

SUBJECT CC MASTER
OPS



PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 208/85

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

7 November 1985

Dear Mr. Gorbachev.

Thank you for your letter of 12 October. I agree with you entirely about the vital importance of arms control. We rightly devoted a substantial part of our conversations at Chequers last year to the subject, in particular to ways to achieve security and stability at lower levels of offensive weapons. We in Britain support the negotiations on which you have embarked with the United States in Geneva. I welcome the fact that both you and President Reagan have tabled proposals for substantial reductions in nuclear weapons and believe that there now exists a real basis for progress at your meeting on 19/20 November. I hope you and the President will join together there in giving clear instructions to the Geneva negotiators to engage in detailed negotiations on these proposals.

I welcome your expression of the Soviet Union's readiness to continue exchanges of view between our two countries on arms control matters. As you say, it is important that European Governments should talk to each other about the issues affecting the future of our continent. The British nuclear missile force is of course strategic in character. It is also of the minimum size consistent with its requirements as a deterrent force. Our position remains that, if Soviet and US strategic arsenals were to be very

substantially reduced and if no significant changes had occurred in Soviet defensive capability, we would want to review our position in the light of the reduced threat. Until that time discussions could not take on the characteristics of a negotiation about British forces. I note with satisfaction that this is not your intention either.

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I am glad that you confirm that an INF agreement can be reached between the Soviet Union and United States separately from the other two agenda items at Geneva. As you know, my firm view is that the objective of this negotiation should be equal global limits on US and Soviet longer range INF systems, together with collateral restraints on shorter range systems. Your acknowledgement that negotiations on LRINF must be between yourselves and the Americans (and not with us) provides the right way forward. I fully endorse President Reagan's proposals on this issue. Agreement on these lines, coupled with NATO's already announced reductions in its shorter range systems, could be a real step towards the enhanced stability at lower levels of nuclear systems in Europe.

I should like to remain in touch with you about these issues. I suggest that exchanges should also be continued between Foreign Ministers and form an important part of the agenda when Mr Shevardnadze visits Britain. I hope that a date for such a visit can soon be agreed.

You and President Reagan carry all our hopes and good wishes for the success of your meeting.

Yours sincerely
Mikhail Gorbachev

Mr M S Gorbachev.