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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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February 14, 1986

Dear Mr. President,

Pursuant to your instructions, Ron Lehman and I consulted with the senior government leadership in London, Paris, Bonn, Rome, The Hague and Brussels. We also held consultations with the North Atlantic Council at the end of our bilateral discussions in capitals. This is our report on those consultations.

Our European allies are most appreciative of your emphasis on the consultative process and showed general support for your anticipated response to General Secretary Gorbachev's January program. They understand the necessity of your trying to work with Mr. Gorbachev to find common ground in arms control on which we can base an agreement which would be in the interest of both East and West. They are, however, fully aware that Mr. Gorbachev's proposal was packaged and delivered to maximize its political and propaganda impact. They are supportive of the "positive tone" of your proposed response to Mr. Gorbachev, but largely because they believe such a tone is necessary to counter the public effect of the Gorbachev proposal. In sum, they are, in general, with you in your response to the Soviets.

There was no significant disagreement with our appraisal that the Gorbachev proposal is astute, designed for its political impact, designed to drive wedges in the Alliance, and requires a careful response. Almost all favored a response that would be positive in tone but cautious as to specifics. They approved the idea of focusing on bilateral first steps, and the idea of emphasizing the preconditions to a nuclear-free world. None suggested changing our START or our basic Defense/Space position.

There are problems, however. A number of issues surfaced which should be considered as suggestions for modifications to your anticipated response to Mr. Gorbachev or to our public handling of that response. With the exception of [REDACTED] there was skepticism about the realism or even desirability of a nuclear-free world; [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Again there was some questioning of a response which included in its first steps a zero/zero outcome on INF in Europe. The [REDACTED] believe the trauma of deploying U.S. LRINF in Europe is over and the idea of withdrawing these missiles so soon is not warranted. Some opponents of zero/zero INF in Europe argued that withdrawing U.S. INF forces could "decouple" the U.S. from Europe, a situation which they claim the 1979 dual-track decision was aimed to redress.

The Germans are supportive of both the goal of total elimination and zero/zero INF in Europe. Because of their unique geographic position, they are also sensitive to the shorter-range missile issue. Hence, they are appreciative that your proposed response would address this issue, whereas Mr. Gorbachev did not. Those we talked to objected, however, to reserving explicitly the right to convert excess Pershing II missiles to the shorter-range Pershing IB; they believe that such conversion would be politically impossible. They took this position knowing full well that such conversion would be the only way we could even partially offset Soviet capabilities in SRINF in the absence of new Pershing IBs.

A potentially divisive issue within NATO concerns the British and French independent nuclear deterrent. Britain and France are adamant that these forces not be the subject of negotiations until their stated preconditions have been met. There are, however, different views on this among the Allies. For example, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

There was general support for SDI as a research program which potentially could strengthen the deterrent; there was disagreement, however, with linking it to the objective of a nuclear-free world. Some thought we should develop a dialogue to clarify ABM Treaty restraints in a way that would make evident that SDI research is not limited. Some also suggested an extension of time with regard to withdrawal.

There was a virtual consensus that you should press Mr. Gorbachev strongly for a total ban on chemical weapons and on an acceptable outcome on a package of CSBMs from the Stockholm Conference. The Allies are also anxious for movement in MBFR. They are mindful, however, that an agreement from the Vienna forum cannot in itself redress the conventional force imbalance in Europe.

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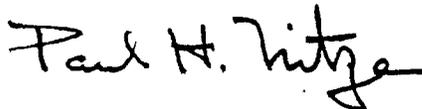
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With the exception of the French, there was universal concern over U.S. opposition to a CTB. Most of this criticism seemed to stem from domestic political pressure in the Allied countries. Some suggested we express more strongly approval of a CTB as a goal to be attained some time in the future.

Almost all urged that we continue to abide by the limitations of existing strategic arms treaties; otherwise it would have devastating effect on European support for and confidence in U.S. arms control policy.

Finally, the Allies were unanimous in the view that your response to Mr. Gorbachev should pick up on, and challenge him to demonstrate his willingness meaningfully to implement, his overture on verification.

Respectfully,



Paul H. Nitze
Special Advisor to the President
and the Secretary of State
on Arms Control Matters

The President

The White House

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