

Mikhail Gorbachev Letter to Ronald Reagan, December 5, 1985

Dear Mr. President!

In this message to you I would like to express several thoughts and proposals in development of our exchange of opinions.

After the Geneva summit, we [now] have a common task—to do everything necessary and possible so that the results of the summit, which were received with satisfaction everywhere, would be supported by practical agreements and measures leading to the cessation of the arms race, strengthening of security of all states, and improving the situation in the world. This is what is expected from us as leaders of the two greatest powers.

Of course, the Soviet-American negotiations on nuclear and space weapons have a special significance. We are in favor of achieving real progress in these negotiations, as well as at the conference at Stockholm, at the negotiations in Viena, and in other forums.

However, there is an issue on which we could achieve concrete results already now, and tangible results at that. This is the issue of stopping nuclear testing.

The Soviet Union introduced a moratorium on all nuclear explosions [starting] from August 6 of this year unilaterally and has been abiding by this moratorium. There is no need to speak about the seriousness of this step. It was not easy for us to take such a decision. The Soviet side has its own programs and concrete practical needs. Therefore, the duration of the moratorium was established to last until January 1, 1986. As we announced, the Soviet Union was willing to abstain from nuclear testing in the future, but of course only on the basis of reciprocity. I reconfirm this again. However, if there would be no positive response to this gesture of good will on the U.S. part, then the unilateral obligations of the Soviet Union would lose its force after the announced deadline.

We would like to see that this does not happen. Although we have only very little time left, it is sufficient for the American side to weigh this issue carefully once again, and to consider it in a wide political perspective. I would repeat the thought which I already stated to you: if there exists a genuine intention to work for stopping the nuclear arms race, then a reciprocal moratorium cannot cause objections, and it would be of a considerable benefit.

Truly, what objective obstacles could there be that could prevent us from jointly stopping tests of nuclear weapons? I am convinced that there are no such obstacles, because here our countries would find themselves essentially in an equal situation.

Sometimes, however, the difficulties of inspection have been cited. And yet, there are no grounds for dramatizing this problem. We both know that the USSR, as well as the United States, possess quite advanced national technical means, which allow them

to reliably establish that there was no nuclear testing going on. A refusal, as the Soviet Union did it now, to conduct any nuclear explosions either for military or peaceful purposes would become an additional guarantee to ensure both sides' confidence in the fact that the moratorium was being upheld.

However, if there would remain some doubts on the issues of inspections, this, in our opinion, is a problem that could be solved, granted that the general agreement existed. We can use, for example, the proposal of the Deli "Six" – Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Tanzania, and Sweden – regarding creating of control mechanisms in the territories of those countries. We already expressed our positive attitude to that proposal.

I would say more. If we establish a reciprocal moratorium on nuclear explosions now, we are willing—and we propose—to simultaneously agree on the following: to give an opportunity for observers of both countries to visit the locations of questionable phenomena, on a mutual basis and upon a corresponding request – in order to remove any possible doubts that such phenomena could be related to nuclear explosions.

In other words, the issue of a mutual moratorium on nuclear explosions is ripe and could be resolved in practice. At the same time, if one speaks about the political meaning of such a joint step, of course it would give quite a definite signal to other nuclear powers as well, and would create a qualitatively new situation—a much more favorable one for a positive development of the process begun in Geneva for achievement of effective practical measures, for curtailing the nuclear arms race.

Undoubtedly a renewal of the three-party negotiations about full and universal ban on testing of nuclear weapons would be a real step in the same direction. The absolute majority of states speak in favor of this with great certainty, which was clearly stated at the UN at the recent conference, which considered the implementation of the Treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and in other authoritative international organizations.

I would like to confirm our readiness for such negotiations, and I propose concretely to restart them in January of the next year, for example in Geneva. I believe that if we have your agreement, we could find a joint agreement with the British on this issue.

Mr. President, I thought it was necessary to speak to you in this message on this very important and serious issue in the spirit of openness, which characterized our meetings and discussions in Geneva.

On behalf of the Soviet leadership I would like to confirm that we are in favor of realization of those principal understandings which were achieved between us. It is precisely in this framework that I am addressing you now.

We do not see any genuine convincing reason why the USSR and the United States could not take a joint step to stop nuclear explosions on a mutual basis. A political

decision is required here. And I would like to hope that this decision would be made by the US administration.

With respect,

M.S. Gorbachev