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CESSATION OF ALL NUCLEAR-TEST EXPLOSIONS
PREVENTION OF AN ARMS RACE IN OUTER SPACE
IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY
RESOLUTION 40/88 ON THE IMMEDIATE
CESSATION AND PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR-
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CHEMICAL AND BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL)
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DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION
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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS TENTH SPECIAL
SESSION

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-first year

Letter dated 10 September 1986 from the Permanent Representative
of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the answers given by
M. S. Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party
of the Soviet Union, to questions put by Zdenek Horéni, editor-in-chief of the
newspaper Rude Pravo, on 8 September 1986.

Kindly arrange for this text to be distributed as an official document of the
General Assembly, under items 49, 56, 57, 61, 62, 63 and 64 of the provisional
agenda, and also of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. M. BELONOVOV

* A/41/150.

ANNEX

Answers given by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of
the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to questions put by the
editor-in-chief of Rude Pravo on 8 September 1986

QUESTION: Your statement about the extension of the unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosions until 1 January 1987 has evoked a very broad response and, so it seems to us in Czechoslovakia, has had a serious impact on the alignment of social and political forces in the world in the sphere of disarmament.

How do you assess the reasons for this and the possible consequences of the major new peace move made by the Soviet Union?

ANSWER: The answer to the first part of the question seems obvious. Today there are many more people than there were before who know about the Soviet moratorium. Political leaders and the mass media in the West are finding it more and more difficult to keep silent about the existence of the unilateral, 18-month moratorium, and the American arguments in favour of testing have lost much of their lustre, have lost their effect on the public. That is the first point. Secondly, there is in the world an increasingly profound awareness of the reality of the nuclear threat. It can be averted only by eliminating nuclear weapons, as we are proposing, and as a first step, by ending nuclear tests. That's as clear as daylight. Even those who are obsessed with the arms race cannot help but understand that in private.

The Soviet moratorium has been supported by our socialist friends, the Communist parties, the Harare Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, which represents dozens of countries, the leaders of the "New Delhi Six", numerous public organizations and trade unions, authoritative political parties, including the West German Social Democrats and the British Labourites, and prominent figures in science and culture throughout the world. They called upon America to follow the example of the USSR. On the whole we might say that it's easier to list those who did not support our action than those who approved of it. The words of support - which we highly appreciate - underscore that a new political thinking is forcing a path through old prejudices, outmoded conceptions, through mountains of lies about the "Soviet threat".

As far as one can judge from American data, the idea of ending nuclear tests is also supported by public opinion in the United States and by a substantial part of the Congress.

In a word, there has never before been such a widespread realization that a nuclear war must never be fought and can never be won, no matter what artful scenarios of military operations are drawn up.

Another point should also be made: the policy of the United States is becoming more and more frightening to people, the glaring manifestations of its militaristic course have opened many people's eyes, and the alarm at the prospect that a catastrophe could really occur can no longer be concealed by anyone.

The reaction generated by the ending of nuclear explosions by the Soviet Union is also linked, of course, with the fact that it is not a declaration, but an action. For the fourth time now we have extended the moratorium. One year without explosions is already a political and military reality. The trend towards reason and common sense is now actually occurring in world politics and it can be developed, backed by an agreement on the mutual prohibition of nuclear tests, as well as by other bold, forceful steps and by solving issues whose solution is ripe or long overdue.

For example, isn't it important for the destiny of Europe, and the entire world for that matter, to crown the work of the Stockholm Conference with a substantive agreement? Yes, there's no question about it. And the Soviet Union, together with Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries, is taking practical measures to ensure that it happens that way. There's a possibility - and I have already spoken about it - of reaching agreement on the prohibition of chemical weapons and the elimination of the industrial base for their production.

As regards strategic arms, medium-range nuclear-missile weapons and conventional armaments, rational compromises are possible, if one really strives to lower the level of military confrontation and achieve equal security. It's also possible to reach agreement on strengthening the régime established by such a fundamental document as the ABM Treaty.

But we have to look at things as they are. It seems that the number of possibilities is growing, but there's no turn for the better.

In that respect, the reaction to our statement in the ruling circles of the United States is indicative. This has shown from the very outset that, at least among those surrounding the President, whose spokesmen did not even bother to conceal their irritation this time, they are not thinking in earnest about eliminating the nuclear threat. That is precisely why the extension of the moratorium caused such displeasure there. It is clear that the people in these circles felt uneasy when faced by the new Soviet proposals. It has evidently become very difficult to justify their stand in the eyes of both the world and the American public.

And once again they followed the same old road in an attempt to belittle the significance of our move, branding it "propaganda". But we might well ask: If this is propaganda, then what are we trying to prove, what are we trying to say by it? That we can do without nuclear explosions? That we are reinforcing our call to rid mankind of nuclear weapons with an end to nuclear testing? What's had about such "propaganda"?

And in general, as regards accusations of "propaganda" levelled against us, I have already said more than once: It is very frivolous when they seek to divert our responsible political actions to such a level. That is not the right approach at such a tense, one might say, crucial turning point in world development.

We do not want to win a propaganda war. We do not even want to participate in such a "skirmish", believing that it is unworthy of the importance of the subject.

Our aim is to take a real step towards real disarmament. And we sincerely invite the American Administration to do the same. We want to get the talks moving so that we can push back the nuclear threat for the sake of everyone's security, for the sake of genuine détente.

There's a whole spate of propaganda speculations about our moratorium in the entourage of the White House, in political circles and in the press. Sometimes one gets the impression that in the United States they are altogether inclined to replace foreign policy with propaganda. What a businesslike and promising dialogue! We reject such a style and believe that the matters we are discussing are too serious to have games of words played around them. And we'd like to hope that, in the U.S., in America they'll understand us and give an adequate response that befits our call.

And if one is going to speak about the "seriousness" they called for when we extended our moratorium once again, I'd like to say that the attitude towards the ending of nuclear tests and the early elaboration of a treaty on their full prohibition has now become the most convincing indicator of how really serious each of the biggest nuclear Powers is in its approach to disarmament, international security and the cause of peace in general.

In the 18 August statement, I already said that the attitude towards nuclear explosions is a test of historical maturity. This is my firm conviction. In fact, it is a touchstone to verify true intent, the main content of the foreign policy of a nuclear State.

Indeed.

If one wants military superiority, one does not need a moratorium.

If one wants to continue the arms race - and, particularly, to extend it to new areas, to outer space - then one doesn't need a moratorium.

If one wants to have new, more sophisticated types of weapons, a moratorium is pointless.

If, in solving international problems, one relies on strength and intends to resort to diktat, to blackmail, then a moratorium is a hindrance as well.

If one is afraid of honestly competing with another social system in the economic field, in democracy, culture, and the intellectual wealth of human life, then a moratorium is obviously unsuitable.

If one doesn't care what will happen to nature, to the human environment, one will continue conducting nuclear explosions.

If the greedy appetites of the tycoons of the arms business and all those linked with it are more important than the opinions and vital interests of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world, one continues to carry out nuclear tests.

In other words, the attitude towards the moratorium lays bear the true essence and orientation of a policy. There's no getting away from that.

But if there really is a desire to start reducing nuclear weapons and then to do away with them all together, as the President himself and certain members of his Administration have officially and solemnly declared more than once, and if there is a real understanding that nuclear war is inadmissible, if it is true that the United States is not striving to achieving military superiority, then there are no impediments of principle to achieving an equitable and strictly verifiable agreement.

That is why we believe that the ball is not in the Russian's court, as the glib White House heralds claim, but in the American court.

However, the issue, is even broader and more fundamental than the attitude towards the moratorium, although, let me repeat, attempts to evade this crucial disarmament problem, watering it down with other matters, belittling it or sidetracking it are fairly characteristic.

If one pieces together the Administration's whole post-Geneva policy, the resulting picture is alarming. Here we have the crash SDI programme, tests of the ASAT anti-satellite system and other actions undermining the ABM treaty, there we have trials of a new intercontinental ballistic missile, new aircraft and submarines, statements on abandoning the SALT-2 treaty - right up to the time they expect to be having a second summit meeting with us - and then there are the fanciful requests included in the next military budget, the appropriations for binary weapons, the strong-arm, bandit-style "neo-globalist" actions against Libya and Nicaragua, in southern Africa and other places, the forming of new naval strike forces, and the military manoeuvres near the Soviet Union, extending from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Far East - manoeuvres which have been unprecedented since the 1950s in the amount of matériel involved. Marshall Akhromeev put it aptly when he said at the Conference in Stockholm: "Just imagine what would happen if such manoeuvres were mounted by the Warsaw Treaty countries!"

How should we perceive these defiant shows of military strength? Surely not as reflecting a commitment to peace and a desire for mutual understanding or, perhaps, as preparing the atmosphere for a summit meeting?

In the White House and around it, however, they say bluntly: This is all needed in order to force the Russians to make new concessions. Such is the level of responsibility of those for whom the arms race is a gold-mine, and, incidentally, such is the level of their understanding of whom they are dealing with.

These military and political practices suggest that one should draw a very serious conclusion: They want to legalize the arms race. In essence, such actions constitute material and psychological preparation for a world war. The public are rightly beginning to ask the question: What is this? Does it mean that America is preparing for war? If so, then the logic of the Administration's actions is understandable.

Involuntarily one is prompted to recall the 1960s, when an extremely reactionary group brazenly laid claim to the White House. But at that time, America itself restrained that group. Other people came to power, and the opportunity arose to hold back the growth of the cold war and then, in the 1970s, to stop it all together. Treaties were concluded, and some of them have remained effective to this day.

And what do we see now? Once again military programmes are being developed, but these are ones that create a much greater risk than before of the outbreak of a world war, because they represent a new scientific and technological spiral in the arms race and are accompanied by much larger arsenals of weapons, capable of wiping out civilization in a matter of days.

That is why the task of our two countries, of all peace forces, is to prevent this race from becoming irreversible.

And a much more serious responsibility than hitherto - I would say a special responsibility - for where the course of world developments will lead rests with the American people. This is something we have to ponder.

I want to believe in the reason, realism and basic sense of self-preservation of the American people. Our two peoples ought to co-operate rather than quarrel, to be on friendly terms rather than fight each other. Once again I appeal for this.

I know that in your country, Czechoslovakia, in my country and also in other countries they frequently ask this question: Doesn't the policy of an unbridled arms race reflect a desire to undermine the USSR and the socialist community in the economic field? How can one evaluate, in particular, the official statements and conjectures in the mass media to the effect that the economic problems and difficulties occurring in the USSR will compel it, if more pressure is applied, to make unilateral concessions?

We do have economic problems and difficulties. We have talked and keep talking about them openly. There are also quite a few problems and difficulties in other countries, especially those which took the path of independent development only recently. But are there really no difficulties in the West, in the United States itself? Of course there are. Moreover, they are mounting menacingly there; really acute problems are piling up. The public debt has reached an astronomical figure, the enormous level of unemployment is again assuming threatening proportions, and social contradictions are deepening.

As regards our own economic concerns, we'd like to cope with them more quickly and more efficiently, and would therefore welcome any opportunity to switch our funds and forces from defence to civilian industries, applying them to improving the people's living standards. But we shall never sacrifice our security interests and never make concessions at the expense of security, and that also applies at the talks. The Soviet people would never allow us to do this.

We see full well the bid to use the arms race to undermine the USSR and world socialism economically. And we shall do all we can to foil these evil plans. We

shall be acting in several areas at once: in the diplomatic, military, political and - yes - propaganda fields, but first of all, in the economic field, by making the economy more efficient, accelerating the pace and streamlining management.

In this connection, the high-quality work of the Soviet people and of the working people of the countries of the socialist community is also a contribution to the cause of peace. When we slacken the pace, more pressure is brought to bear by the enemies of socialism. But as we grow stronger and more stable in economic, social and political terms, so, too, grows the interest of the capitalist world in having normal relations with us, and the illusions that we can turn the clock back are dispelled.

QUESTION: The comments made regarding your statement have included assertions that neither the unilateral moratorium nor even a bilateral agreement with the United States on this issue will be of any appreciable help in solving the problem of nuclear disarmament. Is this so?

ANSWER: I cannot agree at all.

They are really trying to present the moratorium as something that contradicts arms reductions, and even to prove that it hinders a start on the disarmament process. In certain quarters and in the press, the view is also going around that, so to claim, nuclear weapons are an "evil", but a "necessary evil", inasmuch as they serve as a restraint, and if so, they need reliability tests, that is, by carrying out explosions.

All this is absurd, if it is not an attempt to mislead people.

As far back as last January, we proposed that a joint start be made on "rooting out the evil itself", by scrapping all nuclear weapons by the end of the century. Naturally, this is not a simple task. But we propose that it should be tackled in stages, taking account of all the difficulties involved. We set aside 15 years to complete the task, and envisage parallel efforts to destroy chemical weapons and to make radical cuts in conventional weapons, while aiming simultaneously at moving forward in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres of international relations.

The attempts to discover an inconsistency between the issue of ending nuclear explosions and that of reducing nuclear weapons are dishonest also for another reason. Such attempts create the illusion that the two Powers have "almost" agreed on a radical reduction of nuclear weapons, and that now the USSR has ruined everything with its moratorium. But the situation is in fact quite different. Since the Geneva meeting, we have not moved even an inch closer to an arms-reduction agreement, despite all the efforts of the USSR.

However, a mutual halt to nuclear explosions would be a great help in reaching agreement on that goal. The fact is that an end to testing in essence puts an end to the race in the most dangerous area - in the development of new types of nuclear weapons or the upgrading of existing ones. It would then merely be a question of coping with the quantitative aspect of the arms race, which is simpler.

Our position, therefore, is that halting nuclear explosions is intrinsically related to nuclear-weapons reductions and would be of serious benefit in dealing with the problem. I am not talking here about the political side of things. Distrust, terror and suspicion, as you will agree, have a deadly effect on the international climate. There is also a moral, or psychological, side. Continuing with tests means that you are wasting effort and resources on an evil thing when there is such a staggeringly large and growing demand for such resources for good, humane causes.

QUESTION: Soviet nuclear weapons, it is said, are "simple and need no reliability tests, while American weapons are more sophisticated and hence constantly need to be tested for efficiency".

There is another story going around, which is that the Soviet Union, before it declared its moratorium in 1985, had modernized its nuclear arsenal and got a significant lead over America, so it can allow itself a pause in testing while the United States now needs to catch up, and that's why it is conducting tests.

What's the truth of this?

ANSWER: There is none at all. All these statements are false from beginning to end.

Experts have convincingly shown that you don't need nuclear explosions at all to be sure that the nuclear weapons you have already are reliable. You can verify reliability just as effectively, and far more cheaply and safely, by other methods, without nuclear explosions.

That you can have confidence in the reliability of your nuclear reserves without conducting explosions, by doing no more than checking the non-nuclear components of bombs and warheads, is also shown by long practical experience. Since 1974, under the existing treaty, the United States and the USSR have conducted no tests of over 150 kilotons. Yet weapons exceeding this "threshold" make up 70 per cent of the American nuclear arsenal, and no less in our case. So both we and they believe our weapons are reliable without explosions! Why cloud the issue?

If the Americans have doubts about the stability of their nuclear arsenal, let them draft a treaty to end nuclear tests and our experts will let them into the "secrets" of checking nuclear projectiles without explosions.

No, the main aim of the nuclear-weapons tests by the United States is to generate fundamentally new kinds of weapons. What does that mean? Well, new enhanced-yield, high-accuracy nuclear warheads are being developed. The tests are being used to produce space-based nuclear weapons - what are known as nuclear-pumped X-ray lasers. Work is proceeding on an entirely new kind of weapon, which can strike at targets both on earth and in space. In these circumstances it is hypocrisy to say that an end to testing will do nothing to resolve the problem of nuclear disarmament.

As for the second point, it might have sounded remotely credible for the first couple of months of our moratorium. Not now, though, when the Soviet nuclear-testing sites have been silent for over a year. If the development of new nuclear weapons and the modernization of old ones constantly require fresh tests - and that's undoubtedly so - by the logic of things the United States, which has conducted far more explosions than the USSR, plus 18 during the year of our moratorium, should be far ahead and we, not they, are the ones who need to catch up. In short, it's absurd to couch the issue in those terms.

We have encountered another view: as far as tests are concerned, can't we settle, for a while for a compromise between the Soviet and American positions? Not a complete ban, in other words, but some kind of "regulation".

Of course, if you are proposing an agreement with another party you can never rule out compromises altogether. But the idea of "regulation" instead of an end to testing still seems, to me, to be wrong in principle.

Firstly, we already have regulation: the 1963 treaty and the so-called "threshold" agreements of 1974 and 1976. But they didn't stop the arms race. It actually got worse - not, of course, because of the agreements. The same could happen with the proposed regulation of underground nuclear explosions. Most likely the result will be that the arms race simply turns in another direction, which will later turn out to be still more dangerous.

There simply cannot be any half-way solution to the problem of nuclear tests. There is only one honest way of looking at the question: either you agree not to test nuclear projectiles and have done with the matter once and for all, or you launch an even more dangerous military build-up. There is no third course.

If the Americans managed to drag the world into a space arms race, however they described it - "defensive" or something else - the upshot would probably be a highly risky destabilization of the entire military and strategic situation. The threat to mankind would take on qualitatively new, deadly dimensions. No one is entitled to shut his eyes to that.

QUESTION: Once again, as with all the Soviet Union's other initiatives, President Reagan's entourage and the representatives of several NATO Governments are trying to distract attention from the cardinal problem you have raised - the nuclear-disarmament process - with a variety of speculations about control and verification.

How do you regard this approach?

ANSWER: Just as you said, as an attempt to distract attention. They want to revive the bankrupt notion that a ban on nuclear testing can't be monitored. The notion is bankrupt, first of all, because of advances in science. National means of verification nowadays can pick up even the smallest nuclear explosion. To help solve the problem, nevertheless, the Soviet Union has consented to other methods of verification. The "New Delphi Six" offered its services and we agreed. The United States, however, said nothing. Scientists have agreed on the positioning of

seismographs and other equipment near the Soviet and American nuclear-testing sites; we have also supported this initiative, although the American Government spurned it.

Not so long ago I received a group of eminent scientific experts in this field from the USSR, the United States, Western European countries and Japan, and talked with them in detail. Once again I was reassured that they have no doubt at all as to the possibility of monitoring a ban on nuclear tests with the utmost confidence.

As the matter stands now though, the United States has shown no willingness to embark on disarmament, and it is not talking about verifying disarmament, but about monitoring weapons.

I and our military colleagues have more than once had occasion to say that we know what the Americans are doing and what is going on at their nuclear and other test sites. But their efforts to conceal things such as a number of their test explosions (including one conducted a week ago) only go to show yet again that we cannot take their word on trust. Bluntly, we have no reason to trust the American generals, and we are not counting on trust on their part either. For that reason we favour strict, scientifically based monitoring and will insist on it, including on-the-spot inspection. But monitoring, I repeat, not of explosions but of an end to explosions.

American instruments have already been installed near the Soviet nuclear-testing site in the region of Semipalatinsk. We consider it would be possible to incorporate the understanding between the scientists into an official treaty, and each side could see to it that a possible agreement banning nuclear explosions was not broken. Thought could be given also to the creation of an international or supranational network to monitor a test ban. I take the opportunity to make this proposal to the President of the United States. This is not an intractable problem. But it's easy to see why Washington has to present it as an uncrackable nut: the United States isn't ready to abandon the arms race, so it's blustering.

I repeat, the Americans don't need the explosions for deterrence (there is nobody to deter, no one is thinking of attacking the United States); they need them so as to produce weapons intended for use in nuclear war.

QUESTION: A final, delicate question, if you will permit. To judge by the many statements from the American presidential entourage and the Western press, they now want to concentrate the entire world's attention on your next meeting with Mr. Reagan and, in effect, supplant the urgent problems of checking the arms race with talk of that meeting.

What can you say about this?

ANSWER: We're in favour of a high-level Soviet-American meeting, something signalling a perceptible advance towards a solution on at least one or two of the significant problems of international security.

Since Geneva, we've taken a number of steps to reduce our differences on a broad range of problems concerned with ending the arms race. The "all or nothing" approach is alien to us. But it's not worth holding a meeting for nothing. Maybe it would suit some people, but it definitely doesn't suit us.

The problems I'm talking about affect all countries, the entire world community, although the Soviet Union and the United States, of course, bear a particularly large share of responsibility. So however much we're provoked, we're not cutting off contacts with the American Administration or questioning their usefulness, and we're not slamming the door (although some in the West, especially in the American President's entourage, would very much like us to). But the truly worthwhile thing is not contacts in themselves, it's their outcome.

We expect the forthcoming meeting between Mr. Shevardnadze and Secretary of State Shultz will help to clarify where we now stand and whether the Soviet-American dialogue stands a chance of progressing further.

If we start knowingly from the premise that a moratorium is unacceptable, if the issue of medium-range missiles in Europe is blocked, if strategic weapons must be modernized and so forth, what is there to agree on? If there is a feverish arms race, tension is growing and existing treaties are being broken, a summit meeting will be of scant benefit. But nothing would be easier than using it to fool people, soothing the public with the appearance that all is well even as the dangerous policy continues to apply. Indeed, people are already attempting to do so by making out that preparations for the meeting are going ahead in high gear.

The purpose of encouraging the optimistic impression that everything is nearly ready for the meeting may ultimately be to shift the blame for the results of this destructive policy on to the Soviet Union. The same idea must lie behind another suggestion, which is that the USSR has concluded it will get no joy out of the Reagan Administration.

But we attach too much importance to the time factor to decide: "Hey, let's stand still for two-and-a-half years." No. To wait and see or temporize would be an unforgivable mistake. We will carry on taking every opportunity for productive dialogue, progress towards arms limitation and reductions, the settlement of regional conflicts and the development of international co-operation on all pressing topics. In this sense our conscience before the Soviet people and other nations is clear. Our Czechoslovak friends and the countries of the socialist fraternity clearly understand, and give us firm, consistent support.

I would like in particular to emphasize that we greatly value and pay scrupulous attention to the views of our allies; we are resolved to continue improving the machinery and methods used for consultation and the joint formulation of socialist foreign policy. We have high regard for the political initiatives of our allies and friends, their active participation in the campaign to promote fresh political thinking, and their equal and lively contribution to the general effort to resolve the problems of peace, security and disarmament.

I do not think I should pass over another point related to prospects for a summit meeting. There's a lot of conjecture about my confidential correspondence with the President of the United States. I do not want to reveal its content, but this much needs to be said about the conjecture: the deliberate optimism is misleading and smacks of a public-relations exercise.

At the end of July we received a letter from the United States President, apparently in response to our initiatives. I know that in the West this letter is being presented as something new in Washington's position and is giving rise to pro-Administration leaks, making out that everything now depends on Moscow. We will, of course, send a reply to the President.

I studied the President's letter backwards, forwards and inside out - under a microscope and through a telescope so to speak. I won't be more specific than that, because we agreed on confidentiality, but I do understand that people want to know what is in that closed correspondence, because it affects everybody, every person on earth. If they could see both letters and compare their relevance in untangling the main problems blocking the path to disarmament they would see how seriously and responsibly the Soviet leadership is approaching the problems of averting war and how specific, businesslike and mindful of the other side's interests our proposals are.

They would also see that we are a long way from giving up, but believe in the power of man's intelligence and sense of self-preservation.

Through our actions and initiatives we are trying to give substance to people's hopes that the situation may change and that an alternative to confrontation is within reach. I believe we have already entered the second phase of the global anti-nuclear process, a phase not only of hope but of realistic plans leading to concrete action. As a Communist, I believe in the power of the masses who are converting to the new thinking that shows a way out of the crisis.

The most precious thing left to us is time to take collective, responsible decisions, even compromise decisions. But time is fast running out. The era of nuclear weapons is, evidently, the shortest through which world history has ever passed. That's why concrete deeds are so necessary now. I'd like to conclude with such a call to action.

On behalf of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and of all Soviet people, I convey my very best wishes to the fraternal Czechoslovak people.