

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 7, 1985

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

The visit of Secretary Baldrige to the USSR provides an excellent opportunity for me to give you confidentially some of my further thinking on the issue of human rights. I was encouraged by our discussions on this topic in Geneva. Neither of us, I am sure, expected to convince the other of the correctness of all our positions during those sessions. However, I was pleased by your apparent agreement that this is a subject on which, working quietly, we can resolve outstanding problems.

You noted your support for contacts between our two peoples, the importance of visits by relatives, and your understanding of the need for increased contacts by religious groups. You agreed that it is natural that our citizens should marry. I hope steps will be taken that eliminate artificial barriers in these and similar areas. We agreed that the time has come for boldness in our relationship. I can assure you that some bold steps in the human rights area would be reciprocated by us in other areas.

At Geneva, I noted our pleasure that our embassy had been informed that a number of separated spouses would be allowed to leave the Soviet Union to join their husbands or wives. Some unfortunately have yet to hear this officially. Moreover, we have difficulty reconciling your number of ten spouses being held for a limited time because of security concerns with the longer list of

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such people who we know seek to be united with their loved ones. One of these cases involves a blind Soviet woman in her sixties who has been separated from her husband for almost thirty years. Another longtime case involves a Soviet man driven by desperation into two life-threatening hunger strikes in an effort to join his wife and small children in the United States. Several other cases have remained unresolved for many years.

We have provided your government with a list of 17 names in addition to those we have already been informed will be released; they all deserve special concern, and their resolution would have a positive impact on the relationship. I fervently hope these cases can be resolved quickly. It would be a joyous occasion if all of them could join their spouses for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

I also hope we can overcome whatever obstacles stand in the way of eliminating the problem of people with dual US-Soviet citizenship. There are 23 of these cases. Several of these people are now very old. One 77-year old U.S. citizen, who came to the Soviet Union in 1932 on a school break and somehow ended up with a Soviet internal passport, has been trying unsuccessfully to return to the United States for over 50 years. None of the people involved raise security issues in any way whatsoever; it should be easy to wipe the slate clean in this area by allowing those who wish to depart to do so -- quickly.

There are an additional one-hundred twenty-nine families in the Soviet Union who want to join close relatives in the United States, but have not been allowed to do so. Each one

of these cases involves a human tragedy of separation. One involves a 16-year old child from Leningrad whose father was killed in an automobile accident last fall, leaving him all alone. In many other cases, parents and children have been separated for many years. Our embassy has in the past and will again provide all necessary details on these cases.

Beyond these cases, let me touch on areas in which, as I mentioned in Geneva, there are quite substantial political incentives for progress. I refer here to the broad question of emigration, whether of members of such groups as Jews, Armenians, and others, or of some internationally-known individuals. In both categories, we are talking about quite poignant cases. The young pianist I mentioned to you falls into the category of someone whose requests to emigrate have been refused. The political importance of resolving such well known cases as the Sakharovs, Anatoliy Shcharanskiy, and Yuri Orlov cannot be overestimated. We are not interested in exploiting these cases. Their resolution will permit greater prominence for other issues in relationship.

I mentioned the need for boldness in dealing with these issues. We are prepared to take some bold steps ourselves in areas that Secretary Baldrige will be willing to discuss. The emigration and trade areas offer some real scope for parallel movement that could benefit both our countries. I hope you and your representatives will discuss these areas candidly with Secretary Baldrige.

I trust that after our discussions in Geneva you have no doubt about my desire to move the relationship between our two countries onto a more constructive path. The issues I have laid out in this letter are serious ones. Progress here would provide an enormous impetus to the resolution of other outstanding problems; lack of progress will only hold us back.

Sincerely,

*Ronald Reagan*

His Excellency Mikhail Gorbachev  
General Secretary of the  
Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of the Soviet Union  
The Kremlin  
Moscow