

Unofficial translation

His Excellency
Ronald W. REAGAN
The President of the United States of America
Washington, D.C.

January 11, 1986

Dear Mr. President,

Your letter of December 7, transmitted through Secretary Baldrige, addressed the questions on which we had a rather thorough discussion in Geneva. At that time I outlined in detail our approach to these questions, and, it seemed to me, you took in what was said with certain understanding.

It is hardly necessary to repeat, that the questions involved pertain to the internal competence of our state and that they are resolved in strict conformity with the laws. I would like only to point out, that the Soviet laws do not create impediments when decisions are taken on the questions regarding departure from the USSR by Soviet citizens who have legal grounds for that. This is attested to also by the fact that as a practical matter the overwhelming majority of such questions is resolved positively.

The existing laws are obligatory to everybody - both to those who apply to leave and those who consider exit applications. Such is the essence of our law and order and nobody is entitled to violate it - whether under any pressure or without it. I would think this should be understood in the the U.S.

We, of course, take into account, that due to various circumstances, divided families appear, which live partially in the USSR and partially - in the USA. Only in the past 5 years there have been over 400 marriages between Soviet and American citizens. And the overwhelming majority of those marriages - to be precise, more that 95 percent - encountered no problems with regard to the reunification of the spouses and to living together. Yes, there are exceptions, and we have frankly and repeatedly told you what they are about. But generally, and I want to stress it once again, questions

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of this kind are resolved by us on the basis of humanism and taking into account the interests of the people concerned.

I share your desire to channel the relationship between our countries to a more constructive course. And the breaks are being put on this process in no way due to the existence of the cases of such sort - though I do not tend to belittle their importance from the point of view of the lives of individual persons - but because of the attempts to blow them out of proportion in the general balance of Soviet-American relations. The key issues in this area are awaiting their resolution.

I would like to note in passing: as it can be seen, the continued attempts by the American side to tie up trade and economic relations with questions of a different nature will bring no benefit. It is high time to take a realistic look at this whole issue from the position of today, rather than yesterday.

It would seem that much will now depend on how accurately we are going to follow jointly the real priorities in our relations, if we wish to bring about their tangible normalization already in the near future. I think, the chances are not bad here.

Sincerely,

M. GORBACHEV

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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January 14, 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: George P. Shultz *JPS*
SUBJECT: Gorbachev Response to Your Human Rights Letter

Dobrynin came by Monday evening to deliver Gorbachev's response to the letter on human rights which Mac Baldrige delivered when he was in Moscow. It smacked of having been drafted by bureaucrats.

The letter is non-polemical in tone, and reiterates the assurance Gorbachev gave you directly that individual cases of divided spouses can be resolved "on the basis of humanism and taking into account the interests of the people concerned." But it holds out little hope of broad-based progress on human rights issues.

As in Geneva, Gorbachev affirms that Soviet law is not a barrier to the emigration of Soviet citizens who meet its criteria, and rejects bending the rules to resolve specific cases. He reiterates that Moscow will not be swayed in this respect by U.S. pressure, and suggests that human rights cases continue to be "blown out of proportion" in the U.S. - Soviet relationship. Finally, he warns "in passing" against attempts to link trade and economic issues to "questions of a different nature."

The letter did not address the three specific cases raised in your letter (Sakharov, Shcharanskiy and Orlov) or those I mentioned in my earlier letter to Shevardnadze. Dobrynin indicated, however, that we could take up specific cases tomorrow with the Soviet Embassy here. We will, of course, do so.

It is not surprising that Gorbachev has formally stayed with the party line on an issue as touchy as this one is for the Soviets. As we have understood from the beginning, the important thing is not what they say, but what they do. The resolution late last week of the case of Irina McClellan's daughter is a sign that the positive steps which began before the Geneva meeting are continuing for the moment. So is the fact that Gorbachev is prepared to continue the dialogue. Disappointing as the substance of Gorbachev's response is, it only underscores the need to consider how we can best encourage and broaden the fragile process underway.

I've attached the Soviets' unofficial translation of Gorbachev's letter.

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 16, 1986

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: George P. Shultz *GPS*
SUBJECT: Further Soviet Response to Your Human Rights Letter

When Dobrynin delivered Gorbachev's response to your letter on human rights Monday, he told me we could take up specific cases with the Soviet Embassy here. To follow up, Mark Palmer asked Soviet Embassy Counselor Isakov to meet with him today.

Isakov came in with a list of individuals who will be allowed to leave the Soviet Union and stated that this gesture was specifically connected to your letter to Gorbachev. We knew of most of the cases, but a number were new, including two cases that you had mentioned in your letter.

In your letter you raised the case of a 77-year-old U.S. citizen who had traveled to the Soviet Union during a school break in 1932 and had not been permitted to leave since that time; Isakov told us he would be given exit permission. You also raised the case of a 16-year-old boy whose father was killed in a car accident last fall, leaving him alone in Leningrad; we were told he will be permitted to join his mother in the U.S.

In addition, the Soviets told us they would resolve a longstanding U.S. citizen case I had raised in a letter to Shevardnadze, as well as four other cases we had raised earlier.

On the negative side, Isakov stated that the Soviets could not resolve two cases you raised: a blind Soviet woman in her sixties who has been separated from her husband for almost thirty years; and the Soviet husband of an American wife and father of two small children in the U.S. The first they could not resolve because her husband had "violated Soviet law" (he defected in 1956); the second, because of "state security".

In addition, they made no response on the Soviet Jewish pianist Vladimir Feltsman; on the general question of increased emigration; or on Sakharov, Shcharansky, and Orlov, all of whom you raised in your letter.

It is encouraging that the Soviets have been prepared to respond to your interest. Isakov left the door open for the resolution of more such cases, but stressed that any overt attempts to "pressure" Moscow would abort the process. His remarks underscore the importance of proceeding with sensitivity as we seek to encourage further progress.

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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

January 27, 1986

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MEMORANDUM FOR VADM JOHN M. POINDEXTER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Gorbachev's Letter of January 11, 1986

The signed Russian-language original of General Secretary Gorbachev's letter to President Reagan dated January 11, 1986, concerning human rights issues and an unofficial English translation provided by the Soviet Embassy are forwarded with this memo.

BMckmley
for Nicholas Platt
Executive Secretary

Attachment: As stated.

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OF CLASSIFIED ENCLOSURES

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