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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

19 January 1984

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 13/14

Dear Ron,

Thank you for your letter of 14 January and the advance copy of your speech on US/Soviet relations which George Shultz gave me on 15 January.

If I may say so, I thought you struck exactly the right note and at the right time. As we enter 1984, and against the background of public disquiet at the Soviet interruption of the arms control talks in Geneva and Vienna, it was good to put on record your willingness to establish a constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union.

As you say, this is a long-term policy. We cannot expect rapid changes. The Soviet system is too rigid for that, as their initial public response to your speech has demonstrated. But I am sure that it is right to try: and that the best way is to engage the Soviet Union in a dialogue on a broad range of questions - bilateral and regional, political and economic. Against this background it may be easier to make progress on arms control issues.

My views on the arms control problem are very much in line with yours. I warmly welcome your aim to reduce nuclear arsenals and to create greater stability and confidence. It would obviously be wrong to make concessions just to get the

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Russians back to the negotiating table. But they have problems of their own, both of substance and of presentation. Thanks to your own imaginative proposals, and to the unity we have been able to maintain within the Alliance, the initiative rests with the West. We now have an opportunity to consider whether we can find fresh ways forward on nuclear arms reductions. I am glad that the various consultative groupings within the Alliance are beginning to discuss this possibility. We must not only convince our own peoples of our dedication to the pursuit of real reductions but also seek that greater stability of which you spoke.

I hope that your speech will mark the beginning of a new phase of relations with the Soviet Union. That depends on them more than us. But in the Alliance we can all seek to build on the lead you have taken.

I look forward to hearing the outcome of George Shultz's meeting with Gromyko on 18 January. Geoffrey Howe will be meeting Gromyko on 19 January. I shall let you have my impressions of my visit to Hungary from 2 to 4 February.

*Yours ever
Ronald
Reagan*

The President of the United States of America.

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