

Correspondence

**Addressed to President Brezhnev
From President Reagan**

**President Reagan's Response
Final Version and Draft**

November 17, 1981



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November 17, 1981

Dear President Brezhnev:

Your letter of October 15 makes it clear once again how profound are the differences in our respective assessments of the causes of the major sources of tension in the world. I find it difficult to accept your declaration that Soviet actions in other parts of the world must have no bearing on our relations. Soviet actions are having a direct and adverse impact on American interests in many parts of the world. As I said in my letter to you of September 22, Soviet resort to direct and indirect use of force in regional conflicts is a matter of deep concern to us as is the continued build up of military strength beyond the need for self defense.

Despite these differences, however, we should strive to find a common ground for agreement on matters of vital interest to our two countries and the rest of the world. The cause of peace, and particularly the threat of nuclear destruction hanging over mankind, require that our two countries make an effort, together with our partners, to resolve our differences peacefully. I assure you the United States is committed to such a process. I therefore welcome an opportunity for businesslike cooperation in addressing world problems. I believe that our exchanges, and the discussions in New York between Secretary Haig and Foreign Minister Gromyko, have laid the essential groundwork for such an effort. The key question now is how we can translate these beginnings into concrete results. We are ready to advance specific solutions and to hear out Soviet proposals aimed at relieving the dangers, as well as the current human suffering, in problem areas around the world.

I am convinced, Mr. President, that we can achieve results in the coming year if there is genuine good will and serious interest on both sides.

Afghanistan remains a major obstacle to progress, beclouding the international atmosphere. It appears from recent communications that we both agree on the need for progress toward an internationally acceptable solution of this issue. We appear to agree on basic goals: a non-aligned, independent Afghanistan, free of any foreign military presence and guaranteed against any outside interference. This calls for a complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan at the earliest possible date. The United States is prepared to continue the exchange of views on questions that bear on a political settlement in Afghanistan. Ambassador Hartman will be in touch with Foreign Minister Gromyko to determine whether there is a basis for a serious dialogue.

Now let me address your assertions regarding US policy towards Cuba. We do not seek to interfere with Cuba's independence nor are we interfering in Cuba's internal affairs. However, we do find entirely unacceptable Cuba's unremitting efforts to export its revolution by fomenting violent insurgencies and terrorism against legitimate governments in Central America.

But to get to the real purpose of my letter, arms control is a vital area where progress can be made toward world peace. The United States is prepared to accept equality in conventional, intermediate-range nuclear and strategic forces at the lowest possible level of such forces. We are also prepared to take other steps to enhance general peace and international security.

Let me begin with strategic forces. The United States will be prepared to open negotiations on strategic arms reductions as soon as possible in the new year. In approaching these talks we should learn from past experiences. In my view however, the negotiations also will require fresh ideas - to which both sides should devote urgent and serious attention - in order that we can achieve genuine reductions in strategic forces. This will demand political will and a readiness on both sides to accept a higher degree of openness in order to enhance mutual confidence. In this connection, I welcome your important public statement that verification measures going beyond national technical means might be possible.

Concerning intermediate-range nuclear forces, the agreement to begin talks on these systems on November 30 in Geneva marks an important beginning in dealing with the difficult issue of the military imbalance in these forces. We are ready to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union which we believe is straightforward and fair. We are prepared to cancel our plan to deploy Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles on the condition that the Soviet Union in turn dismantles all of its SS-20 missiles, retires and dismantles its SS-4, and SS-5 missiles, and desists from further deployments of these or comparable systems.

Opportunities also exist for reductions in conventional forces in Europe. Your offensive forces have become increasingly capable. The Soviet Union could make no more convincing contribution to peace in Europe than by substantially reducing its conventional forces. Now is the time to take actions to achieve equality at a lower level of conventional forces in Europe.

ministers in New York. Such action I have no doubt would have a favorable effect on deliberations in Madrid, and on relations between our two countries. I feel I must tell you I am personally concerned with the particular cases under discussion between Secretary Haig and your representatives.

There is no shortage, Mr. President, of opportunities for easing world tensions. If the Soviet Union is prepared to move forward in these areas of genuine concern to the United States and its Allies, you will find me a ready partner.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ronald Reagan

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November 17
10:30 a.m.

Dear President Brezhnev:

Your letter of October 15 makes it clear once again how profound are the differences in our respective assessments of the causes of the major sources of tension in the world.

I ~~must confess I find it difficult to~~ ^{CAN NOT} accept your declaration that Soviet actions in other parts of the world must have no bearing on our relations. We both have worldwide interests;

~~Making it hard to see how~~ our bilateral relations can ^{NOT} be isolated from global happenings. As I said in my letter to you of September 22, Soviet resort to direct and indirect

use of force in regional conflicts is a matter of deep concern to us as is ~~the~~ ^{your} continued build up of military strength beyond the need for self defense.

Despite these differences, however, we should strive to find a common ground for agreement on matters of vital interest to our two countries and the rest of the world. The cause of peace, ~~and particularly the threat of nuclear destruction~~

~~hanging over mankind~~ requires that our two countries make an effort, together with our partners, to resolve our differences peacefully. I assure you the United States is committed to

such a process. I therefore welcome ~~our own expressed desire~~ ^{AN OPPORTUNITY} for businesslike cooperation in addressing world problems.

I believe that our exchanges, and the discussions in New York between Secretary Haig and Foreign Minister Gromyko, have laid the essential groundwork for such an effort. The key question

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now is how we can translate these beginnings into concrete results. We are ready to advance specific solutions and to hear out Soviet proposals aimed at relieving the dangers, as well as the current human suffering, in problem areas around the world.

I am convinced, Mr. President, that we can achieve results in the coming year if there is ^{THE} genuine good will and serious interest on ~~[both sides]~~ OUR SIDE IS MATCHED ON YOURS.

Afghanistan remains a major obstacle to progress, beclouding the international atmosphere. It appears from recent communications that we both agree on the need for progress toward an internationally acceptable solution of this issue. We appear to agree on basic goals: a non-aligned, secure Afghanistan, free of any military presence and guaranteed against any outside interference. This calls for a complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan at the earliest possible date. The United States is prepared to continue the exchange of views on questions that bear on a political settlement in Afghanistan. Ambassador Hartman will be in touch with Foreign Minister Gromyko to determine whether there is the basis for a serious dialogue.

Now let me address your assertions regarding US policy towards Cuba. ~~[I assure you we are not attempting to overturn Cuba's political or economic system, nor are we interfering in Cuba's internal affairs. However]~~ WE DO NOT SEEK TO INTERFERE WITH CUBA'S INDEPENDENCE. ~~Cuba's political or economic system, nor are we interfering in Cuba's internal affairs. However]~~ We do find entirely unacceptable Cuba's unremitting efforts to export ~~the~~ ^{AND TERRORISM} revolution by fomenting violent insurgencies against legitimate governments in Central America.

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But to get to the ~~point~~ purpose of my letter, arms control is a vital area where progress can be made toward world peace. "The United States proposes the elimination of intermediate range missiles and the reduction of conventional and strategic forces to the lowest level the Soviet Union is willing to accept." We are also prepared to take other steps to enhance general peace and international security.

Let me begin with strategic forces. The United States will be prepared to open negotiations on strategic arms reductions as soon as possible in the new year. In approaching these talks we should learn from past experiences. In my view however, the negotiations also will require fresh ideas - to which both sides should devote urgent and serious attention - in order that we can achieve genuine reductions in strategic forces. This will demand political will and a readiness on both sides to accept a higher degree of openness in order to enhance mutual confidence. In this connection, I welcome your important public statement that verification measures going beyond national technical means might be possible.

Concerning intermediate-range nuclear forces, the agreement to begin talks on these systems on November 30 in Geneva marks an important beginning in dealing with the difficult issue of the military imbalance with regard to theater nuclear forces. We are ready to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union which we believe is straightforward and fair. We are prepared to cancel our plan to deploy Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles on the condition that the Soviet Union in turn

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dismantles all of its SS-4, SS-5 and SS-20 missiles, and desists from further deployments of these or comparable systems.

— Opportunities also exist for reductions in conventional forces in Europe. Your offensive forces have become increasingly capable. The Soviet Union could make no more convincing contribution to peace in Europe than by substantially reducing its conventional forces. Now is the time to take actions to achieve equality at a lower level of conventional forces in Europe.

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe offers another practical possibility for increasing confidence and reducing the risks of war. At the Madrid meeting, the Western countries have advanced proposals for a Conference on Disarmament in Europe that could negotiate measures aimed at reducing concerns about surprise attack. At the same time, I would hope we could move the Helsinki process forward in all areas taking favorable action to resolve certain humanitarian matters, such as the reunification of divided families and the individual cases raised during the recent discussions between our foreign ministers in New York. Such action I have no doubt would have a favorable effect on deliberations in Madrid, and on relations between our two countries. I feel I must tell you I am personally concerned with the situation of Andrei Sakharov and his family as well as that of Mr. Anatolii Shcharanskii.

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There is no shortage, Mr. President, of opportunities for easing world tensions. If the Soviet Union is prepared to move forward in these areas of genuine concern to the United States and its Allies, you will find me a ready partner.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

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