

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 24, 1981

Dear President Brezhnev:

Thank you for your letter of March 6.

Your letter raises many complex issues which obviously cannot be dealt with in an exchange of correspondence, except in general terms. Please be assured that our country is vitally interested in the peaceful resolution of international tensions. This Administration is prepared to settle disagreements by negotiations. We are also prepared to observe scrupulously our international commitments.

At the same time I must be frank in stating my view that a great deal of the tension in the world today is due to Soviet actions. As we and our allies have repeatedly stated, two aspects of Soviet behavior are of particular concern to us:

-- First, the USSR's unremitting and comprehensive military buildup over the past 15 years, a buildup which in our view far exceeds purely defensive requirements and carries disturbing implications of a search for military superiority.

-- Second, the Soviet Union's pursuit of unilateral advantage in various parts of the globe and its repeated resort to the direct and indirect use of force.

These activities raise serious questions about the Soviet Union's commitment to the peaceful resolution of outstanding issues in accord with international law, the "Basic Principles of Relations" concluded between our two countries in Moscow in 1972, and the Helsinki Final Act.

I believe that real progress in relations between our two countries is possible and necessary. But my Administration is determined to judge Soviet intentions on the basis of actions and demonstrated restraint.

This does not diminish our commitment to constructive dialogue. Effective and meaningful communication between our two countries is absolutely essential. I welcome your assurance that the USSR also believes in such a dialogue. We should work together to avoid misunderstanding or miscalculation.

A personal meeting and a direct exchange of views would certainly be a useful way of pursuing this dialogue at the appropriate time. Clearly, however, the success of such a meeting would depend in large measure on careful preparation and a propitious international climate. I do not believe that these conditions exist at present, and so my preference would be for postponing a meeting of such importance to a later date.

All Americans share your concern over the threat to mankind in the age of nuclear weapons. I welcome your statement that the USSR is prepared for discussions with the United States on limiting strategic weapons. I have stated publicly that the United States is ready to undertake discussions with the USSR that would lead to genuine arms reductions. We are presently engaged in a review of arms control and as soon as this review is completed we will be in touch with your Government.

Your acceptance of the principle that confidence-building measures should apply throughout Europe, including all of the European portions of the USSR, strikes me as encouraging. As our delegation at the Madrid Review Conference has made clear, we support France's proposal for a meeting to negotiate a coherent system of measures on European security: obligatory, verifiable and of military significance. Soviet acceptance of these criteria would eliminate important obstacles to the holding of a security meeting within the CSCE framework as part of a balanced outcome from the Madrid conference.

I am afraid, however, that I cannot be sanguine about your treatment of other arms control issues, especially your proposal for a moratorium on deployments of theatre nuclear forces in Europe.

At the time it took its December 1979 decision, NATO rejected the concept of a moratorium because it would perpetuate existing Soviet superiority in long-range theatre nuclear forces. The continuing deployment since then of Soviet SS-20 launchers targeted against NATO has worsened the situation. NATO deploys no land-based missiles in Europe that could reach territory of the Soviet Union. The reasoning that prompted the Alliance to reject a moratorium in December 1979 is thus even more persuasive today.


Further to our exchanges on Poland, I must reject charges that the United States is intervening in that country's affairs. This is simply not true. As we have repeatedly made clear, our concern is that the Polish Government and people be allowed to resolve their problems peacefully and free from any outside interference. In our view, recent Soviet military behavior and tendentious propaganda amount to a threat of the use of force which represents interference in Poland's internal affairs.

In this connection I have noted with concern repeated statements by responsible Soviet officials suggesting that the form of a country's political, social and economic system bestows upon the Soviet Union special rights and, indeed, duties, to preserve a particular form of government in other countries. I must inform you frankly and emphatically that the United States rejects any such declaration as contrary to the charter of the United Nations and other international instruments, including the Helsinki Final Act. Claims of special "rights," however defined, cannot be used to justify the threat of force to infringe upon the sovereign rights of any country to determine its own political, economic and social institutions.

I was disappointed that in your treatment of Afghanistan, the most important element in the situation was not mentioned -- the prompt withdrawal of Soviet forces from that country. There is wide international agreement that the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan is a major source of tension in the area. Proposals for dealing with this by initiating a dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been firmly rejected by the Pakistanis themselves and by virtually all concerned nations since they fail to deal with the central issue of Soviet withdrawal. Evidence that the Soviet Union is prepared to move toward an acceptable resolution of the Afghanistan problem on the basis of her prompt withdrawal would go far toward restoring international confidence and trust necessary for the improvement of East-West relations.

I have spoken frankly in order to convey to you my views and feelings, and give you a clear sense of the basic foreign policies of my Administration. The discussion initiated in this exchange should continue through the full range of diplomatic channels. If you agree, Secretary Haig and Foreign Minister Gromyko might meet for further exchanges on these and related matters. The traditional meeting at the United Nations in September may be an appropriate forum. Perhaps by that time a basis will exist not only for deepening our bilateral dialogue, but for considering how and at what pace we may begin to build a better and happier relationship.

Sincerely,



His Excellency
 Leonid Ilich Brezhnev
 President of the Presidium of the
 Supreme Soviet of the Union of
 Soviet Socialist Republics
 Moscow

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WASHINGTON

My Dear Mr. President
In writing the attached letter I am reminded of our meeting in San Clemente a decade or so ago. I was Governor of California at the time and you were concluding a series of meetings with President Nixon. Those meetings had captured the imagination of all the world. Never had peace and good will among men seemed closer at hand.

When we met I asked if you were aware that the hopes and aspirations of millions and millions of people throughout the world were dependent on the decisions that would be reached in your meetings.

You took my hand in both of yours and assured me that you were aware of that and that you were dedicated with all your heart and mind to fulfilling those hopes and dreams.

The people of the world still share that hope. Indeed the peoples of the world, despite differences in racial and ethnic origin, have very much in common. They want the dignity of having some control over their individual destiny. They want to work at the craft or trade of their

own choosing and to be fairly rewarded. They want to raise their families in peace without harming anyone or suffering harm themselves. Government exists for their convenience, not the other way around.

If they are incapable, as some would have us believe, of self government, then where among them do we find any who are capable of governing others?

Is it possible that we have permitted ideology, political and economic philosophies, and governmental policies to keep us from considering the very real, everyday problems of our peoples? Will the average Soviet family be better off or even aware that the Soviet Union has imposed a government of it's own choice on the people of Afghanistan? Is life better for the people of Cuba because the Cuban military dictate who shall govern the people of Angola?

It is often implied that such things have been made necessary because of territorial ambitions of the United States; that we have imperialistic designs and thus constitute a threat to your own security and that of the newly emerging nations. There not only is no evidence to support such a charge, there is solid evidence that the United States, when it could have dominated the world with no risk to itself, made no effort

whatsomever to do so.

When World War II ended, the United States had the only undamaged industrial power in the world. Our military might was at it's peak - and we alone had the ultimate weapon, the nuclear weapon, with the unquestioned ability to deliver it anywhere in the world. If we had sought world domination then, who could have opposed us?

But the United States followed a different course - one unique in all the history of mankind. We used our power and wealth to rebuild the war-ravaged economies of the world, including those nations who had been our enemies. May I say there is absolutely no substance to charges that the United States is guilty of imperialism or attempts to impose it's will on other countries by use of force.

Mr. President, should we not be concerned with eliminating the obstacles which prevent our people - those we represent - from achieving their most cherished goals? And isn't it possible some of those obstacles are born of govt. objectives which have little to do with the real needs and desires of our people?

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It is in this spirit, in the spirit of helping the people of both our nations, that I have lifted the grains embargo. Perhaps this decision will contribute to creating the circumstances which will lead to the meaningful and constructive dialogue which will assist us in fulfilling our joint obligation to find lasting peace.

Sincerely
Ronald Reagan

TEXT OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S HANDWRITTEN MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BREZHNEV

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