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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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INFORMATION

September 19, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: RICHARD V. ALLEN *Allen*

SUBJECT: Memorandum from Al Haig on a Letter to Brezhnev and his Forthcoming Meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko

Attached are two memoranda from Al Haig on two communications with the Soviets next week: a letter from you to President Brezhnev, and Al's meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko. (S)

The NSC staff cooperated with the State Department in drafting your letter to Brezhnev and it will help us put some of the public onus back on the Soviets, where it belongs. We will work with State to determine how best to publicize the themes of this letter both to other governments and to the public; the letter itself would be delivered by our embassy in Moscow. (S)

Al's approach to Gromyko is sound. He will let Gromyko know that the rules of US-Soviet relations have shifted, and that the United States will not acquiesce in Soviet attempts to increase their power at our expense. (S)

cc: Meese  
Baker  
Deaver  
The Vice President

Tab A Memo and Letter re Brezhnev  
Tab B Memo re meeting with Gromyko

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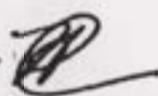
Review on September 18, 1987

DECLASSIFIED  
NLS F98-010 #12  
BY dlb, NARA, DATE 6/27/00

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

September 18, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: Alexander M. Haig, Jr.   
SUBJECT: Letter to Brezhnev

As you know, we have now embarked on a public campaign within the Alliance to take the political offensive away from the Soviets. The purpose is to demonstrate to Western publics that it is the Soviets, not the United States, who are blocking the path to a more stable East-West relationship, and that for our part we are ready for better relations if Moscow is ready to show greater restraint.

To get this campaign off the ground, I believe that you should send a letter to Brezhnev timed with the start of the fall session of the U.N. General Assembly describing your views on the future direction of US-Soviet relations. Although we would not release the text of the letter, we envisage briefing the press on its main themes in order to create the maximum possible impact on Western opinion.

The proposed letter (attached) makes some of the same points that I plan to use with Gromyko in my talks next week. The basic message is that the U.S. is prepared to defend its interests by whatever means necessary, but that a more constructive relationship is possible if the Soviets exercise restraint.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the attached letter to Brezhnev.

DECLASSIFIED/Released  
NLS F98-010 #13  
BY dlb NARA, DATE 6/27/00

DEAR PRESIDENT BREZHNEV:

AS WE BEGIN THE FALL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND APPROACH THE MEETINGS BETWEEN OUR FOREIGN MINISTERS, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR ME TO DESCRIBE TO YOU SOME OF MY THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS.

LET ME SAY AT THE OUTSET THAT THE UNITED STATES IS DEEPLY INTERESTED IN THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS AND IN A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE AND STABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR COUNTRY. WE HAVE REPEATEDLY DEMONSTRATED OUR WILLINGNESS TO SETTLE DISAGREEMENTS BY NEGOTIATIONS AND TO OBSERVE SCRUPULOUSLY OUR INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS.

I BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT A GREAT DEAL OF THE PRESENT TENSION IN THE WORLD IS DUE TO ACTIONS BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. AS WE AND OUR ALLIES HAVE FREQUENTLY STATED, TWO ASPECTS OF SOVIET BEHAVIOR ARE OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO US:

-- FIRST, THE SOVIET UNION'S PURSUIT OF UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE GLOBE AND ITS REPEATED RESORT TO THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT USE OF FORCE IN REGIONAL CONFLICTS. THE ROLE OF CUBA IN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA IS PARTICULARLY DISTURBING AND UNACCEPTABLE TO US.

-- SECOND, THE USSR'S UNREMITTING AND COMPREHENSIVE MILITARY BUILDUP OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS, A BUILDUP WHICH IN OUR VIEW FAR EXCEEDS PURELY DEFENSIVE REQUIREMENTS AND CARRIES DISTURBING IMPLICATIONS OF A SEARCH FOR MILITARY SUPERIORITY.

DESPITE THESE TRENDS, WE ARE COMMITTED TO A DIALOGUE WITH THE SOVIET UNION. WE ARE GRAVELY CONCERNED OVER THE THREAT TO MANKIND IN THE AGE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. I HAVE STATED PUBLICLY THAT THE UNITED STATES IS READY TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE USSR THAT WOULD LEAD TO GENUINE ARMS REDUCTIONS. THE EXISTING STOCKPILES OF THESE WEAPONS AND ONGOING PROGRAMS ARE SUCH THAT ONLY A SERIOUS EFFORT AT ARMS REDUCTIONS WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE OBJECTIVE WHICH WE BOTH SHARE, NAMELY, LIFTING THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION WHICH HANGS OVER MANKIND.

WHILE THE UNITED STATES IS COMMITTED TO A STABLE AND PEACEFUL WORLD, IT WILL NEVER ACCEPT A POSITION OF STRATEGIC DISADVANTAGE. BECAUSE THE SOVIET UNION HAS, OVER THE PAST YEARS, EMBARKED ON A MAJOR PROGRAM TO IMPROVE ITS STRATEGIC FORCES, THE UNITED STATES MUST ALSO UPGRADE ITS FORCES. WE HAVE NO DESIRE TO TAX OUR SOCIETY WITH A COSTLY AND BURDENSOME BUILD-UP OF ARMAMENTS. THE UNITED STATES, HOWEVER, WILL INVEST WHATEVER IS NEEDED TO MAINTAIN A SECURE STRATEGIC POSTURE.

THE MEETINGS THIS MONTH BETWEEN OUR FOREIGN MINISTERS WILL, I ASSUME, SET THE TIME AND PLACE FOR NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES ON WHAT WE TERM "THEATER NUCLEAR FORCES." WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING A MILITARY BALANCE IN THIS FIELD -- A BALANCE WHICH HAS BEEN UPSET BY THE UNPRECEDENTED BUILDUP OF MILITARY FORCES BY YOUR COUNTRY IN RECENT YEARS, ESPECIALLY THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE SS-20 MISSILES. FURTHERMORE, AS WE HAVE STATED AT THE MADRID MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE, WE ARE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS TO FASHION A COHERENT SYSTEM OF COMMITMENTS ON EUROPEAN SECURITY THAT ARE VERIFIABLE AND MILITARILY SIGNIFICANT.

WITH OUR ALLIES AND OTHER CONCERNED NATIONS, THE UNITED STATES IS WILLING TO PURSUE NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS THAT THREATEN WORLD PEACE, INCLUDING THE PRESENCE OF OCCUPATION FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN AND KAMPUCHEA. SOVIET READINESS TO RESOLVE THE AFGHANISTAN PROBLEM ON THE BASIS OF A PROMPT WITHDRAWAL WOULD GO FAR TOWARD RESTORING THE INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE AND THRUST NECESSARY FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS. THE VIETNAMESE INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF KAMPUCHEA HAS EARNED WIDESPREAD CONDEMNATION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AS A BREACH OF ACCEPTED NORMS OF CONDUCT AND A THREAT TO PEACE. I CALL ON YOUR GOVERNMENT TO EXERT ITS INFLUENCE OVER THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM TO WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS FROM KAMPUCHEA.

IN SUM, THE UNITED STATES IS MORE INTERESTED IN ACTIONS WHICH FURTHER THE CAUSE OF WORLD PEACE THAN IN WORDS. WE ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO SOLVING OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCES BY PEACEFUL MEANS, BUT WE ARE NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT DOUBLE STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOR. WORDS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE, HOWEVER, IMPORTANT. A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE REDUCTION OF WORLD TENSIONS WOULD BE FOR YOUR COUNTRY TO CURB THE ESCALATING CAMPAIGN OF ANTI-AMERICANISM AND DISINFORMATION BOTH INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION AND ABROAD, A CAMPAIGN WHICH ONLY SERVES TO POISON THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE.

MR. PRESIDENT, MY COUNTRY STANDS READY TO BEGIN THE SEARCH FOR A BETTER U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP. WE ARE PREPARED TO DISCUSS WITH THE SOVIET UNION THE FULL RANGE OF ISSUES WHICH DIVIDE US, TO SEEK SIGNIFICANT, VERIFIABLE REDUCTIONS IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND TO INCREASE CONTACTS BETWEEN OUR NATIONS. I AM HOPEFUL THAT THE MEETINGS BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE HAIG AND FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO WILL START A PROCESS LEADING TOWARD SUCH A RELATIONSHIP.

FOR SUCH A PROCESS TO BEAR FRUIT, YOUR COUNTRY MUST UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR RESTRAINT IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA. AT THE SAME TIME, LET ME ADD THAT THE UNITED STATES

IS FULLY PREPARED TO TAKE LEGITIMATE SOVIET INTERESTS INTO ACCOUNT. IF WE SUCCEED IN ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK OF MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S INTERESTS AND MUTUAL RESTRAINT IN THE RESOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL CRISES, I THINK WE WILL CREATE A SOUND AND ENDURING BASIS FOR U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS.

END TEXT.

*Ronald Reagan*