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September 29, 1985

Dear Geoffrey:

I want to share with you some initial impressions from my recent meetings and that of the President with Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze.

Our discussions were broad-ranging, covering considerable ground. We touched upon the full agenda of US-Soviet issues, including various regional, bilateral and human rights questions, but with a special emphasis on arms control and security problems. The President put forward a comprehensive view of his thoughts about the upcoming meeting in Geneva with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev, making clear both our concerns with unacceptable Soviet activities in various areas and our hopes for progress towards a more stable and productive relationship with the Soviet Union.

The tenor of the Foreign Minister's response was serious and businesslike. Our exchanges involved a good deal of straightforward give and take over particular issues. While we were not surprised by the persistent differences that these discussions underscored, we believe the past week's meetings with Shevardnadze laid a useful foundation for the Geneva meeting in November and any resulting process of more constructive US-Soviet dialogue.

The Foreign Minister took the occasion of his meeting with the President both to deliver a personal letter from General Secretary Gorbachev and to offer an oral gloss of this message, in which he outlined and expanded upon various Soviet proposals for nuclear arms reductions. In doing so, however, Shevardnadze made clear that a fuller and more detailed elaboration of these Soviet proposals would shortly be forthcoming at the Nuclear and Space Arms Talks in Geneva. Thus, the end effect of his presentation was not unlike the pattern of previous Soviet arms control statements -- heavy on generalized statements of intent and promise, all contingent on Western acceptance of Soviet terms, with hints, but few details, of Soviet movement on some issues.

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As these Soviet presentations in Geneva unfold and as we have the opportunity for detailed questioning at the negotiating table to gain a better picture of just what any new Soviet positions might entail, we will, of course, wish to consult with you closely. In the interim, however, I would note for you that, consistent with the Soviet public line of recent weeks, Gorbachev's message and Shevardnadze's comments laid great stress on the possibilities for progress offered by the November meeting with the President, but in terms of actual substance, reiterated many of their familiar and unacceptable declaratory proposals, such as a nuclear testing moratorium and deployment freeze. Most importantly, they continued to assert a rigid and automatic link between an agreement on so-called space strike weapons with negotiating progress towards reductions of offensive nuclear arms.

In response to our charges of a lack of specificity on their part, the Soviets put forward the number fifty percent as a possible degree of reductions in "relevant nuclear arms," with the Foreign Minister verbally citing a hypothetical end result of 6,000 "nuclear charges," which would include weapons capable of striking the other side's territory. Their comments indicated an effort to characterize and aggregate strategic arms in an unacceptably sweeping and one-sided way, seeking, for instance, to include U.S. LRINF missiles and carrier-based aircraft as strategic while excluding Soviet LRINF systems and to equate bomber-carried gravity bombs with ballistic missile warheads. The Soviets repeated earlier Soviet calls for a freeze and the assertion that they sought no greater quantity of "medium-range" weapons in Europe than the number of British and French warheads.

For our part, we made clear our basic objections to this sort of approach. The Soviets also suggested a mutual understanding to refrain from the deployment of any nuclear weapons in countries which are now nuclear-free, and not to increase the stock of nuclear weapons and not to replace them with new ones in countries where such weapons now exist. This, of course, attacks directly not only NATO's 1979 decision, but also the basis for our

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Montebello decision to reduce the size of the overall NATO stockpile. As in the past, the net impact of such terms would be to lock in Soviet advantages, diminish NATO's conventional capabilities, and divide us from our allies.

As you are aware, we have indicated in our initial public statements that we are prepared to deal with new Soviet ideas seriously. To that end, we believe that the proper next step is for our negotiators to explore both the U.S. proposals already on the table in Geneva and these Soviet counterproposals.

We will see what, if any, possibilities for progress emerge from these follow-on exchanges. Thus far, the new Soviet position appears to represent some interesting changes, but as it currently stands, does not constitute an appropriate basis for agreement in Geneva. The Soviets seem to be slowly moving towards discussion of what must be a central issue in any strategic arms control agreement -- significant reductions that might affect their own already massive strategic arsenal -- but remain preoccupied with seeking to preserve unilateral offensive and defensive advantages through these negotiations.

As our negotiators discuss these issues further in Geneva over the next few weeks, we will be carefully assessing any new Soviet positions by the potential contribution they can make to solving the problems of greater strategic stability, equality at reduced levels of weaponry, and effective verification of compliance by all parties. While we are pleased to see the Soviets at last moving to a discussion of specific numbers in connection with offensive reductions, we must also note that, judged against these important criteria, a simple percentage is meaningless without reference to what is to be included and to the data baselines. Similarly, loosely-defined "nuclear charges" are not the same as "warheads." We will have to see whether the more detailed Soviet formulation addresses the basic threat to strategic stability posed by growing capability of highly-MIRVed Soviet ICBMs to threaten our own land-based deterrent forces.

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That said, we are basically pleased that, after putting forward our own proposals for deep offensive reductions in Geneva during the past two rounds, the Soviets are now responding with a counterproposal of their own. We hope that this can lead to the sort of serious give and take across the negotiating table that we have been working to encourage.

What all of this gives evidence of is the correctness of the Alliance's strategy thus far. In the face of an unwarranted Soviet walkout from the earlier negotiation, Western unity and firmness eventually brought the Soviets back to the negotiating table. After two rounds of talks, the combination of positive U.S. proposals and the patience to stand by those positions have brought about modest signs of evolution in the Soviet position. As we continue our negotiating efforts at Geneva, Stockholm, Vienna and elsewhere, the Alliance will continue to need this sense of realism, determination and common purpose.

It is important that we keep the pressure on the Soviets to keep moving toward a serious discussion of offensive arms reductions. Continued Allied support and solidarity will be especially important in this regard as we negotiate these issues in Geneva and as we approach the November meeting.

We will, of course, continue to be in close touch on these matters. As always, I would welcome your personal thoughts and counsel.

Sincerely,

/S/

George P. Shultz

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Prime Minister
Pretty much what
Mr. McFarlane told you,
though less detailed.
Re Foreign Security may
mention it tomorrow.

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
LONDON

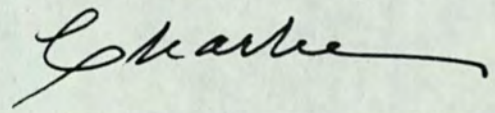
September 30, 1985

Dear Geoffrey: *COP*

Enclosed is a letter which Secretary of State
Shultz has asked me to pass along to you.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,



Charles H. Price, II
Ambassador

Enclosure: SECRET

The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, Q.C., M.P.,
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