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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

May 23, 1986

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Since my last letter, a number of events have occurred which neither of us could have predicted. Therefore, it may be useful for you to have my personal thoughts on how we might set relations between our countries in a more positive direction.

Let me begin by expressing my admiration for the courage with which the Soviet people have responded to the recent tragedy at Chernobyl. Dr. Gale has described to us in stirring detail the sacrifices and skill with which your experts are dealing with the human and physical consequences of the disaster. We wish you success in your efforts. Our hearts go out to those Soviet citizens who have been affected by this tragedy. We offer our condolences to the families of those who perished and our good wishes for the recovery and well-being of others affected. We remain ready to help in dealing with the consequences of the tragedy if this is desired.

In your address of May 14, 1986, you made some constructive suggestions for international cooperation in dealing with the safety of nuclear power plants. I agree with you that such action is highly desirable. You will have the full cooperation of the United States in working for effective international arrangements in this area. I would propose that Ambassador Kennedy and Chairman Petrosyants be prepared to discuss in detail what form such cooperation might take when they next meet.

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Mr. General Secretary, it is time to put behind us any misunderstandings arising out of the accident at Chernobyl. I regret that you misinterpreted the motives behind our offers of assistance. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding is all too characteristic of the recent dynamics of our relationship. Following our meeting last fall, I wanted to build on the momentum I felt we had established. I thought we had agreed to accelerate progress in achieving the very specific goals we had set for ourselves. That was why I instructed Secretary Shultz to propose early dates for our next meeting.

In the absence of a response to our proposal, I have sought to communicate to you in our private correspondence, during Secretary Dobrynin's recent visit, and through diplomatic channels specific ideas on what the outcome of a 1986 meeting might be. I described to Secretary Dobrynin, for example, our readiness to reach agreement by the next summit on the key elements of treaties to reduce strategic nuclear forces and eliminate intermediate range nuclear missiles, as well as on methods to remove both the threat of an effective first strike from either side and the use of space for basing weapons of mass destruction. I also indicated that I was prepared for our experts to meet to discuss the important issue of nuclear testing. As you know, we feel that effective verification is the key to further progress in this area, but we are prepared, of course, to give careful consideration to any proposals you wish to advance.

We have, in short, made a good faith effort to set in motion the serious, high-level discussions necessary to prepare for a meeting between us. I regret that it has not been possible to begin them. While there have been positive steps in some areas, we have lost a full six months in dealing with the issues which most merit our personal attention. I hope you will agree that it is time to concentrate on the agenda we set forth in Geneva last November.

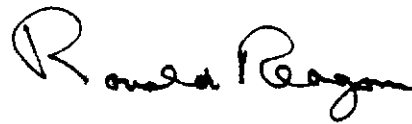
I am prepared to do my part. As I have said, I am eager to achieve tangible practical results at our next meeting. I agree with you that an atmosphere conducive to progress is important. The suggestions I have made, which took careful account of your comments to me on the issues, sought to find a mutually acceptable approach to some of the key issues.

The atmosphere of our relationship is also affected, of course, by what the two of us say publicly. The approach I intend to take in my public statements is to reaffirm my strong personal commitment to achieve concrete progress in all the areas of our relationship during the remaining years of my administration. I hope that in our correspondence we can begin to make such progress.

I would also propose that we arrange for our Foreign Ministers to meet to review these critical matters as soon as possible. If it is more convenient for Minister Shevardnadze to have the meeting in Europe than in Washington, that would be acceptable to us.

Mr. General Secretary, our recent history provides ample evidence that, if we wait for an ideal moment to try to resolve our differences, we are unlikely to resolve anything. This is the moment which has been given us. We should take advantage of it since it is a time of historic and possibly unique potential. Let us not lose it for lack of effort.

Sincerely yours,



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