

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 11, 1984

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Please accept my condolences on the death of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Yuriy Vladimirovich Andropov.

Chairman Andropov had written to me on January 28, 1984, about the Soviet Government's concern for world peace and your willingness to pursue a dialogue aimed at solving some of the very real problems in our relations. I believe that this dialogue is so important that we should proceed with it as soon as your government is ready to do so. Therefore, I have requested Vice President Bush to deliver this letter to you.

As I made clear in my January 16 address, I have no higher goal than the establishment of a relationship between our two great nations characterized by constructive cooperation. Differences in our political beliefs and in our perspectives on international problems should not be an obstacle to efforts aimed at strengthening peace and building a productive working relationship. Indeed, in the nuclear age, they make such efforts indispensable.

In the months ahead, we will be ready to discuss with you the entire agenda of issues in which our two nations have an interest. We have specific ideas for moving the relationship forward. We will be interested in whatever ideas and proposals you may have to put forth.

One area where practical steps are possible is the reduction of strategic arms. When you are ready, we have ideas on concrete ways to narrow the differences between our respective positions. The common framework we are prepared to discuss would

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incorporate elements of the current proposals of both sides and permit forces that are not identical, while providing for a more stable strategic balance at lower levels.

We are prepared to talk about such a framework in diplomatic channels. But we also believe that we need to return to the negotiating table. This applies to intermediate range as well as strategic nuclear forces. Here too, the world expects us to resume our discussions and find solutions.

Another area where practical steps are possible is the Vienna negotiations on conventional force reductions. During the next round of negotiations in Vienna, the Western side will be prepared to introduce some new ideas. If the Soviet Union demonstrates significant flexibility in meeting our serious concerns about assuring effective verification, you will find us flexible regarding data.

A practical and business-like approach could also be helpful in reducing the dangers of wider confrontation in the many regional problems in which our two nations' interests are involved. We have had exchanges of views on southern Africa and on Afghanistan over the past several years, and more recently, Secretary Shultz and Ambassador Hartman have discussed Middle East issues at some length with Foreign Minister Gromyko. I see merit to further exchanges of views on developments in these areas.

We recently have had useful exchanges on a number of questions of bilateral interest. For my part, I am prepared to move ahead in the areas we already have under discussion and to open up new avenues of cooperation as well, assuming there is interest on your side.

Let me conclude by seeking to lay to rest some misunderstandings which may have arisen. The United States fully intends to defend our interests and those of our allies, but we do not seek to challenge the security of the Soviet Union

and its people. We are prepared to deal with you in a manner that could establish the basis for mutually acceptable and mutually advantageous solutions to some of our problems.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko
Secretary of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party
of the Soviet Union
Moscow, U.S.S.R.