

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 26, 1985

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

I have already written to you informally to express some of my thoughts on the issues facing us in the wake of our meeting in Geneva. I would like in this letter to deal with some of the particularly pressing regional issues which I believe we must address in the months ahead.

I mentioned Afghanistan in my earlier letter, but I would like to share with you some further thoughts. Afghanistan was, after all, the regional question on which we spent the most time in Geneva. You expressed Soviet readiness to see an agreement emerge from the United Nations negotiating process which would entail a ceasefire, withdrawal of troops, return of the refugees and international guarantees. The discussion recalled the suggestion in your June 10 letter that my government had "opportunities to confirm by its actions" our readiness to reach a political settlement in Afghanistan. As I explained in my October speech to the UNGA, we are prepared to cooperate with others on practical steps. Three elements could form the basis for a lasting solution: A process of negotiations among the warring parties including the Soviet Union; verified elimination of the foreign military presence and restraint on the flow of outside arms; and movement toward political self-determination and economic reconstruction.

As you know, we have been disappointed with the results of the proximity talks conducted by the U.N. Secretary General's Special Representative. Five rounds in Geneva have not addressed the real issue on which a resolution of this problem depends -- withdrawal of your forces. No other element of the problem presents real difficulty.

To underscore this, we have formally notified the Secretary General that we accept the agreed formulation on guarantees. For your part, I believe that the talks would gain a real impetus from Soviet action to permit discussion of a timetable for withdrawal at Geneva and a public announcement to that effect. Were such action taken by the time of our Ministers' next meeting, it would enable them to have a more focussed and productive discussion.

Another area where I believe movement is possible is Southern Africa. Because we have covered this ground often in the past, the point I need to make is a simple one.

As I am sure you are aware, I am reviewing our policy in Southern Africa, specifically with respect to the war in Angola. This review might not be necessary if there were real evidence that the outside forces in that country could be reduced, and then withdrawn, making possible the reconciliation of the indigenous parties to the war. Such an outcome, of course, would dramatically improve prospects for the establishment of an independent Namibia in accordance with UNSC Resolution 435 -- an objective we share with the U.S.S.R. Unfortunately, the evidence is clear that your own involvement in Angola is deepening.

As I said at the UN in October, our aim is to reduce, not increase, military involvement by the superpowers in local disputes like that in Angola.

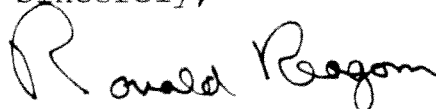
I was pleased to learn from Secretary Shultz that the Soviet Union had expressed an interest in calming tensions between Libya and Egypt. At the same time, it appears that Libya is preparing at least two sites for the emplacement of SA-5 Air Defense Missiles to be supplied by the Soviet Union. It is hard to reconcile Soviet interest in restraint in this region with the provision of advanced weapons to a leader whose reckless behavior is a major danger to regional stability. Because we view this development with utmost

seriousness, I was disappointed to see that the Soviet response to our presentation failed to address the transfer of these weapons to Libya. Our Ministers and experts should address this vital matter, since it raises the prospect of dangerous incidents that I hope you want to avoid as much as we do.

If you agree, both Angola and Libya are additional subjects which Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze might take up in their next meeting.

In closing, let me underline my satisfaction with our agreement in Geneva to put our regional experts' talks on a regular basis. When we met in Geneva we agreed that it was important for both of us to avoid a U.S.- Soviet clash over regional conflicts and to work for solutions. I believe that we must move forward on some of these issues before we meet again. In that regard, I was pleased to note that in your remarks to Secretary Baldrige you referred to the importance of dealing with regional trouble spots.

Sincerely,

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

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