

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 22, 1985

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Thank you for your letter of September 12, which was delivered to me by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze at the White House on September 27. The discussions that Secretary Shultz and I had with the Foreign Minister were frank and useful. In my view they demonstrated that we both are working seriously on the problems which divide us as we near our meeting in Geneva. As I told Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, I look forward to the meeting and to the prospect of more constructive relations. I am considering carefully the arms control proposals contained in your letter and will be in touch with you on these questions in the near future.

This week I will address the UN General Assembly at the commemoration of the Fortieth Anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. This anniversary is a valuable opportunity to reflect on the importance of the UN to world peace and security, as well as its unrealized potential. I think we both agree that the UN can and must be more effective in dealing with regional conflicts. In this connection, I noted Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's statement to the United Nations General Assembly that the Soviet Union viewed with alarm the fact that "it has not been possible to settle a single regional conflict or to extinguish a single hotbed of military tension."

We both recognize that the UN cannot by itself prevent such conflicts. All nations, particularly

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those directly involved, must devote their best efforts to reducing tensions and pursuing negotiated solutions to the most dangerous regional conflicts. Certainly our two nations have a major responsibility to encourage such efforts.

As I told Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, we have found our regional experts' discussions useful and propose to hold them on a regular basis. It is also desirable to try to build on this start by moving beyond the clarification of viewpoints to the search for concrete solutions to real problems. I hope that you and I can discuss this larger question in detail when we meet at Geneva. Even before then, however, I will put before the UN General Assembly an initiative to deal with an important groups of conflicts in Asia, Africa and Central America. I want you to be aware in advance of the proposal I will make.

Through our regional exchanges we have made clear our views on the nature of these problems and their impact on our overall relationship. Although our views on many aspects of these problems vary greatly, we believe that these disputes require political, not military solutions, and we are prepared, if the Soviet Union is willing, to seek ways to help resolve conflicts through negotiation.

Because I believe in promoting a search for political solutions, I propose that we concentrate our efforts on those conflicts that did most to erode our relationship in the past. This would include Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Angola and Ethiopia. Of course, each of these conflicts has its own character and requirements, and we approach them with this fact in mind; other conflicts will need separate treatment altogether.

The peace program that I will put before the General Assembly seeks progress at three levels: internal reconciliation, superpower restraint, and economic reconstruction.

Because these conflicts are rooted in local disputes and problems, the starting point must be negotiations between the warring parties in each conflict; in the case of Afghanistan, this would obviously mean your own government. These talks may take different forms, but we believe that, together with improvement of internal political conditions, they are essential to achieving an end to violence, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and national reconciliation.

Once the parties to the conflicts make real progress, a second level of the process would be useful: separate U.S.-Soviet discussions, aimed at supporting the negotiating process between the warring parties. These talks would not be formal peace negotiations; needless to say, it is not for us to impose solutions. In some cases, however, it would be appropriate to consider guarantees for agreements reached. In every case the primary U.S.-Soviet role would be to support regional efforts to reduce and eliminate outside military involvement, including withdrawal of foreign troops and restraint on the flow of outside arms.

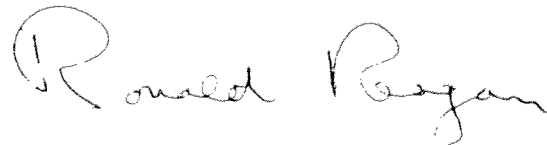
If the first two stages are successful, a third would then become possible: the reintegration of these countries into the world economy. The United State is prepared to contribute generously at this stage.

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze noted in his remarks at the United Nations General Assembly that in many cases mechanisms for mediation were already in place. We want to strengthen these existing

mechanisms, and believe that this proposal will complement and reinforce them.

I feel that if we are unable to resolve these problems through negotiation among the real parties and through mutual restraint, they will only grow more difficult to resolve. This could lead to increased tensions - a situation that neither of us should welcome. I hope the Soviet Union is prepared to work constructively to help promote solutions to these conflicts, and will offer early support for my proposal. If so, you will find us willing to do our part, and to make the most of opportunities thereby opened for progress on other critical issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronald Reagan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

His Excellency  
Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev  
General Secretary of the Central Committee  
of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union  
The Kremlin  
Moscow