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26/8/85

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE TRANSLATION [BY
SERIAL No. T153 6/85 RESEARCH DEPT., FCO]

Dear Madame Prime Minister,

I address you on a matter which in the present situation is of very great importance. Namely, the problem of the cessation of nuclear weapon tests.

We have given careful thought to this problem, among others, from the point of view of seeking solutions which would be comparatively simple and at the same time sufficiently effective in terms of achieving the objective of stopping the nuclear arms race. This has resulted in the decision of the Soviet Union to establish with effect from 6 August 1985 a unilateral moratorium on all nuclear explosions and in our approaching the American Administration with a proposal that they follow our example.

The main point in ceasing nuclear weapon tests, as we see it, is that it would place a serious obstacle in the way of creating more and more new kinds and types of these weapons of mass destruction. In effect, a brake would be applied to the nuclear arms race. Furthermore, in the absence of tests existing nuclear arsenals would in fact be doomed to gradual obsolescence. In other words, the possibility would be opened up for practical progress towards delivering mankind from the nuclear threat.

Thus there is absolutely no case here of a desire on our part, which some have attributed to us, to produce a propaganda effect. The seriousness of our intentions is shown also by the fact that, having imposed upon ourselves a moratorium on nuclear explosions with effect from 6 August, we gave the other side a substantial period of time - until 1 January 1986 - to weigh up our proposal in all seriousness and to take a corresponding constructive decision. At the same time, the establishment of that specific time limit is a natural insurance policy in case the American leadership does not show readiness to reciprocate. If however its response is positive, you can be absolutely sure that the USSR will continue to abide by the moratorium beyond 1 January next year. We would like to hope that we shall not have to revoke the declared moratorium on nuclear explosions.

/Frankly

Frankly speaking, Madame Prime Minister, we cannot understand how the cessation of nuclear weapon tests by the two major nuclear powers - the Soviet Union and the United States - could fail to have a favourable effect on the interests of all States, including Britain. Indeed, it would in practice mean the renunciation by the USSR and the USA of a further build-up of their nuclear arsenals. By declaring the moratorium the Soviet Union has clearly spoken in favour of precisely that.

In our opinion, and we are not alone in it, the technical means already in the possession of many countries provide the necessary degree of confidence for monitoring that obligations not to conduct nuclear explosions are being observed. Incidentally, we opted for the cessation specifically of all nuclear explosions - whether military or peaceful - so that even less would there be any grounds for doubts that nuclear weapons might possibly be being tested under the cover of peaceful nuclear explosions. Thus, verification can become a problem only if the main requirement, ie the desire to stop nuclear weapon tests, is lacking.// It is self-evident that the most effective and, I would add, the most correct step, would be a decision on the complete and general cessation of nuclear weapon tests ie a decision to which all the nuclear powers would be party. We proceed from the premise that a Soviet/American moratorium on nuclear explosions - if the United States accept our proposal - would serve as a weighty incentive to the attainment of this objective.

We regard a moratorium not as an end in itself but as one effective means which opens up the way to agreement on the banning of nuclear weapons under appropriate verification.

Madame Prime Minister, since Britain was a direct participant in the previously held tripartite negotiations on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapon tests, you will, I believe, be well aware how far the sides had advanced at that time in the

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working out of mutually acceptable solutions, including those relating to verification. The resumption of these negotiations with a view to completing the work already begun would, we are convinced, correspond with the fundamental interests of all peoples.

I would like to hope that Britain will be able to adopt a political position which will promote a positive solution of this most important problem.

Respectfully yours,

M. Gorbachev

26 August 1985