

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 11, 1986

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Thank you for your letter of April 2, which Ambassador Dobrynin delivered. As Ambassador Dobrynin will report to you, your letter served as the point of departure for a very useful meeting we held in my office, and for additional meetings between him and Secretary Shultz. It is clear that both of us are concerned about the relative lack of progress since our meeting in Geneva in moving overall relations in a positive direction. While each of us would cite quite different reasons to explain this situation, I agree with your thought that the important thing now is to focus our attention on how we can solve the concrete problems facing us.

I described to Ambassador Dobrynin a number of goals which I believe we could set for our meeting. This was of course an optimum list. I recognize that achieving these goals will be a complex and difficult process and that we may not be able to achieve them all in the immediate future. I am confident, however, that all can be achieved if we have the will to get to work on them promptly. Furthermore, they are sufficiently important that progress on even a few of them would be a worthwhile achievement.

Although I believe we should not relent in our search for ways to bridge critical differences between our countries, I agree with your observation on the desirability of moving step by step when an overall solution to a problem eludes us. I want to assure you that our proposals, like yours, are not "all or nothing at all." We wish to negotiate, to find compromises that serve the interests of each of us, and to achieve as much progress as possible. If we can make a critical

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breakthrough, that of course would be best. But as we attempt to deal with the key issues, we should simultaneously try to solve as many of the smaller ones as we can in order to develop momentum for dealing successfully with the larger issues.

This applies particularly to the nuclear testing issue, which you mentioned in your letter. Since nuclear testing occurs because we both depend on nuclear weapons for our security, our ability eventually to eliminate testing is intimately connected with our ability to agree on ways to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons themselves. This is why we simply cannot enter into the moratorium you have proposed.

However, there must be practical means by which we can begin resolving our differences on this issue. Congressmen Fascell and Broomfield have reported to me your suggestion that we open a dialogue to discuss both your ideas and ours on this subject. I am prepared to agree to this idea, to have our representatives meet to discuss the principal concerns on both sides without preconditions. If we could agree on concrete verification improvements for the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and Treaty on Peaceful Nuclear Explosions, we would be prepared to support ratification of those treaties and create conditions which would let us move toward our ultimate goal of banning all tests.

I have taken careful note of your suggestion that we meet in Europe to deal with this issue. While I agree that it is very important, it is hard for me to understand the basis for a meeting on our level, devoted solely to this issue, when it has been impossible to arrange for our representatives to discuss it. In any event, our calendars are such that we should be able to arrange the meeting we agreed on in Geneva as soon and as easily as we could arrange a one-purpose meeting in Europe. Wouldn't it be better to treat this issue first at a lower level, in the hope that a way could be found to produce some concrete result when we meet in the United States?

In addition to the substantive suggestions I made to Ambassador Dobrynin, I asked him to convey to you some ideas for procedures we might follow to speed up resolution of the issues we face. I hope you will give them serious consideration.

I am pleased that Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze will be meeting in May to discuss how we can accelerate the preparations for your visit to the U.S. I would hope, however, that we can begin immediately to exchange ideas regarding practical goals we can set, and therefore look forward to receiving your more detailed letter and your reaction to the ideas I presented to Ambassador Dobrynin. I would also like to suggest that you look again at our most recent arms control proposals -- the comprehensive proposal of November 1 and the INF proposal of February 24. I believe there are positive elements in them on which we can build. Both of these proposals were designed to pick up on positive aspects of your proposals and bridge the previous positions of our two sides. They also would provide key elements in implementing the first phase of your proposal of January 15.

In conclusion, I want to convey to you the high regard in which Ambassador Dobrynin is held in our country. He has played a truly distinguished, historic role in relations between our countries for over two decades, and we view his departure from Washington with regret. I understand, however, that his future duties will involve relations between our countries, so that we look forward to working with him in the future as well.

I am certain that Ambassador Dobrynin's successor will be received by American officials and our public with the respect due the representative of

a great nation. I agree with you that the widest possible contacts by our Ambassadors both in Washington and Moscow are important if we are to achieve a greater measure of mutual understanding.

Nancy joins me in sending our warm personal regards to you and Mrs. Gorbacheva.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

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