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NLS F99-051 #328

Unofficial translation

BY Amf NARA, DATE 10/16/00

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

RR

December 5, 1985

Dear Mr. President,

In this message of mine I would like to express some considerations and proposals as a follow-up to our exchange of views.

After the Geneva meeting we have a common task - to do all that is necessary and possible so that its results which were met with satisfaction everywhere, be reinforced by practical agreements and measures leading to the termination of the arms race, strengthening of the security of all states and revitalization of the situation in the world. This is precisely what is expected of us as leaders of the two major powers.

The Soviet-American talks on nuclear and space weapons are, of course, of special importance. We favor achieving real progress at these talks, as well as at the conference in Stockholm, at the negotiations in Vienna and in other fora.

But there is an issue where concrete and rather weighty and tangible results can be achieved already now. This is the issue of stopping nuclear tests.

The Soviet Union unilaterally introduced since August 6 and has been observing a moratorium on all nuclear explosions. There is no need to dwell upon the seriousness of this step. To take such a decision was not a simple matter for us. The Soviet side has its own programs, concrete practical needs. For that reason a time

period through which the moratorium would remain in effect was set- until January 1, 1986. As we have stated, the USSR is ready to refrain from conducting nuclear explosions even further, though, naturally, on the basis of reciprocity. I wish to reaffirm that again. If, however, no positive response to this goodwill gesture of ours comes from the US, the unilateral commitments of the USSR will be void after the announced date.

We would not like it to happen. Although we do not have much time at our disposal, there is still enough time for the American side to carefully analyze this question again and to review it in broad political terms. I wish to reiterate the thought which I have already expressed to you: if there is a genuine intention to work towards stopping the nuclear arms race, a mutual moratorium cannot be objected to, while it would bring great benefits.

Indeed - what can be the objective obstacles to our joint suspension of nuclear weapon tests? I am convinced that there are no such obstacles. For in that case our countries would, in fact, be in an equal position.

Sometimes, of course, they refer to the difficulties of verification. But there is no basis whatsoever to dramatize this problem, either. We both know that the USSR and the US possess very sophisticated national technical means making it possible to verify reliably the fact of the absence of nuclear explosions. An additional guarantee of ensuring the confidence of the sides that the moratorium is being observed would be renouncing - as the Soviet Union has done now - any nuclear explosions - for peaceful, as well as military purposes.

If, however, some doubts regarding verification remain, this, given agreement on the main point, is a problem which, in our view, can be solved. One can take up, for example, the proposal of the Delhi "six" - Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Tanzania and Sweden - regarding the creation of verification mechanisms on the territories of these countries. We have already expressed a positive attitude to that.

Moreover. If a mutual moratorium on nuclear explosions is going to be introduced now, we are prepared - and this is what we propose - to agree at the same time on the following: on a reciprocal

basis to give on appropriate requests the opportunity to the observers of both sides to visit the locations of ambiguous phenomena in order to remove possible doubts that such phenomena can be related to nuclear explosions.

In other words, the issue of a mutual moratorium on nuclear explosions is ripe and can be resolved as a practical matter. And if one is to speak of the political significance of such a joint step, then, certainly, it would give quite a definite signal to other nuclear powers, too, would create a qualitatively new situation much more favorable for a positive development of the process started in Geneva, for taking effective practical steps to curb the nuclear arms race.

The resumption of the trilateral negotiations on the general and complete prohibition of nuclear weapon tests would also be a tangible step in that direction. The overwhelming majority of states quite definitely speaks in favor of that, as was clearly stated in the U.N., at the recent NPT review conference, in other prestigious international organizations.

I would like to reaffirm our readiness for such negotiations and I specifically propose that they be resumed next January, for example, in Geneva. I believe that, should you accept, we could jointly come to terms on this matter with the British, too.

Mr. President, I found it necessary to address in this message a very important, serious question in the spirit of frankness which permeated our meetings and conversations in Geneva.

On behalf of the Soviet leadership I would like to reaffirm that we favor the implementation of those understandings of principle, which were reached between us. It is precisely in this vein that I address you.

We do not see any genuinely convincing reasons, why the USSR and US could not make a joint step - to mutually discontinue nuclear explosions. A political decision is required in this case. And we would like to hope that such a decision will be taken by the US Administration.

Sincerely,

M. GORBACHEV



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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520 SYSTEM II
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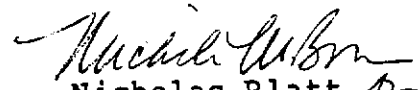
SECRET/SENSITIVE

December 26, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR VADM JOHN M. POINDEXTER
THE WHITE HOUSE

SUBJECT: GORBACHEV LETTER ON NUCLEAR TESTING

The Soviet Embassy has transmitted to us the signed original letter from General Secretary Gorbachev to President Reagan on nuclear testing, dated December 5, 1985. In forwarding it to you, we have enclosed an English language translation.


Nicholas Platt
Executive Secretary

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United States Department of State

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Washington, D.C. 20520

December 19, 1985

MEMORANDUM

TO: Admiral John M. Poindexter
Deputy Assistant to the President
National Security Affairs

FROM: Ambassador Max M. Kampelman *M. Kampelman*

SUBJECT: Response to Gorbachev's Letter on Nuclear Testing

Even though I believe that Option A is not likely adequately to match the public appeal of the Gorbachev proposal, I hesitate to recommend Option B and be contrary to the strong recommendation from the Joint Chiefs, even though I have not seen and do not fully appreciate the reasons behind their objections to Option B.

Our current policy on testing does not have high public credibility as reflected in wide-spread Congressional skepticism. It is, therefore, essential that Option A, were it to be accepted by the President, be significantly beefed up with a clear indication by the President that he would like to recommend to the Senate the ratification of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) of 1974 banning underground testing above 150 kilotons and the companion Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET) of 1976.

The United States should not take steps which might endanger our security interests simply for the sake of satisfying what we perceive to be public or Congressional pressures. We are, however, fully complying with both treaties without getting any bargaining or public relations credit for it. The treaties were not ratified because of concerns about verification. My recent visits to Los Alamos and Livermore have persuaded me that new technological developments make the verification problem much more manageable. I am told that two to three calibration shots per side could settle this problem for us by substantially reducing uncertainty in yield estimation.

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In my judgment, the President's response to Gorbachev should note the fact that an undoubted irritant in our bilateral relationships is the fact that the United States negotiated and then signed these two treaties without ratifying them. The President should assert he wants to eliminate that irritant and his proposal for an experts meeting to find common ground is designed toward that end.

Ratification is not a "slippery slope" toward a pressure to adopt a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB). It would open the door to the principle of on-site inspection and would lessen pressures from Allies and the Congress. It would also serve to test Gorbachev's earnestness in seeking to improve arms control progress with us.

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