



UNITED STATES DELEGATION
TO THE STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTIONS TALKS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

Geneva, Switzerland

August 9, 1982

Dear Linc,

Good to hear from you. I appreciate your best wishes. We have an excellent position--one which I believe has put the arms reduction train on the right track.

I read your piece with interest. While I agree it is more kindly disposed toward the Administration's efforts than much of what is in the press, I must say, in all candor, you haven't chosen a very high standard as a basis for comparison.

Let me try a brief explanation of our current position.

The superiority which a mutual freeze would codify is the Soviet overwhelming superiority in ICBM warheads and throw-weight. The name of the game is deterrence. If the Soviet Union continues to have a capability for a disarming first-strike, it badly undermines stability and hence erodes deterrence. So long as that capability exists Moscow could blackmail us politically.

Arguments about "winning" or not winning a nuclear war should it break out are wide of the mark. If nuclear war breaks out the main objective--deterrence--has not been achieved.

You're right in quoting Bismarck. The Soviets don't want war--they want victory. They go back to Sun-Tzu and Clausewitz for their sources of this wisdom.

Arguments that we have sufficient bombers and cruise missiles to take out Soviet industrial society, or that one submarine could do it, I find morally repugnant. It's not uncertainty which is repugnant if it helps us achieve the basic objective--deterrence. But to put the US president in a position where his only counter to a threatened attack on our military targets is retaliation against his cities and people, is morally repugnant.

This is the main thrust of our approach which is still, after all these years, so poorly understood. Many of the other arguments are largely irrelevant. For example, I am unimpressed with the fact that Moscow is surrounded by hostile countries. Should we reward them for having enemies?

I agree with your policy prescription of getting on with serious proposals. Ours is a serious proposal which should be negotiable because it calls for equality at lower levels and concentrates on the destabilizing systems. There is a great deal in it for the Soviets as well as for us. As for a freeze on new systems--"No." It freezes a condition of instability and undermines deterrence. Besides, it takes away any incentive the Soviets might have for negotiating with us. Remember the ABM Treaty? Only after we decided to go ahead with our anti-ballistic missile programs did the Soviets seriously begin to negotiate. Same for bombers and cruise missiles. Throw away relatively stabilizing systems and further cut down our leverage? Makes no sense.

So there you have it. If I haven't convinced you I won't stop trying.

Sincerely,



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