

The Deputy Secretary of State

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Dear George:

Once again, I'm grateful to you for taking the time to write me with your concerns. As I told you the last time we corresponded, I feel it is essential that those of us grappling with U.S.-Russian relations constantly test the assumptions, as well as the consequences, of our policy.

Before turning to the immediate issue your raise — Operation "Sea Breeze" — let me address a general point at the beginning of your letter. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic have not been invited to join the Alliance. It is widely assumed that they will constitute at least the core of the first tranche, but neither the U.S. Government nor NATO has yet made a decision as to the "who first" of enlargement. That will occur at the Madrid Summit of the Alliance in July.

As we prepare for Madrid, we are working hard — and with some success, I believe — to minimize the danger that you identify: namely, that the nations of Central and Eastern Europe will feel faced with a stark choice between having good relations with NATO or having good relations with Russia.

As I stressed in my last letter to you, President Clinton and his fellow Allied leaders believe that, while retaining its military capacity and its core identity as a defense treaty, NATO can, more than ever before, foster integration and cooperation between what we used to think of as East and West. Moreover, NATO's open door to the East can foster integration and cooperation among the Central Europeans themselves. In fact, to elaborate on a point I made in our earlier correspondence, the very prospect of NATO membership has already begun to encourage positive, peaceful trends in Central Europe. To cite three examples: Hungary has largely settled its disputes over borders and minority questions with Slovakia and Romania; Poland has reached across an old divide to create joint peacekeeping battalions with Ukraine and Lithuania; and Romania and Ukraine are very close to signing an

agreement that will end their border dispute. The leaders of these countries have all said that the current and prospective role of NATO — and their own aspirations either to belong to the Alliance (in the case of all but Ukraine) or (in the case of Ukraine) to have good relations with NATO — has been an inducement for them to move in the right direction with each other.

I take the point, on which your own critique and caveat largely rest, that our ability to realize this aspect of our strategy will depend in no small measure on whether there can be decent — and, more than that, steadily improving — relations between NATO and Russia itself. Insofar as there is an exacerbating of tensions and mistrust between the Alliance and Russia, the nations caught in between, especially those that are not members of NATO, will be subject to the kind of tugs and pulls you suggest.

That concern goes to the heart of our pursuit of a cooperative NATO-Russia relationship — indeed, of our attempt to *institutionalize that cooperation*. I believe President Clinton made some progress in that direction in Helsinki, and we hope to move further in the days, months, and years, to come. (To that end, I am leaving for Brussels and Moscow tomorrow; Secretary Albright will be in Moscow at the end of the week; and President Clinton, along with the other NATO leaders, is prepared to meet with President Yeltsin as early as next month.)

We hope that Russia will, in due course, come to see that NATO can be a stabilizing factor in Central Europe and, as such, a presence that *actually enhances Russia's interest*. We believe, as I have said before, that if relegated to a security limbo, the nations of Central Europe would be more likely to revert to the patterns of behavior, and misbehavior, that characterized the period before the Second World War. *Fearful of each other and unsure of themselves, they would build up armies in ways that would be mutually threatening and that would throttle their fledgling market economies in the cradle.*

As a consequence, we would have, in Central Europe, a volatile mix of poverty, anxiety and militarized nationalism. President Clinton has stressed this point with President Yeltsin: a strong, new NATO, operating in partnership with a strong, democratic, new Russia, will give the Russian people something they have not had for over two hundred years: a genuine, sustainable peace with the nations to their west.

To see the matter this way, Russia will, of course, have to break out of a deeply ingrained habit of thinking and behavior. Instead of

seeking to protect its western borders by carving out a buffer zone of conquered smaller states and maintaining an armed truce along lines of confrontation, Russia would have to consider an alternative that holds out the promise of something better: true security and stability, based on cooperation rather than on subjugation and intimidation. The opportunity to change the fundamental terms of reference and engagement of Russia's relations with its neighbors comes when Russia is trying to open its society and economy to the outside world.

We recognize that this sort of fundamental shift in attitude will not come overnight. But it will not happen at all unless we engage Russia in a variety of ventures and areas, including in military-to-military cooperation.

That brings me to the Partnership for Peace. The goal of PFP is to create the same kind of cooperation on the military level that we are striving for at the political and economic levels.

Russia is a full partner in PFP. (President Yeltsin's agreement in '95 to have Russia join PFP, despite his objection to NATO enlargement, was an important milestone.) Our objective is to induce Russia to deepen its relationship with the West, including in the military sphere. This is part of our overall strategy of trying to anchor Russia in Europe.

PFP's scale is already considerable, and it is growing. There are twenty-four major NATO PFP exercises planned in 1997 alone and another fifty "in the spirit of PFP" exercises. Operation "Sea Breeze" is in the latter category. Over 600 PFP activities will take place this year. Partner countries have increasingly asked for, and we've agreed to, deepen this cooperation by planning progressively more sophisticated and complex exercises. The goal is to generate greater political trust by expanding military cooperation.

In addition to the Ukrainian exercise you mention in your letter, we are also planning exercises this year in Central Asia as well as the Baltic region. All of these exercises are planned and conducted with full transparency. For all NATO PFP exercises, all PFP countries (including Russia) are invited to participate. They themselves decide whether, and at what level, they want to participate. !!

Let me be a bit more specific about Operation "Sea Breeze." It is a naval exercise hosted by Ukraine. It will be restricted to peacekeeping, humanitarian, civic-action and search-and-rescue activities. Ukraine invited the United States, Russia, Greece Turkey, France, Germany

Italy, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria and Romania to participate. Albania and Georgia have been invited to send observers.

Not only was Moscow invited to participate in the exercise, but the Russian military initially did participate in the planning process. It subsequently withdrew, however, as the prospect of a NATO-sponsored exercise became an issue in the Russian media.

The purpose of the exercise is to enhance international naval cooperation in disaster-relief efforts. The scenario involves an earthquake in a fictitious country. The country's leadership calls for a multi-national peacekeeping force to help provide humanitarian assistance with a naval convoy helping to deliver assistance as well as to evacuate wounded personnel. A small amphibious force will go ashore to help secure the mission but it will be authorized only to defend itself, not train for any offensive action.

who's doing?

In short, there is nothing either in the premise or execution of the exercise that should be threatening to the Russians.

That said, it has obviously aroused controversy. But it has done so in the context of tension between Russia and Ukraine over the Crimean issue — the unresolved differences over Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet to which you allude — as well as over the cooperation that is developing between Ukraine and NATO.

The right response, we feel, is not to stop cooperating with Ukraine but to redouble our efforts to engage Russia, to offer Moscow every opportunity to cooperate with us and thus to encourage the evolution in mindset to which I referred above.

Stop cooperating?

As to why this issue has not attracted more attention in the Western press, your guess is as good as mine. But it hardly surprises me that you would be alerted to the matter issue from your regular reading of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. Nor does it surprise me that you would take the time to pass along your concerns in such a thoughtful, probing and constructive manner.

I cannot resist adding one more thought. You were the first to call my attention to the parallels between current events and the career of Alexander Gorchakov. Specifically, you were interested — and aroused my interest — in a circular (the equivalent of a Long Telegram) that Gorchakov sent to his ambassadors and other envoys about Russia's relations with states along the periphery. Well, when I was last in Moscow some weeks ago, I saw Primakov in his office and was interested to note that there is a large

bust of Gorchakov right next to Primakov's desk. That prompted me to learn a bit more about Gorchakov, who I see assumed the position of the Czar's Foreign Minister after Russia's ignominious defeat in the Crimean War; he exploited the Franco-Prussian war to abrogate post-Crimean War prohibitions on Russia's Black Sea Fleet and coastal fortification; he strengthened Russia's ties with France and Prussia; and his initial successes in restoring Russia's power and prestige from their fifty-year low were undermined by the various Bosnian crises that culminated in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. So Primakov's affinity for his predecessor can be read in several different ways, including in the context of the issues on which you and I have engaged in our correspondence!

You have said that you are not showing your letter to others. I hope you do no mind if I share it with a few colleagues — Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, Sandy Berger, and General Shalikashvili — given their responsibilities for PFP and what I know to be their respect for your views. One of the goals we have all set ourselves as we pursue our policy of enlarging NATO and developing better relations with Russia is to answer the questions you have raised about whether it is possible to do both.

I hope very much that you and Annelise will be in Washington this spring or summer and that I might be possible to see you both.

Please give my best to the Bundys and the Dilworths next time you see them.

Very best personal regards,

