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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

29 August 1985

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Prime Minister.

This is the letter the Charge d'Affaires passed to Mr. Rifkind yesterday. It is about the Soviet recognition of nuclear tests. FCO are providing a draft reply, in consultation with MOD.

— MEA 29/8

Dear Mark,

Message from Gorbachev

The Soviet Charge d'Affaires, Parchine, called on Mr Rifkind as planned yesterday afternoon. He handed over a message to the Prime Minister from Gorbachev. I enclose a copy of the unofficial translation which he handed over at the same time.

I will let you have our comments plus a draft reply as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely,
Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

Mark Addison Esq
10 Downing Street

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Mr Parkerham ACID) ✓
News Dept
Research Dept
Defense Dept
Mr Jenkins

Unofficial translation

Esteemed Mrs. Prime-Minister,

Handed to Mr
Rifkin by
Mr Parkerham
(Soviet charge)
at 1630 on
28 August
May 1985
Soviet Dept
28/8

I address You on a matter which is of quite big importance in the present situation. It is the problem of cessation of nuclear weapons' tests.

We gave to this problem, among others, a thorough consideration from the point of view of search for such solutions, which could be relatively simple and, simultaneously, sufficiently effective with the view to achieve the aim of stopping nuclear arms race. As a result came the decision by the Soviet Union to impose from August 6, 1985 a unilateral moratorium on all nuclear explosions and the appeal to the American administration with the proposal to follow our example.

The main sense of cessation of nuclear weapons' tests, as we see it, is that it would raise a serious barrier on the way of creation of new and ever new kinds and types of these weapons of mass destruction. In essence, nuclear arms race would be hampered. Even more so, in the absence of tests the existing nuclear arsenals would be actually doomed to gradual moral and physical ageing. Putting it otherwise, a possibility would open up for practical progress on the way of deliverance of mankind from the nuclear threat.

Thus, it is certainly not the case of a desire to achieve a propagandist effect, as attributed to us by some. The fact that we, having imposed for ourselves the moratorium on nuclear explosions since August 6, offered the other side considerable time - till January 1, 1986 in order to measure with all seriousness our proposal and adopt appropriate constructive decision, speaks of the seriousness of our intentions. At the same time, the imposition of the above-mentioned specific time limit - is a natural warrant in the case if the American leadership does not show readiness to reciprocate. If the answer is positive, you can be assured that the USSR will stick to the moratorium further on, after January 1 of the next year. We would wish to hope that we will not have to revoke the declared moratorium on nuclear explosions.

To say frankly, Mrs. Prime Minister, it is not clear for us why cessation of nuclear weapons' tests by two major nuclear powers - the Soviet Union and the United States - could not impress the interests of all states, including Britain. That would practically mean a rejection by the USSR and the USA of further build up of their nuclear arsenals. By declaring the moratorium the Soviet Union has clearly spoken just in favour of that.

In our and not only in our opinion, the already existing technical means of many countries provide the necessary degree of confidence to check that the obligations not to exercise nuclear explosions are fulfilled. Incidentally, we came out for cessation of precisely all nuclear explosions - both for military and peaceful purposes - especially in order not to leave grounds for doubts whether nuclear weapons are tested under the cover of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. Thus, control can become a problem only when a main thing is lacking - a wish to stop nuclear weapons tests.

Of course it is clear that the most effective and, I will add, the most right thing, would be a decision on total and universal nuclear weapons' test ban, to which all nuclear powers would be participants. We proceed from the fact that the Soviet-American moratorium on nuclear explosions - if the United States accept our proposal - would serve as a weighty incentive for achieving this goal.

We do not consider a moratorium as an end in itself, but as one of the effective means which opens a way to an agreement on a ban of nuclear weapons under an appropriate control.

Mrs. Prime Minister, since Britain was a direct participant to the tripartite talks on total and universal ban on nuclear weapons, which were held previously, I believe that You are well aware about how far did the sides advance then in working out of mutually acceptable decisions, including the issue of control. The resumption of these talks in order to finish the work, which had been started, would correspond, in our conviction, to the fundamental interests of all peoples.

We would like to hope that Britain will be able to take up such a political position which will contribute to a positive solution of this most important problem.

Sincerely yours,

M. GORBACHYOV

August 26, 1985