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Unofficial translation

Dear Mr. President,

I gave a careful thought to your personal letter to me and want to respond to it in the same personal and frank manner.

Just as you do, I recall our brief conversation at the reception given by President R. Nixon at "Casa Pacifica" in June 1973. Today, as we did at that time, all Soviet leadership and I commit our hearts and minds to realization of hopes and aspirations of all the peoples of the world for peace, quiet life and confidence in their future.

At the recent congress of our Party it was with all due emphasis stressed once again that not war preparations that doom the peoples to a senseless squandering of their material and spiritual wealth, but preservation and consolidation of peace, and, thereby, implementation of the foremost right of every man - a right to live. that is the clue to the future.

I noted that, recalling the year of 1973 you indicated that peace and good will among men never had seemed closer at hand.

And, indeed, precisely in those years our two countries took the path of reaching agreements which marked a radical turn for the better not only in Soviet-American relations but in the international situation as a whole. Those were the years when the USSR and the USA actively and not without success set about to solve the task of limiting arms, first of all strategic arms, when they started seeking in common solutions to acute international problems,

Authority D. VAN TASSEL, NSC, 10/5/95
BY DSD NADA, Date 11/20/95

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when mutually beneficial bilateral ties and cooperation between our countries in a variety of fields were developing fruitfully.

Why then did hitches begin to appear in that process, why did it pause and even find itself set back? To answer this question correctly one thing is necessary - to take an objective, non-biased look at the course of events.

And then, Mr. President, we shall recall, that even at that time when Soviet-American relation were developing upward voices resounded in the United States of those who did not like such a development and who stubbornly tried to slow down and disrupt this process. And further on, their efforts became ever more active. Those were the efforts that were pulling back, to confrontation, efforts embodied in quite a number of concrete steps directly aimed against the improvement of relations between the USSR and the USA, against the relaxation of international tension. On the contrary, nothing of the sort was taking place in the Soviet Union.

We have differencies of opinion between us of philosophical and ideological nature, and it could not be otherwise. But when it comes to the events of international life-whether pertaining to the present day, to the recent or more distant past, - then an objective approach is not only possible, but necessary. Otherwise it is easy to misstep and to plunge into serious errors.

Here, for example, it is said in your letter that after the Second World War the USA had a capability to dominate the world, but, deliberately, as it were, made no use of that capability.

Let me say it straight away, it is hard to find many people among those who are familiar with that time through their own experience or who have seriously studied it, that would share such an affirmation.

Actually, the USA did the maximum it could using a wide array of military, political, and economic means to achieve what American leaders themselves called "Pax Americana", in other words, to restructure the world the way the United State wanted it to be. But this proved to be beyond its possibilities - and this is the way it was. Even the possession during a certain period of time of what you call "the ultimate weapon" didn't make the USA omnipotent.

To follow your logic, we, in our turn, could have said that after the defeat of the Hitler Germany and, incidentally, even before the American atomic bomb emerged, the Soviet Union was in a position to do much of what it didn't do being guided by its principled convictions, true to its word and respecting its allied commitments. However I wouldn't like to go deeper into this subject now and to discuss events that didn't take place.

You are saying that the policy of the USA has never constituted a threat to anyone else's security. Let us go back to the facts again. Hardly three years passed after the end of the war when the USA set about to create the NATO - a closed military block. One would wonder what the need for it was. After all, fascist Germany had been routed and militarist Japan-destroyed. The keys to peace were in the hands of the allied powers of the Anti-Hitler coalition. Who was the tar-

get of the military block of NATO and the numerous overseas America bases? No secret was ever made in the USA who all that was directed against.

You made mention of the post-war American economic assistance programs. The USA did really give assistance. But who was the recipient? It was only those countries which chose to submit their policy to foreign interests. On the contrary, the states belonging to a different social system, and, indeed, generally the peoples which did not agree to submit their policy to outside diktat did not receive the American assistance. That is how the matters stood. In essence that is precisely how they stand at the present time.

If we are to take the most recent years, when after a period of ascent the relations between our countries began to deteriorate, and deteriorate sharply, it is known that the lion's share was contributed to that by the Carter administration. That was done consciously and purposefully, but in the final analysis, let us be frank, it brought no laurels to Carter. Isn't it so, Mr. President?

However, for some reason or other, the new US administration too has decided to continue on the same path. Try, Mr. President, to see what is going on through our eyes. Attempts are being made to revitalize the USA-made military and political alliances, new bases are being added to those which already exist thousands of kilometers away from the USA and aimed against our country, the American military presence abroad in general is being increased and expanded, large areas of the world are being declared spheres of

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"vital interests" of the USA. Nobody even asks if the peoples inhabiting those areas wish to be under the patronage of other countries. Attempts are made to tell some other peoples what to do with their natural resources, threatening them otherwise with all kinds of punitive actions.

For all their differences, however, the peoples have the same right to be masters of their own destiny. There should be no double standards in this respect. One must not believe that if something is good for the USA then it has also to be good for others. After all, is it good, for instance, for the average American family, not to mention the family of a peaceful Afghan peasant, when the intention is openly announced in Washington to go on with supplying arms to the bands carrying out incursions into the Afghanistan territory from the outside?

It is not for the sake of polemics that I am sharing my thoughts with you, Mr. President. I would like them, on the one hand, to give you a better understanding of what actually constitutes the policy of the Soviet Union, and, on the other hand, to help clarify how we and indeed, others as well, perceive certain actions of the USA, especially those of recent time.

The main idea, though, that I would like to convey through my letter is that we do not seek confrontation with the USA or infringe upon American legitimate interests. What we seek is different - we wish peace, cooperation, a sense of mutual trust, and benevolence between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Guided by

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this sincere desire we propose now to the USA and other Western countries honest and constructive negotiations, as well as a search for mutually acceptable solutions of practically all major questions existing between us - be it restraining of the arms race, elimination of most dangerous sources of tension in various areas of the world, or measures for confidence building and developing a mutually beneficial cooperation. These proposals of ours contain no ruse or any ulterior motives. And I would like you to accept them precisely in this way and with no bias.

Thus our policy is a policy of peace. We will never set up the fire of war. You know very well, as we do, what such a fire would lead to. I would want to believe in the wisdom of your people, in your personal wisdom also not to allow anything that would push the world towards a catastrophe.

These are some of the general considerations which I wanted to convey to you, Mr. President, in connection with your letter. Maybe it was not possible to express everything in sufficient detail. An exchange of correspondence has its limitations, and in this sense a private conversation is better. In this regard, concerning the possible meeting between us, I would like to say that it is also my view that such a meeting should be well prepared. We could yet return to the question of its timing, I believe, at a moment acceptable to both of us.

Sincerely,

L. BREZHNEV

May 25, 1981

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OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

*Returned w.o.
Brezhnev ltr. it.
P is holding it.
in ltr.*

May 28, 1981

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

RICHARD V. ALLEN *Allen*

SUBJECT:

Leonid Brezhnev's Letter of May 25, 1981

Secretary Haig has sent you a memorandum (TAB A) forwarding and commenting on Brezhnev's reply (TAB B) to your personal, handwritten message (TAB C). Secretary Haig says that Brezhnev tries to match the constructive tone of your letter and has the impression that Brezhnev's letter conveys a sense of substantial nervousness and concern. The Secretary's memorandum also describes his conversation with Dobrynin, who delivered the Brezhnev reply, which touched upon U.S.-Soviet relations, Lebanon and issues for U.S.-Soviet negotiations.

The following is an analysis of the Brezhnev reply prepared by the Soviet specialists on the NSC staff:

Brezhnev's response to your personal, handwritten letter is conciliatory in tone and unbending in substance. It ignores a number of specific points made in your handwritten note, including your assertion that governments must serve the people and not the other way around. He makes no reference to your allusion to Cuban actions in Angola, nor to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (except to blame the United States for offering help to those resisting it). He does not even mention your lifting the grain embargo, which in your letter was presented as an act of good will.

Instead, he gives the standard litany of Soviet objections to "aggressive" U.S. policies since 1945, such as the founding of NATO (apparently without any cause), trying to dominate other countries through economic aid, and perpetuating the arms race. All these are arguments drawn from the classical Stalinist

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Review on May 28, 1987

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BY *Amf*

10/22/99

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repertoire of anti-American accusations presented here for the ostensible reason of making you understand that Moscow has a legitimate "different" point of view.

Three items in the letter and in the remarks Dobrynin made when delivering it deserve emphasis:

- 1. Once again Brezhnev calls for a summit as a vehicle for resolving outstanding differences.
- 2. Dobrynin firmly rejects the principle of "linkage" in U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union.
- 3. Dobrynin seems to link the recent events in Lebanon to the need to have the Soviet Union involved in a general Middle Eastern peace settlement.

cc: The Vice President
Ed Meese
Jim Baker
Mike Deaver

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