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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

March 19, 1982

Mr. Paul E. Healy
City Clerk
City of Cambridge
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

Thank you for the copy of the Cambridge City Council resolution regarding strategic arms reduction negotiations with the Soviet Union. I apologize for the delay in my response.

I am glad to see that the Council has adopted this resolution. It is this type of action that is needed to alert the Reagan Administration to the views and apprehensions of the American people. Let me share with you my thoughts on the very important issue of arms control.

As you well know, the history of arms control in recent years has not been encouraging. Nuclear disarmament has remained a distant and unreachable goal. Even SALT II, a modest arms limitation treaty, was not ratified by the Senate. Hopes were once high for the SALT process, but in the late 1970's, there were troubling signs on the horizon for arms control. Many military spokesmen were speaking out in excessive alarm over the Soviet military buildup. They said that arms control negotiations only tranquilized the American people to the Soviet threat. Other commentators intensified their call for linking arms control agreements to Soviet behavior elsewhere, such as Soviet "proxy" activity in the Third World. By the time the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, the SALT II Agreement was, in political terms, mortally wounded. The negotiation of almost all arms control issues, such as strategic nuclear arms, European theater nuclear arms, conventional arms in Europe, and comprehensive nuclear tests, were put on hold until after the 1980 elections.

I was an enthusiastic advocate of SALT II, even though I recognized that it did not substantially reduce the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers. I believed then, as I do now, that SALT II was an important beginning for a more extensive and effective arms control process. As a testament to the usefulness of SALT II, it is noteworthy that the Soviet Union and the United States are still adhering, in de facto fashion, to the Treaty's numerical limits.

The general tone and content of the Reagan Administration was decidedly negative towards arms control during the first ten months of the President's term. Undersecretary of State, Walter Stoessel, declared that arms control had been "oversold"; the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Eugene Rostow, called for a nuclear weapons buildup to achieve a "margin of safety" over the Soviets before any arms control initiatives could be undertaken; a staff member of the National Security Council declared that the Soviet Union and the United States were "drifting towards war"; and Secretary Haig announced that arms control talks would be closely "linked" to Soviet behavior elsewhere in the world.

These statements and policy postures were a source of widespread misgivings concerning the sincerity of the Reagan arms control approach. I and many of my colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee closely questioned Administration officials on this issue time and again. Our paramount concern was the date by which European theater and strategic arms control talks with the Soviets would begin.

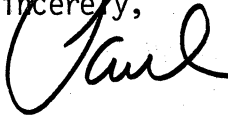
On November 18, President Reagan publicly announced his arms control agenda and specifically proposed that the Soviet Union and the United States reduce to zero the deployment of medium range nuclear missiles in Europe. I have given my full support to the President's initiative. I believe that it represents a genuine first step toward a European theater arms control agreement. Many thoughtful observers have doubt concerning the sincerity of the proposal and given the President's past performance on arms control, those doubts may well be justified. But, if the arms control community here in the United States and in Europe will lend their support to the negotiations in Geneva, I believe that both the Soviets and United States will be less inclined to adopt obstructive positions or abandon the talks. There is no question that the future of arms control depends very directly on the outcome of those negotiations.

On the question of strategic nuclear arms control, the prospects are less well defined. The President has announced that he will offer a proposal to the Soviets sometime early in 1982. The Administration has titled its approach START, Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, as opposed to SALT. This would imply that the Administration will propose severe cuts in the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers. But at the same time, the President has announced his decision to go forward with two controversial strategic weapons, the MX missile and the B-1 bomber. I am opposed to basing the MX in vulnerable fixed silos, and I will vote against funding the B-1 bomber, which I regard as far too expensive (over \$20 billion for 100 planes). I regard strategic arms control as the ultimate issue, and I will pressure the Administration at every opportunity to proceed with all energy and sincerity.

The Administration, however, will not proceed with a vigorous arms control policy unless the President understands that the American people actively seek arms control and disarmament. The SALT II Agreement was never ratified largely because most Americans did not give it their strong support. The Senate heard more from the opponents than from the proponents of the Treaty. Today, the situation has changed. A national arms control movement is taking shape, composed of many organizations, groups, and individuals whose objectives I strongly support. The Nuclear Freeze Campaign, the Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Business Alert to Nuclear War, the Council for a Livable World are all doing very valuable and productive work for the control and ultimate elimination of nuclear arms. I applaud their efforts and I heartily welcome your concern.

Again, thank you for contacting me. Please keep me informed of the Council's views and activities on this most vital issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul", written in dark ink.

PAUL E. TSONGAS
United States Senator

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Comm. from Paul E. Healy, City Clerk, transmitting comm. from Sen. Paul Tsongas Re: in appreciation for resolutions sent to him by the Council on strategic arms reductions with the Soviet Union.

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MAR 26 9 37 AM '82
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

In City Council,

March 29, 1982

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