Draft 12/15/83

SPEECH ON U.S. SOVIET RELATIONS

My fellow Americans:

We will soon begin a season of cheer, good fellowship, love and hope. And as the year draws to a close we have the tradition of reflecting on the past and making resolutions for the future. Before these holidays are upon us, I think it is a good time to share my thoughts with you on a topic that is in all of our minds and all of our hearts: how to strengthen and preserve peace in the world.

When we think of world peace we think first of all of our relations with the Soviet Union. Not because either the United States or the Soviet Union can bring peace to everyone, but because the world cannot be at peace unless there is peace between us. It is an awesome and sobering fact that, for the first time in the history of mankind, two nations have the might, not only to destroy each other, but to destroy mankind itself. Neither of our nations can have a higher interest than making sure that this does not, indeed cannot, happen.

I believe that the Soviet leaders understand this overriding fact as well as I do. Yet, we are experiencing a period of tension in our relations which is greater than we have seen for

many years. I'd like to talk to you tonight about why this is and what we can do about it.

Causes of Tension

If we look back over the seventies, we notice two things: America tended to withdraw from the world and to neglect its defenses while the Soviet Union increased its military might steadily and enormously. The facts speak for themselves: Throughout the 1970's, the Soviets devoted twice as much of their gross national product to defense as the United States. They deployed six times as many ICBM's, five times as many tanks, twice as many combat aircraft and, of course, over 360 SS-20 imtermediate-range missiles at a time when the United States deployed no comparable weapons.

But the Soviets not only amassed a monstrous arsenal while we stood still and let our defenses deteriorate, they also began to use these arms to establish their domination over other countries. From Angola to Afghanistan, from El Salvador to Kampuchea, the Soviets or their proxies have used force to interfere in the affairs of other nations. And in Europe, their deployment of SS-20 missiles was a blatant effort to split the NATO Alliance and threaten our West European allies.

This was the situation we faced when I took office. It was absolutely clear that we had to reverse the decline in American strength or else the danger of war would increase. History teaches us that wars begin when one side feels that it can prevail and therefore has something to gain. If we are to keep the peace, we must make sure that we and our Allies are strong enough to make clear to any potential aggressor that war could bring no benefit but only disaster to him.

With your support and that of your representatives in the Congress, we have stopped America's decline. Our economy is regaining health, our defenses are on the mend, and our commitment to defend our values has never been greater.

Now this, I think, has taken the Soviets by suprise. They had counted on us to keep on weakening ourselves. After all, their propagandists have been saying for years that we were destined for the dustbin of history, and they said it so often that they may have even started believing it. But they can see now that this isn't happening.

And not only that. Telltale signs are accumulating that it is their system, not ours, that doesn't work. So it is no wonder that the Soviets are feeling frustrated--and are showing it in their shrill propaganda.

A Safer World

The harsh words that we have exchanged has led many to fear that the danger of war is rising, even that we and the Soviets are on a "collision course." This is understandable, but I believe it is profoundly mistaken. For if we look beyond the words and the diplomatic manoeuvering, one thing stands out: the balance of power has been restored and this means that the world is in fact a safer place.

It is safer because there is less danger that the Soviets will produce a confrontation by miscalculating our strength or will. And we, of course, have no intent to threaten them. We did not do so even when we had a monopoly of nuclear weapons, so how can anyone think that we would do so now, when they are armed to the teeth?

But to say that the world is safer is not to say that it is as safe as it should be, or that our relations with the Soviet Union are what we would like them to be. The world is plagued with tragic conflicts in many areas. Nuclear arsenals are much too high and are a danger in themselves. And there is a sad lack of confidence in U.S.-Soviet relations. These are the conditions which we must resolve to improve.

Our Aims

Essential as deterrence is in preserving the peace and protecting our way of life, we must not let our policy toward the Soviet Union end there. If we are to avoid an arms race, with all the dangers it entails, we must do more. And it seems to me that our government and the Soviet government should concentrate our attention in three broad areas.

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

War, for me, is public enemy number one. The world has witnessed more than 150 wars since the end of Warld War Two alone. Today armed conflicts are raging in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America and Africa. In many other regions, independent nations are confronted by heavily armed neighbors seeking to dominate by threatening attack.

Most of these conflicts have their roots in regional or 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. This Soviet habit of trying to extend its influence and control by fueling local conflicts and exporting revolution is a dangerous practice which

exacerbates local conflicts, increases destruction and suffering, and makes solutions to real social and economic problems more difficult.

Would it not be better and safer for all to assist the governments and peoples in areas where there are local conflicts to negotiate peaceful solutions, rather than supplying arms or sending in armies? The answer, I believe, is obvious, and I invite the Soviet leaders to join us in a search for ways to move the world, and our own actions, in this direction.

Second, we need to find ways to reduce the vast stockpiles of armaments in the world, particularly those of nuclear weapons.

It is nothing less than a tragedy that the world's developing nations spend more than 150 billion dollars a year on arms--almost 20 percent of their national budgets. And I regret that the relentless Soviet build-up over the past two decades has forced us to increase our defense spending to restore the military balance. We must find ways to reverse the vicious circle of threat and response which drives the arms race.

Even while modernizing our forces to meet the Soviet threat, we have tried to reduce the number and destructive power of our nuclear weapons. It is a little-known fact that our total nuclear stockpile is now at its lowest level in 20 years in terms of the number of warheads, and at the lowest level in 25 years in

terms of its total destructive power. Just last month, we and our allies agreed to eliminate an additional 1400 nuclear warheads from Western Europe. This comes on top of the removal of a thousand warheads from Europe three years ago. Even if all our planned intermediate-range missiles have to be deployed in Europe over the next five years--and we hope this will not be necessary--five existing warheads will have been eliminated for each new one.

But this is not enough. And the sad fact is that we can hardly go further until the Soviet Union adopts a similar policy and negotiates seriously for substantially lower levels.

Third, we must work to establish greater confidence and understanding. Without this, we will hardly be able to accomplish much in reducing the use of force or lowering the level of arms.

Confidence has many facets. Complying with past agreements increases it while violating them undermines it. Respecting the rights of one's own citizens bolsters it, while denying these rights injures it. Expanding contacts across borders and permitting a free interchange of information and ideas increase it; attempts to seal one's people off from the rest of the world diminish it. Peaceful trade can help and organized theft of industrial secrets certainly hurts.

These examples illustrate clearly why confidence is so low in our relations with the Soviets. But while we have a long way to go in building confidence, we are determined to keep on trying.

Our Approach

In working toward these goals, I base my approach on three guiding principles: realism, strength, and dialogue. Let me tell you what they mean to me.

Realism means that we start by understanding the sort of world we live in and the nature of our adversaries. We must recognize that we are in a long-term competition with a rival who 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 defend our values.

I have been forthright in explaining my view of the Soviet system and of Soviet policies. This should come as no surprise to the Soviet leaders, who have never been reticent in expressing their view of us. But this doesn't mean we can't deal with each other. We don't walk away from the negotiating table because the Soviets call us "imperialist aggressors," or because they cling to the fantasy of the triumph of communism over democracy. The fact that neither of us likes the other's system is no reason to

refuse to talk. In fact, in this nuclear age, it makes it the more imperative for us to talk.

Strength means that we know we cannot negotiate successfully or protect our interests if we are weak. Our strength is necessary not only to deter war, but to facilitate negotiation and compromise. The Soviet leaders are supreme realists themselves: if they make a concession, it is because they get something in return. It is our strength that permits us to offer something in return.

Strength is of course more than military might. It has many components: economic health, political cohesion, Alliance solidarity as well as adequate defenses. We are stronger in all these areas than we were three years ago, and this gives us the basis for dealing effectively with the Soviets.

Dialogue means that we are determined to deal with our differences peacefully, by negotiation. We are prepared to discuss all the problems that divide us, and to work for practical, fair solutions. We will never walk away from a negotiating table. To do so would be unforgivable given the stakes involved for the whole world.

When the Soviets shot down the Korean airliner with 269 passengers aboard, many thought that we should express our outrage by cutting off negotiations. But I sent our negotiators

back to Geneva and Vienna because I understood that, no matter how strong our feelings were about that dastardly act, it would be irresponsible to interrupt efforts to achieve arms reduction.

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

Some Real Problems

(START AND INF)

Our Approach in a Nutshell

(FOLLOWING NEEDS TO BE REWRITTEN, WITH EYE TO DISTINGUISING OUR APPROACH FROM DETENTE AND ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION. IS THERE A PHRASE? SHOULD ENCAPSULATE DETERRENCE, FIRMNESS, OPENESS TO NEGOTIATE REAL PROBLEMS, LONG-TERM STEADINESS)

In the past our policies toward the Soviet Union have fluctuated between periods of cooperation and periods of confrontation. But when we tried to cooperate--as during World War II and during the detente of the seventies--we often closed our eyes to unpleasant facts in order to preserve a friendly atmosphere. This is a dangerous course for a democracy, since

our people must understand the world as it is to understand the policies we must follow to deal with it. And it always led to subsequent disillusionment and a worsening of relations.

We must try in the future to hold a steady course, resisting swings of euphoria and despair.

Conclusion

Reasons for optimism: common interest in avoiding nuclear war, never fought war, etc.

Kennedy quote:

"So, let us not be blind to our differences--but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

Conclude with appeal to Soviets to join us in pondering the lessons of the past and rededicating ourselves to solving problems in the future.

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It would be better and safer if we could work together to assist governments in areas of conflict in negotiating peaceful solutions to their problems. ~~Up to now, however, the Soviet leaders have usually chosen to exploit local conflicts; acted as if it had no stake in peaceful solutions.~~

~~All too often, however, the Soviet Union has acted~~

~~The problem we have encountered, however, is that~~ That should be

~~2nd~~
That should be our goal. But we must recognize that ~~the~~ the ~~differences in our analysis~~ gap in American and Soviet perceptions and policy is so great that our immediate ~~goal~~ task objectives must be more modest. ~~Therefore, I propose~~ As a first step, I believe we should ~~concentrate on~~ jointly examine ~~ways to~~ concrete steps we both can take to reduce the ~~danger~~ risk of US-Soviet ~~conflicts~~ confrontation in these areas. And if we succeed in this, we should be able to

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When we think of world peace we think first of all of our relations with the Soviet Union. The United States or the Soviet Union cannot bring peace to everyone, but the world cannot be at peace unless there is peace between us. It is an awesome and sobering fact that, for the first time in the history of mankind, two nations have the might, not only to destroy each other, but to destroy mankind itself. Neither of our nations can have a higher interest than making sure that such terrible capabilities are never used.

I believe that the Soviet leaders understand this overriding fact as well as I do. Yet, we are encountering obstacles to cooperation between our two nations greater than we have seen for

many years. I'd like to talk to you tonight about why this is and what we want to do about it.

Causes of Tension

If we look back over the experience of the 1970s, we notice two things: America tended to question its role in the world and to neglect its defenses while the Soviet Union increased its military might steadily and enormously. The facts speak for themselves: Throughout the last decade, the Soviets devoted twice as much of their gross national product to the military as the United States. They deployed six times as many ballistic missiles, five times as many tanks, twice as many combat aircraft and, of course, over 360 SS-20 intermediate-range missiles at a time when the United States deployed no comparable weapons.

But the Soviets not only amassed an enormous arsenal while we stood still and let our defenses deteriorate, they also used these arms to establish their domination over other countries. From Angola to Afghanistan, from El Salvador to Kampuchea, the Soviets or their proxies have used force to interfere in the affairs of other nations. In Europe and in Asia, their deployment of new missiles was a blatant effort to threaten our friends and allies and to split the NATO Alliance.

This was the situation we faced when I took office. It was absolutely clear that we had to reverse the decline in American strength or else the danger of war would increase. History

teaches us that wars begin when one side feels, however mistakenly, that it can prevail. If we are to keep the peace, we must make sure that we and our Allies are strong enough to make clear to any potential aggressor that war could bring no benefit to him, but only disaster to all.

With your support and that of the Congress, we have halted America's decline. Our economy is regaining health and our defenses are on the mend. Our alliances are strong and our commitment to defend our values has never been more clear.

This may have taken the Soviet leaders by surprise. They may have counted on us to keep on weakening ourselves. After all, they have been saying for years that we were destined for the dustbin of history. They said it so often that they may even have started believing it. But they can see now that they were wrong.

And not only that. Signs are accumulating that it is their system, not ours, that history is leaving behind. So it is no wonder that Soviet leaders are feeling frustrated--and are showing it in their shrill propaganda.

A Safer World

These harsh words have led many to fear that the danger of war is rising, even that we and the Soviets are on a "collision course." There is talk of a new "Cold War." This is

understandable, but I believe it is profoundly mistaken. For if we look beyond the words and the diplomatic posturing, one thing stands out: the balance of power is being restored and this means that the world is in fact a safer place.

It is safer because there is less danger that the Soviet leadership will produce a confrontation by underestimating our strength or resolve. We, of course, have no intent to threaten them. We did not do so thirty-five years ago when we had a monopoly of nuclear weapons; much less would we do so now, when they are armed to the teeth.

But to say that the world is safer is not to say that it is as safe as it should be, or that our relations with the Soviet Union are what we would like them to be. The world is plagued with tragic conflicts in many areas. Nuclear arsenals are much too high. And there is a sad lack of confidence in U.S.-Soviet relations. These are the conditions which we must seek to improve.

Our Aims

Essential as deterrence is in preserving the peace and protecting our way of life, we must not let our policy toward the Soviet Union end there. Relying on the foundation of the military balance we have restored, we must engage the Soviet Union in a sober and realistic dialogue designed to reverse the arms race, to promote peace in war-ravaged regions of the world,

and gradually to build greater confidence between our two nations.

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

War, for me, is public enemy number one. The world has witnessed more than 150 conflicts since the end of World War Two alone. Today 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 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. This Soviet habit of trying to extend its influence and control by fueling regional and local conflicts and exporting revolution is dangerous. It exacerbates local conflicts, increases destruction and suffering, and makes solutions to real social and economic problems more difficult.

Would it not be better and safer for all to assist the governments and peoples in areas where there are local conflicts to negotiate peaceful solutions, rather than supplying arms or sending in armies? The answer, I believe, is obvious, and I invite the Soviet leaders to join us in a search for ways to move the world, and our own actions, in this direction.

Second, we need to find ways to reduce the vast stockpiles of armaments in the world, particularly those of nuclear weapons.

It is nothing less than a tragedy that the world's developing nations spend more than 150 billion dollars a year on arms--almost 20 percent of their national budgets. And I regret that the relentless Soviet build-up over the past two decades has forced us to increase our defense spending to restore the military balance. We must find ways to reverse the vicious circle of threat and response which drives the arms race.

Even while modernizing our forces to meet the Soviet threat, we have built and maintained no more forces than have been necessary to ensure a stable military balance. It is a little-known fact that our total nuclear stockpile is now at its lowest level in 20 years in terms of the number of warheads, and at the lowest level in 25 years in terms of its total destructive power. Just two months ago, we and our allies agreed to withdraw an additional 1400 nuclear warheads from Western Europe. This comes on top of the removal of a thousand warheads from Europe three years ago. Even if all our planned intermediate-range missiles have to be deployed in Europe over the next five years--and we hope this will not be necessary--five existing warheads will have been eliminated for each new one.

But this is not enough. As I said in my speech to the Japanese Parliament, "Our dream is to see the day when nuclear weapons will be banished from the face of the Earth." We cannot

begin to make that dream a reality, however, until the Soviet Union adopts a similar policy and negotiates seriously for substantially lower levels of nuclear arms.

Third, we must work to establish greater confidence and understanding.

Confidence is built on deeds, not words. Complying with agreements increases it while violating them undermines it. Respecting the rights of one's own citizens bolsters it, while denying these rights injures it. Expanding contacts across borders and permitting a free interchange of information and ideas increase it; attempts to seal one's people off from the rest of the world diminish it. Peaceful trade can help and organized theft of industrial secrets certainly hurts.

These examples illustrate clearly why confidence is so low in our relations with the Soviet Union. But while we have a long way to go in building confidence, we are determined to keep on trying.

Our Approach

In working toward these goals, I base my approach on three guiding principles: realism, strength, and dialogue. Let me tell you what they mean to me.

Realism means that we start by understanding the sort of world we live in. We must recognize that we are in a long-term competition with an adversary who 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 defend our values.

I have been forthright in explaining my view of the Soviet system and of Soviet policies. This should come as no surprise to the Soviet leaders, who have never been reticent in expressing their view of us. But this doesn't mean we can't deal with each other. We don't refuse to talk because the Soviets call us "imperialist aggressors," or because they cling to the fantasy of the triumph of communism over democracy. The fact that neither of us likes the other's system is no reason to refuse to talk. In fact, in this nuclear age, the fact we have differences makes it all the more imperative for us to talk.

Strength means that we know we cannot negotiate successfully or protect our interests if we are weak. Our strength is necessary not only to deter war, but to facilitate negotiation and compromise. The Soviet leaders are supreme realists themselves: if they make a concession, it is because they get something in return. It is our strength that permits us to offer something in return.

Strength is of course more than military might. It has many components. Economic health is the starting point; equally

important are political unity at home and solidarity with our allies abroad. We are stronger in all these areas than we were three years ago. We have virtually eliminated the scourge of inflation and are on the road to a strong recovery. The NATO Alliance, with the initiation of intermediate-range missile deployments, has proven its ability to restore the military balance upset by the Soviet Union. And there is a renewed sense of pride in our democratic values and in America's sense of pride in our democratic values and in America's vital role in world affairs. All this gives us a former basis for dealing effectively with the Soviets.

Dialogue means that we are determined to deal with our differences peacefully, by negotiation. We are prepared to discuss all the problems that divide us, and to work for practical, fair solutions on the basis of mutual compromise. We will never retreat from negotiations. To do so would be to ignore the stakes involved for the whole world.

When the Soviets shot down the Korean airliner with 269 passengers aboard, many thought that we should express our outrage by cutting off negotiations. But I sent our negotiators back to Geneva, and I sent them back with new, more forthcoming proposals. I understood that, no matter how strong our feelings were about that horrible act, it would be irresponsible to interrupt efforts to achieve arms reduction.

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

Real Problems, Realistic Solutions

In our approach to negotiations, reducing the risk of war--and especially nuclear war--is unquestionably priority number one. A nuclear confrontation could well be mankind's last. Thus I have proposed to the Soviet Union a comprehensive set of initiatives that would greatly reduce the size of our nuclear arsenals, and eliminate any incentive to use these weapons, even in time of crisis.

The world can only regret that the Soviet Union has broken off negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces, and has refused to set a date for further talks on strategic arms. Our negotiators are ready to return to the negotiating table, and to conclude agreements in INF and START. We have proposals on the table that are ambitions yet fair, proposals that would increase the security not only of our two countries, but of the world at large. We are prepared to negotiate in good faith. Whenever the Soviets are ready to do likewise, I pledge to meet them half-way.

We seek not only to reduce the numbers of nuclear weapons, but also to reduce the chances for dangerous misunderstanding and miscalculation in times of tension. We have therefore 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 exchange advance notifications of our missile tests and major military exercises. Following up on suggestions by Senators Nunn, Warner and the late Senator Henry Jackson, we also proposed a number of ways to improve direct US-Soviet channels of communication as a further safeguard against misunderstandings.

These bilateral proposals will soon be supplemented by broader negotiations on measures to enhance confidence involving all the nations of Europe, East and West, including the Soviet Union. Together with these nations, we will be joining in a conference on European security opening next month in Stockholm. Secretary of State Shultz will lead the U.S. Delegation to the first session of that conference.

Our goal there will be to develop practical and meaningful ways to reduce the uncertainty and potential for misinterpretation surrounding military activities, and to diminish the risks of surprise attack. This important task needs to be a joint effort. We will be working closely with our allies, but invite the cooperation of all others -- including the Soviet Union.

Arms control has been the most visible area of US-Soviet dialogue. But world peace also requires that we find ways to defuse tensions and regional conflicts that could escalate dangerously. We and the Soviets should have a common interest in promoting regional stability, in finding peaceful solutions to existing conflicts that will permit developing nations to concentrate their energies on economic growth. Thus we have sought to

engage the Soviets in exchanges of views on Afghanistan, complementing the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General, and on southern Africa, to supplement the diplomatic efforts in the region itself which have been underway for several years.

Our approach has been constructive. So far not much has come of these efforts. But we are prepared to continue if the Soviets are willing. We remain convinced that on issues like these it should be in the Soviet Union's best interest to play a constructive role in achieving broad-based, peaceful, negotiated solutions. If the Soviets make that choice, they will find us ready to cooperate.

Realistic Engagement

Conflicts of interest between the United States and the Soviet Union are real. But I believe they can be managed peacefully. With determination as well as good will, we can keep the peace between our two mighty nations and make it a better and more peaceful world for all mankind.

We have achieved less than we might over the past decades because our approach to the Soviet Union has fluctuated so dramatically. We have gone from periods of euphoric hope for cooperation to periods of excessive fear and pessimism. Either approach is dangerous, and unrealistic.

The Soviet Union has remained much the same country, with the same purposes and values, throughout the postwar period. So have we. If we are strong, and realistic, and prepared to talk

to the Soviet Union on all the serious issues between us, there is no good reason why we cannot develop a stable, productive relationship that can be sustained without swings of euphoria and despair.

That is the objective of my policy toward the Soviet Union. I call this policy "realistic engagement." It is a policy for the long haul. It is a challenge for Americans. It will require the kind of patience that does not come naturally to us. It is a challenge to the Soviets as well. They must recognize that the days of atmospherics for the sake of atmosphere are over. If they cannot match our good will, we will be able to protect our interests, and those of our friends and allies in the world. But we want more than deterrence; we seek genuine cooperation.

We will stay at the negotiating table, and we will be ready for negotiation whenever the Soviets are. Our challenge is a peaceful one. It will bring out the best in us; it calls for the best from the Soviet Union, too.

The Challenge

No one can predict how the Soviets will respond to this challenge, but I am optimistic. Our two countries share with all mankind an interest in doing everything possible to reduce the risk of nuclear war. Our peoples have gotten to know each other better in recent years; we should do everything we can to increase contacts and understanding. We have never fought each other; there is no reason we ever should. Indeed, we have fought alongside one another in the past; today our common enemies are hunger, disease, ignorance and, above all, war.

Twenty years ago this year, in the aftermath of a major crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations, President John F. Kennedy defined an approach to dealing with the Soviets that is as realistic and hopeful today as when he announced it:

> "So, let us not be blind to our differences--but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

Tonight, on the eve of Christmas and the approach of the New Year, we should reflect on the lessons of the past, and rededicate ourselves to a struggle in good faith to solve the problems of the present and the future. I appeal to the Soviet leaders and the people of the Soviet Union to join with us in realistic engagement to the benefit of all mankind. In this high endeavor, they will never find us wanting.