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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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INFORMATION

May 22, 1982

*I made some  
margin notes  
RR*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: WILLIAM P. CLARK *WPC*

SUBJECT: Brezhnev's May 20 Letter to You

Brezhnev's letter (Tab A) is a reply to your May 7 message and repeats some of the salient points of his May 18' Komsomol Congress speech. He says your May 9 speech causes "apprehension" and even doubts as to US seriousness in approaching negotiations.

He criticizes negotiations on "any one component" with "no connection to others" -- probably referring to bombers and cruise missiles -- and claims that the "substantial" reductions we propose would be substantial only for the Soviet side. Brezhnev again called for preserving "positive" achievements so far -- meaning the essential elements of SALT II. He also repeated his call for a quantitative freeze on strategic arsenals and limiting modernization as soon as START begins. This does not seem to be a precondition for talks, but only to "create favorable conditions" for them. Brezhnev agreed that the time and venue for START be discussed in the "near future" through diplomatic channels.

Brezhnev felt compelled to come back at you on the matter of restraint in international affairs by stating that the Soviets expect restraint on our part. While noting "incessant (US) attacks" regarding the Soviet Union, he claimed to be seeking neither sharp polemics nor confrontation. The tone of the letter is cool and correct by Soviet standards.

Attachment

Tab A Letter from Brezhnev

Prepared by:  
William Stearman

cc Vice President  
Ed Meese  
Jim Baker  
Mike Deaver

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Review May 21, 1988

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BY *anf* NARA DATE 10/22/99



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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May 21, 1982  
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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. WILLIAM P. CLARK  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Message from President Brezhnev

The Russian Charge delivered this afternoon the attached letter from President Brezhnev to President Reagan replying to the President's message of May 7 on the START talks. We will forward to you our analysis shortly.

L. Paul Bremer, III  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:  
As stated.

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10/22/97

Dear Mr. President,

With regard to your message to me of May 7, 1982 I would like above all to emphasize that the Soviet Union - the correspondence between us being a clear testimony thereof - has been steadily and persistently calling on the United States to agree on joint measures aimed at effectively bridling the arms race, first of all, in nuclear weapons.

We have been proceeding from the premise that only by moving along this path is it possible to achieve the objective of preventing a nuclear war, which would become an irreparable tragedy for all mankind.

Life itself puts questions of limitation and reduction of strategic arms in the center of Soviet-American relations. We have always favored increasingly radical steps in this direction. And it is not our fault that the strategic arms limitation process was interrupted for a long period of time.

?  
History does not confirm.

References made to this or that event on the international scene cannot justify the lack of readiness on the part of the U.S. to resolve the issue which you yourself justly call one of critical importance for our two countries and the world at large. And the special responsibility of our two countries and their leaders in this respect is certainly not a thing that has emerged today. That responsibility existed in equal measure one year ago, a year and a half ago. On our part we always proceeded from this premise.

How about the last 35 years?

HH

If the U.S. side has now come to understand the need to resume negotiations on the problem of strategic arms, that in itself is a positive fact.

Our position of principle in favor of continuing such negotiations is surely well known to you. I can reaffirm that it has not changed. We agree that specific questions concerning the organizational aspect of those negotiations, including the time and venue for holding them, be discussed in the near future through diplomatic channels.

Speaking of the coming negotiations, one can be certain that a great deal of effort will be required to recoup for the time lost and the opportunities missed. But that must be done. Helpful in this respect can be, first, the preservation of whatever positive has already been achieved through the joint efforts of our two countries in the area of strategic arms limitation and, second, a genuinely serious willingness to seek a mutually acceptable agreement commensurate with the scope and significance of the truly historic task that stands before us.

In other words it is important that the negotiations be set on the right course from the very beginning, that they be conducted constructively without one side attempting to gain advantage in them at the expense of the other.

I deem it necessary to say it with all clarity, since the position with which the U.S., judging by your speech of May 9, is approaching the negotiations cannot but cause apprehension and even doubts as to the seriousness of the intentions of the U.S. side.

*He must be kidding.*

After all, it is obvious that to isolate just any one component out of the totality of the strategic systems and to make it a subject of negotiations with no connection to the others, as you suggest, would inevitably lead to a distorted picture of the balance of forces between the sides. Thus, the "substantial" reductions the U.S. side is talking about on the basis of the picture it has itself presented would naturally be substantial only for the Soviet side.

*They become more of  
the means  
misbalance*

Only one thing would be the result of such a one-sided approach - an upsetting of the existing balance of forces and a breach of that very stability which the U.S. side is allegedly so anxious to ensure.

There should be no misunderstanding, Mr. President: this is not a realistic position, not the path toward agreement. Besides, as you know, we are not the only ones who hold such a view.

We believe it is difficult to argue against the fact that, when it comes to matters touching upon national security, neither side can allow a tilt to be made in favor of the other and to the detriment of its legitimate interests. We are realists and do not expect that the United States would accept that. To an equal degree, it cannot be expected of the Soviet Union either. I consider it necessary to state this directly, with nothing omitted.

In your letter you mention that a possible agreement should be understandable and acceptable to the American people. But this does not make any more convincing the arguments for such an

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approach which is clearly unacceptable to the USSR, to the Soviet people.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to say that I found it necessary also to express publicly in my speech on May 18, 1982 at the Komsomol Congress, our attitude toward such a one-sided approach and our opinion regarding the principles on which a genuinely fair and equitable agreement on the limitation and reduction of strategic arms should be based.

In doing so, I also stated the readiness of the Soviet Union to reach agreement with the United States to the effect that right now, as soon as the negotiations begin, the strategic nature of both countries be frozen quantitatively and that their modernization be limited to the utmost. Such agreement would, in our view, create favorable conditions for the negotiations and facilitate achieving the objectives therein. I would ask you, Mr. President, carefully to consider this proposal.

*of have and it's an appeal for an agreement.*

I am convinced that the American people would understand and support an agreement between the USSR and the USA which would be based on the principle of equality and equal security, and which would meet the objective of mutual limitation and reduction of strategic arms, just as they have supported the previously reached agreements that you cited. Soviet people - and you can take my word for that - will resolutely support such an agreement.

*How will they react? Tell the truth for years.*

And the last point. In our correspondence I have already spoken about to whom an appeal for restraint in international

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affairs should be addressed. Since you raise that subject again, I shall only say, without repeating myself, that it is precisely of the U.S. that we, and indeed other countries, expect restraint and a constructive approach both to issues of bilateral relations and to fundamental international problems, above all to those related to limiting the arms race and strengthening common security.

We, of course, are giving and will continue to give a proper evaluation to unacceptable manifestations in U.S. policy as well as to the incessant attacks made regarding the Soviet Union. But we, on our part, have been seeking neither sharp polemics nor confrontation.

You may be assured, Mr. President, that a readiness to deal on an equal basis, to respect the interests of each other, and to develop mutual trust, will meet a most positive response on the part of the Soviet Union.

We will, as before, continue to do all we can so that people can look into the future with confidence and calm, without fearing for the threat of war which is not needed equally - I repeat, equally - either by the Soviet or the American people.

Sincerely,

L. Brezhnev

*H2's a journal  
of Brezhnev.*

May 20, 1982

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