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SOVIET PEACE COMMITTEE

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Mr. Bruce Kent,
General Secretary,
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Dear Bruce Kent,

This fresh complication of the international situation, which is evident to all, prompts me to consult you on how we, peace supporters, acting at times from different positions but equally concerned to prevent a nuclear catastrophe, are to act further.

You, I hope, are already familiar with the Statement of Yuri Andropov, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and President of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, of November 25, containing an assessment of this situation and mapping out measures which the Soviet government has been forced to take in the present circumstances to safeguard the security of our people and to contain US adventurism which poses a threat to the cause of peace in the whole world. I would like to add at once that, as is indicated by the numerous meetings held by Soviet people all over our country, as well as by their letters now coming in great quantities to our Committee, this Statement receives a unanimous support from the Soviet people.

In familiarising myself with how most of the Western mass media are covering these decisions of the leadership of the Soviet Union, I have to state with a feeling of regret that this time too they give, as a rule, a distorted and lopsided presentation of the motives by which the USSR is being guided in taking the measures mentioned by Yuri Andropov. Again and again, much is being made of the false ploy about a "Soviet threat", that the Soviet Union is allegedly out to assure for itself a military superiority over the West, etc.

So it is all the more important now to recall some of the factors of key importance, which cannot be refuted. For two years, the Soviet representatives in Geneva tabled one realistic proposal after another, meeting the security interests of both sides, beginning with the total withdrawal of all the nuclear means from Europe, both medium range, and tactical -- up to drastically reducing all nuclear arsenals of medium-range means in Europe down to one-third. All these proposals, however, were rejected. ,

The Soviet peace supporters actively backed the important unilateral measures of the USSR, designed to facilitate the attainment of an agreement in Geneva, including, among other things, the moratorium, strictly observed since March 1982, on deployment of "SS-20" missiles in the European part of the USSR. Over that period, the Soviet Union did not install a single new missile of this type and also scrapped all the "SS-5" missiles which, incidentally, have a range which is not inferior to the "SS-20" missiles and by the payload -- even surpassing.

Moreover, as is known, on October 27 Yuri Andropov stated the USSR's readiness to embark already now upon reduction of its "SS-4" missiles (of which the USSR has over 200) and to complete their liquidation during 1984 and 1985 if the USA gave up deploying its missiles in Europe in the period announced, which would thus have created a possibility to continue the talks and to seek mutually acceptable solutions.

And I do not say anything about the fact that, as this was confirmed by Yuri Andropov also at that time, if it proved possible to conclude an agreement in Geneva on a just and equitable basis, then, it goes without saying, a significant part of the "SS-20" missiles now in existence would also have been liquidated. In the process, the total quantity of missiles in the Western part of the USSR would have been less than in 1976, i.e., even before the start of the deployment of the "SS-20" missiles, which, as is being asserted by the NATO leaders, was the primary reason for the adoption by them of the decision to deploy new US missiles.

Alas, all these reasonable proposals were rejected by the US side. The USA gave top priority to their goal of installing at any cost missiles in Western Europe, trained on the vital centres of the USSR, which they could reach in 6 to 8 minutes.

As is known, the aim of the Geneva talks was to limit medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe. Despite this, the USA decided to build up these weapons, thus undermining the very basis of those talks. No matter what President Reagan and others would say about "regretting" over the suspension of the talks, the fact remains that by bringing its missiles into Europe the USA exploded the Geneva talks. It would be an attempt to deceive the peoples to pretend that nothing has happened and, by remaining at the negotiating table, to actually legalise the deployment of new US missiles in Europe, which was so uncompromisingly opposed by the mass peace movement, including that in your country.

It is difficult for me to believe that the US leaders seriously hoped that as soon as the first "Pershings-2" made their appearance in the FRG, and cruise missiles -- in Great Britain and Italy, the Soviet people would raise their hands up and reconcile themselves to the fact that the nuclear gun has been put to their temple. In this connection, I would like to recall words from a statement of the participants of the 800-thousand-strong anti-war demonstration in Moscow on October 1, 1983: "There is no difference between an American, English

or French missile, if it is aimed at and can hit the USSR and its allies. Our inalienable right is to have protection against any of them! And if the USA and NATO do begin deploying new missiles, the Soviet government is duty bound to do everything necessary to adopt effective countermeasures".

The US aggression against Grenada clearly demonstrated to all the Europeans how the USA can behave as irresponsibly and adventuristically in Europe by installing first-strike nuclear weapons here. And if timely and resolute measures are not taken to neutralise that step, the consequences may be of the most catastrophic type.

The Soviet public realises that these are forced measures which the USSR did not wish and would not have taken if the US representatives displayed a concerned and responsible approach to the Geneva talks and would seek, not in word but in deed, together with Soviet representatives, mutually acceptable solutions on cardinal reductions of all nuclear arms in Europe, without any exception, while preserving the principle of parity and equal security for all. Regrettably, it has not been possible to preserve this principle on the basis of an arms reduction which we all advocated. The grim reality is such that our country was forced to defend this principle on which the preservation of peace in the whole world rests in our age, by adopting response countermeasures. I hope that you also realise the forced nature of this step.

And now the question that arises is this, what we and you -- jointly or in parallel -- can and must do in the situation that has developed. I ask you to give special attention to the following words from the November 25 Statement by Yuri Andropov:

"Should the United States and the other NATO countries display readiness to return to the situation that existed before the commencement of the deployment of the American medium-range missiles in Europe, the Soviet Union will also be prepared to do this. In that event our earlier proposals on questions of limiting and reducing nuclear arms in Europe would become valid again. In that case, that is on condition of the restoration of the former situation, the USSR's unilateral obligations in this field would also become effective again".

We, Soviet peace supporters, see in these words a ray of hope that it is still possible to call a halt to the spiral of the arms race that has begun.Everything depends on whether it will prove possible, above all, to achieve a cessation of the further deployment of US missiles, and withdrawal from Europe of those missiles that have been already brought there. And this can be achieved through concerted efforts by all sober-minded people, if they continue to act together, and to make their efforts increasingly massive and dynamic.

I have just returned from Athens where a meeting of representatives of the Movement for nuclear disarmament of Great

Britain, the Inter-Church Peace Council of the Netherlands, "No to Nuclear Weapons" of Norway, the Soviet and Bulgarian Peace Committees, and the Peace Council of the GDR, was held at the invitation of the Hellenic Movement for national independence, world peace and disarmament (KEADEA). We all unanimously decided to give support to the KEADEA efforts to prepare a meeting of national anti-war movements of the West and East of Europe, as well as of the USA and Canada, which is, as it is being planned, to be held in Athens in February 1984.

In the present situation it may become an important milestone in developing the anti-war struggle. Time, however, does not wait, and, as it would appear to me, already now, in December-January, it is necessary that we step up our various activities -- independent, joint or parallel -- with the aim of combatting the new round in the nuclear arms race. The security of East and West is indivisible. "No to nuclear weapons in Europe, in the West and the East, in the whole world" -- is our common slogan.

I know that at present a campaign has been launched in the West whose aim is to weaken the anti-war movements, to cause disenchantment and pessimism among their participants that they have allegedly "lost" the battle against the missiles and so must lay down their arms. There is nothing more remote from the truth than such assertions.

In reality the anti-war movements have changed the entire psychological atmosphere in Europe. They have drawn the broadest popular masses who previously kept aloof from politics into vigorous actions, and contributed to stepping up the anti-nuclear struggle. It is these movements that forced the USA to sit down at the negotiating table in Geneva. By their actions, they demonstrated to the whole world that those advocating the nuclear arms race are an absolute minority.

The struggle for peace continues.

In the present situation, we deem it extremely important to prevent an exacerbation of the differences between our movements, and especially outbursts of anti-Sovietism which, regrettably, some forces are zealously continuing to stimulate in the West.

Seriously concerned over the present sharpening of the international situation, the Soviet Peace Committee is resolved to step up its struggle against the nuclear threat. We intend to develop our campaign against the fresh round of nuclear arms under these interlinked slogans:

-- Stop the deployment of nuclear missiles in Europe!

-- Get the missiles already deployed back!

-- To create, in this manner, favourable conditions for resolving the problem of medium-range nuclear arms limitations in Europe through negotiations!

I would appreciate very much if you could express your considerations as to how to pursue further our common struggle for a nuclear-free Europe, how to strengthen cooperation of all the anti-war movements in the name of the goal of removing the nuclear threat, which is a common goal for all of us.

Respectfully yours,

Y. Zhukov

Yuri Zhukov,
On behalf of the Presidium of the
Soviet Peace Committee, President
of the Committee