

(DRAFT LETTER FROM PRESIDENT REAGAN TO BREZHNEV)

Dear President Brezhnev:

As we approach the Fall session of the United Nations General Assembly and the meetings between our Foreign Ministers, I thought it would be useful for me to describe to you some of my thoughts on the future direction of U.S.-Soviet relations.

Let me say at the outset that the United States sincerely desires a more constructive and stable relationship with your country. We seek a relationship in which cooperation prevails in all areas, and in which our two countries can work together to reduce international tensions and minimize the risk of a nuclear confrontation that could threaten the future of all mankind.

Unfortunately, the basis for such a relationship does not now exist. It is our view that it is principally actions by your country which, however they may have been intended, have brought relations to their present low level. As I have said before, I am particularly disturbed by two aspects of Soviet conduct: your tremendous military build-up begun in the mid-1970s, which continued unabated at a time when U.S.

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military spending was on the decline, and which has brought Soviet military capabilities to a point that far exceeds the needs of defense; and secondly, the increasing readiness of your country and its allies to use military force to inflame regional conflicts in order to expand Soviet influence in areas of vital interest to the West.

From Angola to Afghanistan, from Ethiopia to El Salvador, your country has displayed a willingness to exacerbate tensions that has thoroughly undermined the basis for a stable, cooperative East-West relationship, and for progress on such priority issues as reduction of strategic arms. Furthermore, despite the numerous public "initiatives" advanced by your country, your military build-up and the record of past negotiations cause me and the entire American people to doubt whether the Soviet Union is prepared to engage in truly meaningful and equitable negotiations.

I know you will protest that this is untrue, and that the United States is, in fact, to blame for the present sorry state of our relationship. The task, however, is not to debate one another. We are interested in Soviet actions, not words. For our part, we are ready to begin the search for better relations -- to seek significant reductions in strategic and theater nuclear forces, to expand trade, to increase contacts at all

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levels of our societies. I am hopeful that the meetings between Secretary of State Haig and Foreign Minister Gromyko will start a process leading toward such a relationship. But for such a process to bear fruit, your country must understand the need for greater restraint -- mutual restraint -- in the international arena. You should have no doubt that, without such restraint, we are fully prepared to defend our interests by whatever means necessary.

What do we mean by restraint? We are not asking the Soviet Union to abandon its Allies or to renounce its principles. What we do ask is that the Soviet Union enter into serious negotiations to resolve the numerous geopolitical problems that threaten world peace -- Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Southern Africa -- rather than continuing to try to solve these crises through military force. We ask that the Soviet Union cease its own efforts, as well as those of countries dependent on Soviet support, such as Cuba, to promote violence and instability in Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa. And we ask the Soviet Union to restrain its enormous arms buildup and demonstrate a commitment to significant arms reductions. We also hope that your country will curb the escalating campaign of anti-Americanism and disinformation by Soviet propaganda media, both inside the Soviet Union and abroad, a campaign which only poisons the political atmosphere.

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I am not talking about unilateral concessions. The United States is fully prepared to reciprocate Soviet restraint. We are ready to take your interests into account, if you are prepared to do the same with us. If we can succeed in establishing a framework of mutual respect for each other's interests and mutual restraint in the resolution of international crises, I think we will have created a much more solid and enduring basis for U.S.-Soviet relations than we have ever had before.

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