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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

5 September, 1985

NUCLEAR TESTING:MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER FROM MR. GORBACHEV

Thank you for your letter of 4 September enclosing a draft reply from the Prime Minister to Mr. Gorbachev's recent message about nuclear testing.

The Prime Minister has signed a slightly amended version of the message which I enclose. But careful thought is required as to the best timing and channel of delivery. I should be grateful for advice on this. My own view is that it would probably be best to wait until the end of next week. In the light of your advice, we will date the original and send it to you for delivery.

(C.D. Powell)

L. Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 September 1985

Dear Charles,

Nuclear Testing: Message to the Prime Minister from Mr Gorbachev

We sent you on 29 August the text of a message to the Prime Minister from Mr Gorbachev on nuclear testing issues, which was handed over to Mr Rifkind here the previous afternoon by the Soviet Charge d'Affaires; I now enclose a revised translation by our Research Department of the original Russian text. The Soviet Charge asked whether the Soviet side could expect a reply, and Mr Rifkind said that early thought would be given to a proper response. We have deferred sending a draft reply in case it was swiftly overtaken by Sir Bryan Cartledge's call on Mr Gorbachev, but with this still not fixed we feel a response should not be delayed any longer.

The first part of the Gorbachev message deals with the Soviet unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, to last until the end of this year. Interestingly, it does not call upon us to associate ourselves with this Soviet move, but merely argues for joint US/Soviet action. The message then recalls the earlier (UK/US/Soviet) negotiations on a comprehensive test ban (CTB), which the moratorium move is designed to repromote. Mr Gorbachev suggests that resuming those negotiations would correspond to international interests and hopes that we will be able "to adopt a political position which will promote a positive solution of this most important problem".

The message therefore does not make any specific proposals for action by HMG. It appears to be part of the current Soviet propaganda initiative, designed to capitalise on the revived international interest in nuclear testing issues as a result of the present Review Conference of the NPT and the possibility of some movement in arms control as a result of the November Summit. Our arguments against favouring the Soviet moratorium were set out in FCO guidance telno 119 (of which I enclose a copy). We do not believe that the latest message requires a wholesale reassessment of our policy on this point. Nor, without further (and possibly time-consuming) consultations with the Americans about their preparations for the Summit, will we be well-placed to give any sort of substantive response to the implicit suggestion by Mr Gorbachev that the CTB negotiations might be

/resumed.

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resumed. In short, the subject of nuclear testing is not a particularly fruitful one in which to try to engage the Russians in a substantive dialogue, at least at this stage.

We therefore recommend a relatively brief reply from the Prime Minister on the moratorium, but one which makes clear that she would welcome a continuing, if occasional, dialogue by letter on arms control issues. I enclose a draft upon which she may care to draw. (We have flagged chemical weapons at the end of the draft as a subject on which further exchanges can be worthwhile; from our point of view, it would certainly be more so than correspondence on the CTB.) Before entering a more substantive dialogue with Mr Gorbachev, we see advantage in pursuing with the Americans their ideas in the run-up to the Summit; on this we shall shortly be sending further advice as requested.

If the Prime Minister is content, we would brief Allies in NATO on this exchange, in addition to having a more detailed discussion with the Americans as part of our bilateral contacts in the run-up to the Summit. We have already heard from the Italians that Craxi has received a similar message on this subject (presumably minus the final substantive paragraph). It is likely, in this case, that a wide range of allies are also recipients.

I am sending copies of this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD), and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,
L V Appleyard*

(L V Appleyard)

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despach/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM: Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: Mr Mikhail Gorbachev

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

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PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

I am writing to thank you for your message of 26 August which was delivered through your Embassy here last week. ~~I attach much importance to this type of substantive exchange between us.~~

CAVEAT.....

~~I certainly recognise the arguments behind your announcement of a moratorium in your nuclear testing programme until the end of this year, and I was most grateful for the further elaboration in your letter on the detailed public statement you made on this subject in July. At the same time I hope that you for your part will accept that the reservations expressed earlier by my Government are genuine, and are based on an honest disagreement about the prospects of substantive progress in this area being advanced as a direct result of your proposal. I can however assure you that I shall continue to study these difficult issues in the light of what you have said.~~

I recognize force for your decision to

You also referred to a resumption of the previous negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban, which were suspended in 1980. ~~As you may know, we for our part declared our agreement recently, at the Review Conference in Geneva of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, that a properly verified Treaty of this nature which met the security /interests~~

Enclosures—flag(s).....

interests of all parties would be a significant contribution to containing the proliferation of nuclear arms.

Nonetheless, as you ^{yourself} rightly mentioned, we continue to face substantive difficulties in achieving the necessary degree of verification, difficulties which we outlined in detail in a paper tabled in July at the Conference on Disarmament. While my Government remains fully committed to seeking progress towards a Comprehensive Test Ban, we ~~do~~ believe that these difficulties cannot be lightly brushed aside. My ~~present~~ ^{at present,} view therefore, is that a resumption of the negotiations to which you referred would be premature; ~~while solutions to them have begun to be worked out. But I must emphasise that, as in the past, we will continue to~~ lend our best efforts towards the search for ~~such~~ solutions ^{to}

I hope that at our meeting here last December and in subsequent discussion, ^{so} ~~on~~ which I ~~have~~ placed the highest ^{a very high} value, I left you in no doubt about the sincerity of my own ^{attach great importance,} commitment and that of my Government to achieving progress in the vital field of arms control. I therefore welcome this opportunity to continue the dialogue between us on these subjects, and for my part would be most glad to engage in further exchanges on arms control questions. I was pleased, ^{to} to learn, ~~for example,~~ of ^{the} contacts between our officials in July on the ~~important matter of~~ chemical weapons, where I trust we can find some new common ground which will enable ~~these~~ negotiations to move ahead.

In conclusion I would like to underline my hope that the current negotiations you are conducting with the United States in Geneva and your meeting with President Reagan in November will produce the sort of substantive progress which we are all anxious to see.

in difficulties which we have both identified.

in particular,