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For a General Conversation with Prime Minister of India I. Gandhi

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Summary:

Material sent to L. I. Brezhnev in preparation for a general conversation with I. Gandhi. Potential topics for conversation include the importance of Soviet-Indian relations, tensions with the United States, negotiations on nuclear weapons, and events in the Middle East.

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for a general conversation with

Prime Minister of India I. Gandhi

Dear Madam Prime Minister,

I am genuinely glad to welcome you in Moscow. We highly value the good relations with India and know how much you personally have done for their development. I am convinced that your present visit will even further strengthen the traditional friendship of our countries and their multifaceted cooperation.

The gradual development of relations between the USSR and India has truly paramount importance for our countries, and for the situation in Asia and in the world on the whole. The Soviet leadership assesses the cooperation with India in all spheres positively. Its spheres are expanding and it is becoming increasingly deep in substance and varied in form.

The agreements reached in the course of our visit to Delhi in 1980 are being successfully put into effect.

The effectiveness of trade, economic, scientific, and technical cooperation between the USSR and India is growing by virtue of the fact that it is being done on a planned basis. The corresponding long-term program signed in 1979 will be mainly accomplished by 1990. It seems that we could look at a more distant perspective of our cooperation, let's say, to the year 2000.

As I am told, some days ago Indian candidate cosmonauts arrived in our Star City to prepare for a joint Soviet-Indian space flight. A new important chapter in our cooperation is thereby being opened.

Some words about how matters are going with us in the Soviet Union.

The main efforts of the Soviet people are concentrated right now on the fulfillment of the large-scale program of economic and social development of the country outlined by the 26th Congress of our Party. And much has already been done. A solid growth of industrial production is assured. The production of consumer products is increasing. Work to develop the natural resources of Siberia and the Far East is being done on a broad front. The USSR Food Program for the period up to 1990 is aimed at providing a serious improvement of agriculture and the industrial sectors associated with it. The work to put it into effect is beginning to bring the first fruits. So the workers of our country are heading for the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which we will mark in December of this year with impressive achievements.

Of course, more could also be done, we also have unresolved problems. The tense international situation creates certain difficulties.

This tension is the result of the actions of the US and its allies, who have adopted a course of a direct confrontation with the socialist countries and those liberated from colonialism, and the crude use of force and pressure in policy. The "crusade" proclaimed by the President of the US is directed not only against Communism, but against all forces of progress, liberty, and the independence of peoples.

Now in Washington they officially announce that a nuclear war is possible, and in some circumstances even advisable. They speak of preparing for a "protracted" nuclear war and victory in it. This is monstrous and we'll say frankly, a crazy doctrine which is dangerous for all humanity.

Completely ignoring the realities of our time the US Administration is pursuing a policy directed at occupying first place militarily and dominance in the world. References to any change in the correlation of forces unfavorable to the US are called upon only to disguise these goals. They are calculated at deceiving the American and other peoples.

The Americans have been forced to resume negotiations with us on nuclear weapons, but they are trying to use them only to hide their military preparations which are unprecedented in scale, and to impose unilateral disarmament on us. I will tell you frankly, Madam Prime Minister: unfortunately right now one cannot speak of any progress in the negotiations with the US either on medium-range nuclear weapons or on strategic [ones]. Although we are doing and will continue to do everything that depends on us to achieve an agreement taking the legitimate

interests of both sides into consideration. But Washington clearly has other goals.

In these conditions the active and joint actions of all peace-loving forces are especially important to block the path to war.

A collective rebuff is needed to the policy of pressure and blackmail, and indeed the direct use of force, to which the US and its allies increasingly resort. It is sufficient to recall the criminal aggression and atrocities of Israel in Lebanon and the colonial plundering of Britain in the South Atlantic. Washington stands behind their backs.

The Reagan Administration is trying to conduct a sort of counterattack of imperialism against the liberated countries to restore the dominance of the colonizers over them in one form or another. The US announces that one, then another region of the world as a zone of its "vital interests" as the "basis" for sending American troops there.

But take Washington's attempts in violation of the UN Charter to ascribe to itself the "right" to introduce an embargo and impose sanctions on other countries. What is this if not arbitrariness in international relations? And it will be eliminated faster the more vigorously and unitedly all countries that value their sovereignty speak against it.

Such are our impressions from the policy of the current US Administration. You were recently in Washington on an official visit. Perhaps you have some new information on this matter?

As concerns the Soviet Union we intend, as before, to oppose this policy of Washington's with a constructive approach to the resolution of key international problems. Our foreign policy was and remains a policy of peace, but everything that we do in the military sphere pursues only a single goal - defense. The Soviet Union does not set itself the task of achieving military superiority, but will not allow Washington to make challenges [*pretenzii*] in this respect.

We consistently and persistently seek a lessening of international tension. And the situation in the world would be better if the Western powers would accept at least some of our proposals directed at curbing the arms race. Unfortunately, Washington does not even react to the unilateral commitment we made not to use nuclear weapons first, at least not seriously.

We know that India is doing much to dispel the storm clouds of military danger, and not just in South Asia. It seems that in the non-aligned movement, in which India enjoys great and deserved authority, it is capable of more actively acting in defense of peace and for disarmament.

Part of the US policy of confronting the socialist and developing countries is their militaristic actions in the Indian Ocean. During our meeting with you in Delhi in December 1980, as I understood, it became apparent that there was a similar understanding of the danger created by these actions. Apparently you will agree that since that time the situation has become even more complex.

The implementation of the proposal of the coastal countries to turn it into a zone of peace could help lessen military tension in the Indian Ocean. The pivotal question right now is whether an international conference on the Indian Ocean will be able to be convened in the first half of 1983 in accordance with the UN decision. Or will the US, as in 1981, torpedo it again.

But the Americans are continuing a strategic "exploitation" [*osvoenie*] of this region for the time being. We are confident that the obstruction of the US can be broken by the combined efforts of the interested countries. And India's role in this might not be the last, of course.

As before, the situation in the Middle East, where Israel is perpetuating plunder with the direct complicity of the US, is very dangerous. The events in Lebanon affect not just the interests of the Arabs. The US and Israel were intent not only to eliminate the Palestinian resistance movement and take over the Middle East, but to also intimidate other peoples who are defending their independence. Turning Israel into an aggressive American base threatens the vital interests of countries which depend on Middle East oil resources, over which the US is increasingly openly trying to establish its sole control.

The Soviet Union has vigorously supported the Lebanese patriots, the Palestine Liberation Movement, and also Syria from the very beginning of Israel's invasion of

Lebanon. We have taken practical steps to strengthen the military potential of the forces opposing the aggressor, and to give them moral and political support, including appropriate demarches to the US leadership. From now on we intend to give the Arabs the necessary aid in the future; I want to add that we highly value the position of India on the problems of the Middle East and your support of the Palestinian and Lebanese patriots.