

His Excellency  
Ronald W. Reagan  
The President of the United States  
of America  
Washington, D.C.

July 18, 1987

Dear Mr. President,

I have carefully read your message and considered the views contained in it.

We, too, are seriously concerned over the growing tensions in the Persian Gulf area. We discussed this issue more than once with the U.S. side, including at the time of Secretary of State Shultz's visit to Moscow. Our position of principle on this acute and complex problem has been set forth in the recent statement by the Soviet government.

One has to note with regret that thus far it has not been possible to slow down the dangerous trend in this region, let alone reverse it. There are several reasons for this.

First, it is the continuation of the senseless bloodshed between Iran and Iraq, which contributes, objectively, to aggravating the situation. Here, as I understand, there are opportunities, and good ones, for joint actions by our two countries in the UN Security Council in favor of an earliest cessation of this prolonged conflict on just terms. There are, however, other sources of the escalation of tensions, which

I shall discuss further.

Before doing so, I wish to inform you, Mr. President, about the many-sided efforts that the Soviet Union has been making to settle the Iran-Iraq conflict. As you may be aware, we have established special direct contacts with the leaderships of Iran and Iraq and are engaged at this time in intensive talks aimed at bringing the positions of the belligerents closer together, and encourage them toward a peaceful solution.

I would like to particularly emphasize that these efforts pursue no selfish ends, let alone directed against legitimate interests of third countries. Our only goal is to prevent a situation where a dangerous line would be crossed, beyond which a regional conflict could escalate into an international crisis, our objective is to help end the war.

We intend to continue and intensify those efforts.

Such an active bilateral diplomacy is called upon, as we see it, to organically supplement and bolster the broad multilateral efforts to end the Iran-Iraq war, and we attach paramount importance to our participation in those efforts. And I agree with your view that in this area the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have good prospects for constructive cooperation. Currently, our two countries, along with other UN Security Council members, are playing an active role in working out effective measures to promptly to channel the Iran-Iraq conflict toward peaceful solutions. Our representatives have been instructed to press on with the efforts seeking, in particular an immediate ceasefire, an end to all hostilities and a prompt withdrawal of all troops to internationally recognized borders.

It is our firm conviction that a special role in carrying out the decisions now being prepared by the world community belongs to the UN Secretary General. Indeed, it is on his actions that will depend to no small degree the further steps which may be required if the adopted resolution is resisted by either of the parties in the conflict. In the event of such an undesirable development the recommendations of the Secretary General will, understandably, carry a lot of weight. In this connection, we expect, Mr. President, that you will find it possible to give necessary support to the peacemaking mission of the Secretary General and will join us in contributing to its success.

As for your proposal that experts participate in the work being done in the Security Council, I can reaffirm our positive attitude to it, given, naturally, the concurrence of the Council's other permanent members.

Now I must come back to the question of the causes for the increased tensions in the Persian Gulf area. I must say frankly: these are not confined to the continued hostilities between Iran and Iraq. We cannot ignore the buildup of the US military presence in the area, to say nothing of the contrived pretexts used in an attempt to disguise it. True, there are not only your warships, but ours as well in the Persian Gulf. However, simply looking at the facts as they are - and I am sure you have every possibility to do so - would show that our naval presence is in no way comparable to yours either in scale or in operational functions. A few Soviet warships to which references are being made in Washington, are escorting on a temporary

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basis our merchant vessels at the request and with the knowledge of the littoral states.

Moreover, guided by the desire to use every opportunity to make the situation better, the Soviet Government has proposed that all warships of the states outside of the region be withdrawn as early as possible while Iran and Iraq in their turn refrain from actions which would pose a threat to international shipping.

We are gratified by the constructive reaction of most countries, including those involved in the conflict, to that proposal. We would like to expect that the US leadership will also view it in a positive light, in the spirit of cooperation.

Also, some statements by representatives of your administration seem to indicate an interest on the American side. If such an impression is justified, then we would be prepared to discuss this question with the US in more concrete terms in any format suitable for you.

Speaking in broader terms, I want to emphasize that I share the idea which you expressed in concluding your letter: when our countries decide to act together, the results will not be long in coming.

Sincerely,

M. GORBACHEV