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DRAFT PRIVATE LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO GORBACHEV

Dear Mr. General Secretary: *Gorbachev* RR

Now that we are both home and facing the task of leading our countries into a more constructive relationship with each other, I wanted to waste no time in giving you some of my initial thoughts on our meetings. Though I will be sending shortly, in a more formal and official manner, a more detailed commentary on our discussions, there are some things I would like to convey very personally and privately.

First, I want you to know that I found our meetings of great value. We had agreed to speak frankly, and we did. As a result, I came away from the meeting with a better understanding of your attitudes. I hope you also understand mine a little better. Obviously there are many things on which we disagree, and disagree very fundamentally. But if I understood you correctly, you too are determined to take steps to see that our nations manage their relations in a peaceful fashion. If this is the case, then this is one point on which we are in total agreement -- and it is after all the most fundamental one of all.

As for our substantive differences, let me offer some thoughts on two of the key ones.

Regarding strategic defense and its relation to the reduction of offensive nuclear weapons, I was struck by your conviction that the American program is somehow designed to secure a strategic advantage -- even to permit a first strike ^{and test} capability. I also noted your concern that research in this area could be a cover for developing and placing offensive weapons in space.

As I told you, neither of these concerns ^{is warranted.} ~~has any foundation in reality.~~ But I can understand, as you explained so eloquently, that these are matters which cannot be taken on faith. ~~Of course this is true, and I do not expect you to take my assurances on faith.~~ Both of us must ^{deal} with the reality of what the other side is doing, and judge the implications for the security of ~~our~~ own countries. ^{I do not ask you to take my assurances on faith.} ~~truth~~

However, ^{using} the objective reality is that the United States has no intention ~~to use~~ its strategic defense program to gain any advantage, and there is no development underway to create space-based offensive weapons. Our ~~objective~~ ^{purpose} is to eliminate any possibility of a first strike from either side. This being the case, we should be able to find the way, in practical terms, to ~~eliminate~~ ^{relieve} the concerns you have expressed.

For example, could our negotiators, when they resume work in January, discuss frankly and specifically what sort of future developments each of us would find threatening? Neither of us, it seems, wants to see offensive weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction, deployed in space. Should we not attempt to



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define what sort of systems have that potential and then try to find verifiable ways to prevent their development?

And can't our negotiators deal more frankly and openly with the question of how to eliminate a first-strike potential on both sides? Your military now has an advantage in this area -- a three to one advantage in warheads that can destroy hardened ^{alarming} ~~warheads~~ targets with little warning. That is obviously ~~worrisome~~ to us, and explains many of the efforts we are making in our modernization program. You may perhaps feel that the U.S. has some advantages in other categories. If so, let's insist that our negotiators face up to these issues and find a way to improve the security of both countries by agreeing on appropriately balanced reductions. If you are as sincere as I am in not seeking to secure or preserve one-sided advantages, we will ~~not~~ ^{find} ~~allow~~ a solution to these problems, ~~to solve us.~~

Regarding another key issue we discussed, that of regional conflicts, I can assure you that the United States does not believe that the Soviet Union is the cause of all the world's ills. ^{we do believe} We do believe, however, that your country has exploited and ~~exacerbated~~ local tensions and conflict by militarizing them and, indeed, intervening directly and indirectly in struggles arising out of local causes. While we both will doubtless continue to support our friends, we must find a way to do so without use of armed force. This is the crux of the point I tried to make.

One of the most significant steps in lowering tension in the world -- and tension in U.S.-Soviet relations -- would be a decision on your part to withdraw your forces from Afghanistan. I gave careful attention to your comments on this issue at Geneva, and am encouraged by your statement that you feel political reconciliation is possible. I want you to know that I am prepared to cooperate in any reasonable way to facilitate such a withdrawal, and that I understand that it must be done in a manner which does not damage Soviet security interests. During our meetings I mentioned one idea which I thought might be helpful and I will welcome any further suggestions you may have.

These are only two of the key issues on our current agenda. I will soon send some thoughts on others. I believe that we should act promptly to build the momentum our meetings initiated.

In Geneva, I found our private sessions particularly useful. Both of us ^{have} ~~had~~ advisors and assistants, but, you know, in the final analysis, the responsibility to preserve peace and increase cooperation is ours. Our people look to us for leadership, and nobody can provide it if we don't. But we won't be very effective leaders unless we can rise above the specific but secondary concerns that ~~infect~~ ^{preoccupy} our respective bureaucracies and give our governments a strong push in the right direction.

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So, what I want to say finally is that we should make the most of the time before we meet again to find some specific and significant steps that would give meaning to our commitment to peace and arms reduction. Why not set a goal -- privately, just between the two of us -- to find a practical way to solve ~~the two critical issues~~ I have mentioned by the time we meet in *critical issues* Washington?

Please ^{convey} give regards from Nancy and me to Mrs. Gorbacheva. We genuinely enjoyed meeting you in Geneva and are already looking forward to showing you something of our country next year.

Sincerely yours,

RR



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