

January 12, 1984

1:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS

EAST ROOM

MONDAY, January 16, 1984

During these first days of 1984, I would like to share with you -- and the people of the world -- my thoughts on a subject of great importance to the cause of peace -- relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

^{Tomorrow,}
~~In just a few days,~~ the United States will join the Soviet Union and ³³ ~~the~~ other nations ~~of Europe~~ ^{European} at an ~~international security~~ ^{disarmament} conference in Stockholm. We intend to uphold our responsibility as a major power in easing potential sources of conflict. The conference will search for practical and meaningful ways to increase European security and preserve peace. We will go to Stockholm bearing the heartfelt wishes of our people for genuine ^{progress} ~~purposes~~.

We live in a time of challenges to peace, but also of opportunities for peace. Through ~~times~~ ^{times} of difficulty and frustration, America's highest aspiration has never wavered: We have, and will continue to struggle for a lasting peace that enhances dignity for men and women everywhere. I believe 1984 finds the United States in its strongest position in years to establish a constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union.

^{We've come a long way}
~~Some fundamental changes~~ have taken place since the decade of the seventies -- years when the United States seemed filled with self doubt and self reproach and

neglected its defenses, while the Soviet Union increased its military might and sought to expand its influence by armed force and threats. During ^{the last decade} ~~this period~~, the ^{Soviet Union} ~~USSR~~ devoted twice as much of its gross national product to military expenditures as the United States. It deployed six times as many ICBM's, five times as many tanks, ^{and} twice as many combat aircraft and, of course, ^{began 370 deploying the SS-20} ~~over 360 SS-20~~ intermediate-range missiles at a time when the United States had no comparable weapons. ^{Today —}

As the Soviet arsenal grew, so did Soviet aggressiveness. From Angola to Afghanistan, from El Salvador to Kampuchea, the Soviet Union and its proxies have tried to force their will on others. History teaches that wars begin when governments believe the price of aggression is cheap. To keep the peace, we and our allies must be strong enough to convince any potential aggressor that war could bring no benefit, only disaster. So when we neglected our defenses, the risks of serious confrontation grew.

Three years ago we embraced a mandate from the American people to change course, and we have. With the support of the American people and the Congress, we halted America's decline. Our economy is in the midst of the best recovery since the sixties. Our defenses are being rebuilt. Our alliances are solid and our commitment to defend our values has never been more clear.

America's recovery may have taken Soviet leaders by surprise. They may have counted on us to keep weakening ourselves. They have been saying for years that our demise was inevitable. They said it so often they probably started believing it. ^{1/50,} I think they can see now they were wrong.

This may be the reason we've been hearing such strident rhetoric from the Kremlin recently. These harsh words have led some to speak of heightened uncertainty and an increased danger of conflict. This is understandable, but profoundly mistaken. Look beyond the words, and one fact stands out: Deterrence is more credible and it is making the world a safer place; safer because there is less danger now that the Soviet leadership will underestimate our strength ^{question our} or resolve.

~~Certainly in the first three years of this Administration we have witnessed nothing akin to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the 1973 threat of Soviet military intervention in the Middle East or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. At no time in the past three years has either the United States or the Soviet Union placed its armed forces on~~

~~Alert.~~ Yes, we are safer now. ^{the restored deterrence has made because}
 But to say that ~~the~~ world is safer, ^{is not to say that} ~~it~~ is safe enough. We are witnessing tragic conflicts in many parts of the world. Nuclear arsenals are far too high. And our working relationship with the Soviet Union is not what it must be. These are conditions which must be addressed and improved.

Neither we nor the Soviet Union can wish away the differences between our two societies and our philosophies. But we should always remember that we do have common interests. And the foremost among them is to avoid war and reduce the level of arms. There is no rational alternative but to steer a course which I would call credible deterrence and peaceful competition; and if we do so, we might find areas in which we could engage in constructive cooperation.

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Our strength and vision of progress provide the basis for demonstrating, with equal conviction, our commitment to stay secure and to find peaceful solutions to problems through negotiations. That is why I say that 1984 is a year of opportunities for peace.

But if the United States and the Soviet Union are to rise to the challenges facing us and seize the opportunities for peace which are at hand, we must do more to seek out areas of mutual interest and build on them. I propose that our governments make a major effort to see if we can make progress in three broad problem areas.

First, we need to find ways to reduce -- and eventually to eliminate -- the use and threat of force in solving international disputes.

The world has witnessed more than ~~150~~¹⁰⁰ conflicts since the end of World War II alone. Armed conflicts are raging in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, and Africa. In other regions, independent nations are confronted by heavily armed neighbors seeking to dominate by threatening attack or subversion.

Most of these conflicts have their ^{origins} ~~roots~~ in local problems, but many have been ~~fanned and~~ exploited by the Soviet Union and its surrogates -- and, of course, Afghanistan has suffered an outright Soviet invasion. Fueling regional conflicts and exporting ~~totalitarian rule~~^{violence} only exacerbate local ^{problems} ~~conflicts~~, increase suffering, and make solutions to real social and economic problems more difficult. Furthermore, such activity carries with it the risk of confrontations.

~~It~~ ^{is not} would be better and safer if we could work together to assist ^{people and} ~~governments~~ in areas of conflict in ^{finding} ~~negotiating~~ peaceful solutions to their problems? That should be our ^{mutual} goal. But we must recognize that the gap in American and Soviet perceptions and policy is so great that our immediate objective must be more modest. As a first step, I believe our governments should jointly examine concrete actions we both can take to reduce the risk of U.S.-Soviet confrontation in these areas. And if we succeed in this, we should be able to move further toward our ultimate goal.

Our second task should be to find ways to reduce the vast stockpiles of armaments in the world, ~~particularly~~ ~~nuclear weapons.~~

It is tragic to see the world's developing nations spending more than \$150 billion a year on ~~arms~~ ^{forces} ~~the military~~ ^{armed} ~~defense~~ -- almost 20 percent of their national budgets. We must find ways to reverse the vicious cycle of threat and response which drives arms races everywhere it occurs.

~~While modernizing our defenses, we have done only what~~ ^{The} ~~is needed to establish a stable military balance.~~ ^{with regard to nuclear arms race} The simple truth is, America's total nuclear stockpile has declined. We have fewer nuclear weapons today than we had 28 years ago. And our nuclear stockpile is at the lowest level in 25 years in terms of its total destructive power.

Just 2 months ago, we and our allies agreed to withdraw an additional 1,400 nuclear weapons from Western Europe. This comes after the removal of a thousand nuclear weapons from Europe over the last 3 years. Even if all our planned intermediate-range missiles have to be deployed in Europe over the next 5 years -- and we hope this will not be

necessary -- we will have eliminated five existing nuclear weapons for each new weapon deployed.

But this is not enough. We must accelerate our efforts to reach agreements that will greatly reduce nuclear arsenals, provide greater stability and build confidence.

Our third task is to establish a better working relationship with each other, one marked by greater cooperation and understanding.

Cooperation and understanding are built on deeds, not words. ~~Complying~~ with agreements helps; violating them hurts. Respecting the rights of individual citizens bolsters the relationship; denying these rights harms it. Expanding contacts across borders and permitting a free interchange of information and ideas increase confidence; sealing off one's people from the rest of the world reduces it. Peaceful trade helps, while organized theft of industrial secrets certainly hurts.

Cooperation and understanding are especially important to arms control. In recent years, we have been disturbed by mounting evidence that the Soviet Union has breached important elements of several arms control agreements. It has also established a pattern of taking advantage of any imprecision or ambiguity in agreements. Such actions jeopardize the arms control progress.

I will soon submit to the Congress the report on these Soviet activities which it requested from me. I will of course see to it that our modernization program takes them into account so that we will not be at a disadvantage. But I will also continue our discussions with the Soviet government on activities which undermine agreements. I believe it

is in our mutual ~~interest~~ to remove impediments to arms control, which offers us the means to improve the security of both our countries and to create a safe world.

The examples I have cited illustrate clearly why our relationship with the Soviet Union is not what it should be. We have a long way to go, but we are determined to try and try again. We may have to start in small ways, but start we must.

In working ^{on these tasks,} ~~toward these goals,~~ our approach is based on three guiding principles: realism, strength, and dialogue.

Realism means we ^{must} start ^{with a clear-eyed} ~~by~~ understanding ^{of} the world we live in. We must recognize that we are in a long-term competition with a government that does not share our notions of individual liberties at home and peaceful change abroad. We must be frank in acknowledging our differences and unafraid to promote our values.

Strength ^{is essential to} ~~means we can~~ negotiate successfully and protect our interests. If we are weak we can do neither.

Our strength is necessary not only to deter war, but to facilitate negotiation ^{ed} ~~and~~ solutions. Soviet leaders know it makes sense to compromise only if they can get something in return. America's ^{renewed} ~~economic and military~~ strength permits us to offer something in return.

Strength is more than military power. Economic strength is crucial and America's economy is leading the world into recovery. Equally important ^{our strength of spirit, and} is unity among our people at home and with our allies abroad. ^A We are stronger in all these areas than we were 3 years ago.

^{Strength and} Dialogue ^{go hand in hand.} ~~is, of course, an essential complement to strength~~
~~Dialogue means we are determined to deal with our~~
~~differences peacefully, through negotiation.~~ We are ^{determined}
^{to deal with our differences peacefully, through} ~~negotiation.~~ ^{negotiation}

We are

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prepared to discuss the problems that divide us, and to work for practical, fair solutions on the basis of mutual compromise. We will never retreat from negotiations.

I have openly expressed my view of the Soviet system. I don't know why this should come as a surprise to Soviet leaders who have never shied away from expressing their view of our system. But this does not mean we can't deal with each other. We don't refuse to talk when the Soviets call us "imperialist aggressors" and worse, or because they cling to the fantasy of a communist triumph over democracy. The fact that neither of us likes the other's system is no reason to refuse to talk. Living in this nuclear age makes it imperative that we do talk.

Our commitment to dialogue is firm and unshakable. But we insist that our negotiations deal with real problems, not atmospherics.

In our approach to negotiations, reducing the risk of war -- and especially nuclear war -- is priority number one. A nuclear ~~confrontation~~^{conflict} could well be mankind's last. That is why I proposed over two years ago, ^{the "option"} ~~a~~ zero ~~solution~~^{solution} for intermediate range missiles. Our aim was and continues to be to eliminate an entire class of nuclear arms.

~~in fact,~~
Indeed, I support a zero option for all nuclear arms.

As I have said before, my dream is to see the day when nuclear weapons will be banished from the face of the earth.

Last month, the Soviet defense minister stated that his country shares the vision of a world free of nuclear

weapons. These are encouraging words, ^{Well, now is a time to} ~~but the Soviets~~
move from words to deeds.

~~should back them up with concrete proposals that would lead to this nuclear-free world.~~

opportunity for progress in arms control exists;

The ~~framework for such proposals exists~~; the Soviet leaders should take advantage of it. ↩

↩ We have undertaken a set of initiatives that would reduce substantially the size of our nuclear arsenals and reduce the risk of a nuclear confrontation by providing greater stability. ~~In the most recent round of negotiations on strategic arms we proposed -- with strong Congressional support -- a novel concept to "build-down" the nuclear~~ *we ~~had~~ tried to meet Soviet con*

~~arsenals on both sides by removing more than one old weapon for each new one deployed. This proposal was not intended to disadvantage the Soviet Union. But it was intended, quite simply, to reduce the numbers of these horrendous weapons and to make deterrence safer by moving to fewer, more modern and safer weapons.~~ *we regret that the Soviet*

Union broke off negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces, and ~~that it refused to set a date for the resumption of the talks on strategic arms and on conventional forces in Europe.~~ *has not yet*

Our negotiators are ready to return to the negotiating table to work toward agreements in INF, START and ~~MBFR~~ *MBFR*. We will negotiate in good faith. [^] Whenever the Soviet Union is ready to do likewise, we will meet them halfway.

We seek both to reduce nuclear arsenals, and to reduce the chances for dangerous misunderstanding and miscalculation. So we have put forward proposals for what we call "confidence-building measures." They cover a wide range of activities. In the Geneva negotiations, we have proposed ~~that the U.S. and Soviet Union~~ ^{to} exchange advance notifications of missile tests and major military exercises.

Following up on congressional suggestions, we also proposed a number of ways to improve direct U.S.-Soviet channels of