

State 391349
December 18, 1987
Conveyed by cover letter
dated Dec. 22, 1987

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I greatly appreciated your message just before my meetings with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev, particularly the comments about your discussion of the Afghanistan problem with Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov.

With General Secretary Gorbachev I underscored the importance of regional issues--particularly Afghanistan--in shaping the long-term character of our relations. I made the obvious point that a settlement depended mainly on the Soviet Union's willingness to set a firm timetable for the prompt departure of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Mr. Gorbachev reiterated the Soviet intention to withdraw, but avoided a specific commitment beyond mentioning with favor Najibullah's recently publicized proposal for the withdrawal of Russian troops in no more than 12 months. He stressed the linkage between the beginning of withdrawals and the end of outside interference, a matter which was settled long ago in the Geneva negotiations. While we continue to agree that future political arrangements should be left to the Afghans, Mr. Gorbachev seems wedded to Najibullah's "unrealistic" coalition approach, rather than accept the need for a fresh start which would have the full support of the Afghan people. We have agreed to continue our discussions, and hope that you, for your part, will continue to share with the Soviets your concerns, along with your realistic assessment of the situation in Afghanistan.

The lack of movement on Afghanistan at the Summit stands in contrast to the giant strides we made towards our goal of meaningful nuclear arms reduction. I appreciate your public praise of this progress and your letter of December 9. The agreement by General Secretary Gorbachev and myself to eliminate an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons is an historic first. This agreement establishes precedents in verification which will be useful as we move to future agreements on arms reductions, including reductions of strategic nuclear weapons. Here too we made important progress. As a result, the General Secretary and I instructed our negotiators in Geneva to work to achieve an agreement on such reductions at the earliest possible date, preferably in time for signature when I go to Moscow next year.

With this progress underway, we must redouble our efforts to address other nuclear issues, including those in South Asia. You raised in your letter the proposal advanced by the Senate Appropriations Committee regarding the Indian and Pakistani nuclear programs, which has since failed to secure the support of the full Senate. I want you to know that there was never any change in this Administration's position on non-proliferation as we discussed during your visit here, or in my strong commitment to our joint effort of strengthening our bilateral ties. I am very conscious of the need to establish an atmosphere of confidence if we are to succeed in these efforts. My Administration will continue working with Congress to that end. We should dedicate ourselves during the next year to implementing the program we agreed on October 20, 1987.

Sincerely yours,

Ronald Reagan

His Excellency Rajiv Gandhi
Prime Minister of India
New Delhi

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