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Chernenko

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Chernenko on US-Soviet Relations

Two press interviews and a speech upon the conclusion of the CEMA Summit this week are the latest in a recent flurry of statements by Soviet leader Chernenko.

- Since early May, statements and appearances by Chernenko have been featured prominently in Soviet media, perhaps reflecting a concerted effort to build up his status for both foreign and domestic audiences.

Chernenko's interviews and authoritative press editorials have offered little new in either tone or substance on US-Soviet relations and on the prospects for renewed nuclear arms negotiations.

- They are in line with Moscow's current practice of rejecting US efforts to stimulate a dialogue and of dramatizing the poor state of bilateral relations.

In a 13 June Pravda interview Chernenko dismissed US appeals for renewed arms control talks as an election year tactic. He reiterated the now familiar call that Washington demonstrate a genuine readiness for talks through "concrete actions." While acknowledging in principle the value of negotiations, he contended that US missile deployments in Europe were increasingly blocking the possibility of talks. Negotiations would be possible, he said, if the US withdrew its "essentially preemptory conditions" for talks.

- He did not, however, explicitly call for the removal of US missiles from Europe.
- Nor did he make reference to President Reagan's offer to discuss the principle of non-use of force in the Stockholm Conference.

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In his Pravda interview Chernenko also alluded to the issue of a US-Soviet summit, stating that Moscow was ready "at any moment" to engage in a dialogue provided that the talks were "serious." Soviet spokesman Zamaytin reiterated on Thursday that Chernenko would favor a summit, but he said that it would require careful preparation and that "a lot of demands" would have to met.

- These references to summit conditions may be intended to increase perceived political pressures on the President at home to reduce tensions with Moscow.

Chernenko's interview echoed a 7 June Pravda editorial, which provided Moscow's authoritative response to the President's Irish Parliament speech.

- The editorial dismissed US willingness to discuss the non-use of force principle as representing only a "semblance" of readiness for talks.

Chernenko's interview also singled out Soviet proposals on outer space arms control, claiming that they had been submitted to Washington and that the US had no interest in a dialogue on this subject.

- Moscow's statements alleging the US intends to militarize space and urging ASAT limitations probably are intended to influence Congressional deliberations on ASAT weaponry and probably reflect concern about the US ASAT program and strategic defense initiative.

Apparent Soviet preoccupation with the ASAT issue also was reflected in a 12 June Chernenko interview in Izvestiya in which he responded to an American journalist's questions.

- Chernenko reiterated Moscow's unilateral moratorium on launching ASAT weapons, which is conditioned on other countries refraining from placing such weapons in space.
- Such a moratorium, he proposed, would be "only the first step" toward a total ban on ASAT weapons.
- He called for "official" talks to begin immediately.
- He rejected the US contention that verification of such an accord was not possible and alluded for the first time to the use of radars and other electronic collectors in monitoring compliance.

Annex of Recent Soviet Statements

7 June Pravda, "Serious Approach Still Unsighted."

- The US president failed to mention that "Washington is making Western Europe into a stage set for a nuclear war, putting ever new first-strike nuclear systems into full scale production, lavishing billions of dollars on militarizing outer space and refusing to hold any talks to curb the arms race."
- "In short, the West Europeans as well as the American voters were regaled with another portion of pseudopeaceful rhetoric."
- "As is known, and this was confirmed by the NATO council's recent session, no changes have occurred in Washington's stance on nuclear armaments in Europe."
- "What kind of talks would that be? They would not be concerned with the mutual reduction of armaments but with NATO's rearmament.... The Soviet Union will not agree to such talks."
- "The President is apparently striving to create also a semblance of US readiness for talks on non-use of force. But this is only a semblance. In reality, the American representatives at Stockholm are unwilling to discuss this issue today."
- "The President's new European speech has been definitely conceived with a view to calming down the West Europeans and creating a semblance of respectability... in the conditions of election struggle in the US."

12 June Izvestiya, Chernenko answers to question from American journalist Kingsbury-Smith.

- "The vote in the House of Representatives clearly reflects concern over the possibility of the arms race spreading to space... either the militarization of space is averted, or space will become the source of a terrible danger hanging over all mankind."
- "Last year the USSR unilaterally assumed a commitment not to place ASAT weapons in space, in other words, a

unilateral moratorium on such launches, as long as other states, the US included, refrain from placing any type of ASAT weapons in space."

- "This moratorium remains in force, and is only the first step toward a total ban on ASAT weapons, including the elimination of such systems that already exist. It is precisely for this reason that we are suggesting to the US that official talks begin immediately in order to reach an agreement on this."
- "The Soviet Union is convinced that monitoring a freeze on ASAT weapons test is possible and moreover is extremely reliable above all through national technical means"
- "Effective monitoring... could be ensured by means of tracking objects in space.... It would also be possible to use other radioelectronic facilities stationed on the ground, in the worlds oceans, and in space.... In uncertain situations an exchange of information and consultations could be effected. Should the need arise, other forms also could be found..."
- "Any questions, including questions of monitoring, could be successfully solved during the talks being proposed by the Soviet Union."

13 June, Chernenko answers the Pravda on London Summit.

- "Again the Soviet Union was urged to engage in a dialogue and talks.... Regrettably, however, these intentions and appeals failed to be backed up with anything tangible. Why? It is considerations connected with the US presidential elections."
- "The dialogue and talks are mentioned since they need a screen to somehow cover up the transformation of Western Europe into a launching pad for new US missiles. The line of missile deployment remains unshakeable... and this is increasingly blocking the possibility of talks."
- "Is there a need for a dialogue and for talks? Both yesterday and today our answer has been the same-- Yes. But a dialogue which is honest, and talks that are serious. In these we stand ready to engage at any moment."

- "We hold that these issues be considered in earnest at the negotiating table as soon as the American side withdraws its essentially preemptory conditions for talks."
- "I will single out as an example the problem of preventing the militarization of space. Our proposals on how to resolve this problem have been submitted to Washington. But it does not want to handle this problem, it does not want even to discuss it."
- "In all likelihood the US administration is fond only of its own ambitious stance whose essence is opening outer space to formidable armaments and thus trying to gain military superiority. We do not see a reciprocal desire for solid talks."
- "It is high time the US and its allies confirmed by concrete deeds their share of the responsibility for peace... and display genuine readiness for dialogue.... The USSR is not wanting in such readiness."