response to our proposal from the British Government. We also take into consideration the fact that you, Madame Prime Minister, recognise that a corresponding treaty would be in the security interests of all parties and would be an important contribution to restraining the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We are also ready for an immediate start to multilateral negotiations, in which all nuclear powers would take part, on the banning of tests within the framework of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. The Soviet Union also agrees with the proposal of the non-aligned countries to hold consultations in order to extend the scope for the treaty on the prohibition of the nuclear weapons test in three environments to cover underground test.

To fulfil the programme for the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons it is necessary, in our view, to bring into play the entire existing structure of negotiations and to ensure maximum efficiency in the mechanisms of disarmament.

We know that you have spoken favourably of the results of the meeting in Geneva between the leaders of the USSR and the USA at which the objective of the Soviet/American negotiations on nuclear and space arms was confirmed, namely, the prevention of an arms race

in space and its termination on Earth, and where the mutual aspiration was expressed to accelerate work at these negotiations. In this connection, I would like to emphasise the importance of solving a cardinal problem, that of banning strike space armaments. Such armaments must not be stationed in space, nor must they be created. Moreover, let the strictest verification be established in this matter, including the opening for inspection of the relevant laboratories.

We have already expressed our principled assessment of Britain's joining the US "Strategic Defence Initiative". I would like to hope that you will once again most seriously reconsider this question. The road for arms getting into space should be securely closed off. This is a task not only for the participants in negotiations on nuclear and space armaments in Geneva, but for all states interested in ensuring international peace and security.

The present situation in Europe gives rise to particular concern. The presence here of large opposing missile groupings and the possibility of using European territory for launching first-strike nuclear missiles, with all the ensuing consequences, is an extremely abnormal situation. It cannot be satisfactory primarily for all those living in Europe, including yourselves and us.

In the year that has just begun there is a prospect of achieving progress also in the negotiations on chemical weapons and on other problems under discussion in the framework of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. The Soviet Union will actively work towards finding a solution to the problem of the complete elimination of chemical weapons and of the industrial base for their production. We are prepared to ensure timely announcement of the locations for enterprises producing chemical weapons and the cessation of its production, to start working out procedures for the destruction of the relevant production facilities, and also to begin, soon after the Convention enters in force, the elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles. All this would take place under strict control, including international on-site inspections.

Taking into account the interest shown by Great Britain in this problem one would like to see similar constructive efforts from the British delegation as well. We also counting on finding points of convergence with Britain on the issues of non-proliferation of chemical weapons, their non-transfer to anyone whatsoever, and their non-stationing on the territory of other states.

Together with the removal of weapons of mass destruction from the arsenals of states, the Soviet Union propose that conventional weapons and armed forces should be the subject of agreed reductions.

Agreements at the Vienna negotiations and at the Stockholm Conference could serve as a signal for the start of movement in this direction. Approaches to such agreements appear to have begun taking shape. It is important now not to miss these opportunities and to embody them in concrete decisions. I hope that Britain will assist in this.

I consider it necessary to draw your attention to yet another urgent and important question. We object resolutely to attempts to make the implementation of disarmament measures dependent upon so-called regional conflicts. And such attempts, as is known, continue to be made. We are convinced that they conceal both an unwillingness to disarm and a desire to use these conflicts for the self-serving purposes of subjecting sovereign states to their will in pursuit of the delirious idea of world domination. Our aim, by contrast is not to whip up regional conflicts, but to eliminate them by collective efforts based on just principles, and the sooner the better.

When the preservation of peace, the deliverance of mankind from the menace of destruction are at stake, there can be no outsiders or uninvolved. The contribution of each state is important here, regardless of whether it is big or small, socialist or capitalist. We talked about this frankly and in detail during our discussion at Chequers and, as it seems to me, we understood each other.

I am convinced that the current year of 1986 could be the year of a breakthrough for the better in the development of international

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relations. We, for our part, are ready to contribute to this by practical deeds.

In conclusion I would like to express the hope that our new proposals will be received and treated by the Government of Britain with all seriousness and in a constructive manner.

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