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SUBJECT



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UNION: RELATIONS

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10 DOWNING STREET

Handwritten notes: "K... SA", "cc to Lord President", "Mr Peacock"

THE PRIME MINISTER

19 May 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 91/86

Dear Mr. Gorbachev,

Thank you for your letter, which Mr. Zamyatin delivered to me immediately after his arrival in London and before I went to Tokyo. Like you, I attach great importance to the development of links between Britain and the Soviet Union and the personal dialogue which we developed at Chequers and in Moscow. In this reply I shall concentrate on the issues of arms control which you raised in your letter. I am also asking Lord Whitelaw to give you an oral account of some of the discussions which I had at the Tokyo Summit.

Comprehensive Test Ban

You referred to the urgency of negotiating an end to nuclear testing. I have made clear to you that the British Government favours progress towards a Comprehensive Test Ban. But political will alone is not enough. As I have said before, an adequate verification system remains essential for progress in this field. All parties to an agreement, as you have said, must have the confidence in compliance which such verification alone can bring. It is certainly in both your and our interests to provide a complete guarantee of strict compliance with a nuclear test ban. I hope that our representatives at the Conference on Disarmament can co-operate with others to move forward in this field.

Handwritten initials "LP"

Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces

I have also indicated the importance I attach to the elimination of Soviet and American intermediate-range nuclear missiles. I want to see global elimination of these mobile systems. President Reagan's proposal of 24 February provides a realistic basis for such elimination in a way that would give both sides the assurance of security. I hope that now that the Fifth Round is under way at Geneva it will be possible to make progress towards this objective. As to British nuclear forces, I am sure you will understand that I am not prepared to allow them to become obsolescent. If Soviet and US strategic arsenals were to be very substantially reduced and if no significant changes had occurred in Soviet defensive capability, we should be prepared to review our position in the light of the reduced threat.

Conventional Forces

I was encouraged by your comments on conventional forces, and your clear statement of the need "to get down to this problem in real earnest". I agree that we must seek greater stability, and lower levels of forces, in the conventional field throughout the whole of Europe. But I was not clear how the general ideas you put forward in your speech in East Berlin will relate to the current negotiations under way in Stockholm and Vienna. I would like to know more about your thinking on this. I certainly hope that in both sets of talks your proposals indicate a Soviet readiness now to make real progress. In my previous letter I mentioned my disappointment at the Eastern response to the West's proposals at Vienna, which in my view were a major step forward. There too, verification is the key to progress.

Chemical Weapons

Recently, we have seen some new proposals from your side on chemical weapons. These are a small step forward. We are seriously worried about the imbalance between the chemical weapons capability of the United States and the Soviet Union. The proliferation of these weapons and their use in the Gulf

3

War makes even more urgent a renewed effort to reach agreement in Geneva on a global chemical weapons ban. This will require agreement on an adequate regime for challenge inspection. We are using our Chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee at the Conference on Disarmament in the most constructive way we can. I hope you will instruct your negotiators to do the same, particularly on challenge inspection.

Strategic Nuclear Forces and Space Defence Issues

In your letter you concentrated on three issues: nuclear test ban, intermediate-range nuclear forces and conventional forces. I assume that you also continue to give high priority to the negotiations on strategic nuclear forces and space/defence issues, which have just been resumed in Geneva. It is to Geneva that we look for the basis of a new US/Soviet relationship, founded on practical considerations which you and I have discussed in the past. I urge you again to consider the points I put to you on these topics in my February letter. These are key areas of arms control for the Soviet Union as for the West.

Verification

I was encouraged by your comments on your approach to verification, as I have been by a number of statements you have made on this theme in recent months. Those general precepts now need to be given substance by your negotiators at Vienna, Stockholm and Geneva.

The difficulties over provision of information on the Chernobyl accident have also highlighted the critical importance of openness and verification to the whole arms control process.

Compliance

In Tokyo President Reagan told me once more of his serious concern that on certain specific matters the Soviet Union is not in compliance with existing arms control agreements. I believe the matter has been raised in the

Standing Consultative Committee provided for by the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. I find statements that the Soviet Union is fully complying with its obligations difficult to match with the information available to me. As you know we have our own concerns on this subject: we have raised with you on numerous occasions the acute and legitimate concern about the construction of a large phased array radar near Krasnoyarsk. I see it as vitally important that states should stand by, and be seen to stand by, their treaty commitments: and I regard the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty as being particularly important if the confidence necessary for arms control agreements is to be restored. I believe that Western concerns on this score must be met if we are to make further progress on arms control.

I welcomed the initiative you took in writing to me before the Tokyo Summit. The subjects under debate between us are of high importance to both our countries, to our respective Allies, and to the whole international community. Sir Geoffrey Howe and I look forward to further discussion of them with Mr. Shevardnadze during his visit here, and I welcome the indication in your message that it will be possible to arrange this soon. I hope in due course that you and I can resume our own direct talks on these matters.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Mikhail Gorbachev

Mr. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev