

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE



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SERIAL No. ~~TS/TA/18610~~ DOWNING STREET

OPS cc: subject LONDON SW1A 2AA  
Soviet Union: Relations PTb.  
master.

THE PRIME MINISTER

20 August 1986

Dear Mr. Gorbachev,

I was very pleased to welcome Mr. Shevardnadze to Britain and to receive from him your letter of 10 July, together with your invitation to visit the Soviet Union. I accept with pleasure and hope that my visit might take place in the first half of next year.

I read the comments in your letter about relations between the United States and Soviet Union with great care. I have since been in touch with President Reagan. He has confirmed that, like you, he is very keen to have a second summit and that he wants it to yield results. It is hard to imagine that any successor could be as well-placed as he is to persuade Congress to ratify the arms control agreements which I hope a Summit would reach.

I dealt with many of the arms control issues mentioned in your letter in my discussions with Mr. Shevardnadze. Without repeating what I said to him, I thought I should let you know how I believe progress can be made in the months ahead.

President Reagan has told me of the response he has now sent you on the latest Soviet proposals at the Geneva talks. The response was made after close consultation with me and the proposals have my full support. They should serve as the basis for rapid progress towards the agreements at Geneva. It seems to me that the United States and the Soviet Union should continue to work towards the objective of 50 per cent

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cuts in strategic weapons which you and President Reagan identified at your meeting last November, although I accept that more modest cuts as a first step towards this should not be ruled out. The complete elimination of longer range INF missiles remains a worthwhile goal we should aim at. But I would also support an interim agreement, which you and President Reagan endorsed at Geneva. Such an agreement must of course address the problem on a global basis, and must provide for appropriate constraints on shorter range missiles.

I welcome your affirmation that Britain's national defence forces are not a subject of the Geneva negotiations. As I emphasised to Mr. Shevardnadze, the United Kingdom intends to maintain its independent deterrent, and to modernise it as necessary so that it remains fully effective.

You well know the importance which the United Kingdom attaches to the abolition of chemical weapons. I hope that the Soviet Union will respond positively to our recent initiative on challenge inspection. We now have an opportunity to rid the world of these terrible weapons for good. We should seize it.

I agree with you on the importance of conventional arms control and the need to achieve balance at lower levels of armed forces. There is not much time left at Stockholm. But I hope that we can get a significant result, and also make progress in the long-running negotiations on MBFR in Vienna.

I very much welcome the practice of regular exchanges between us following your visit to this country two years ago. I look forward to renewing contact in person in Moscow, and to continuing our discussion on these vital issues.

Yours sincerely  
Margaret Thatcher

Mr. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev