

February 4, 1977

Letter, Secretary Brezhnev to President Carter

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The USSR Embassy in the USA
Washington, D.C.
From the journal
of DOBRYNIN A.F.
RECORD OF THE CONVERSATION

with the U.S. Secretary of State
C. VANCE

February 4, 1977

I visited Secretary of State Vance and referring to my delegated task, handed him the text of the following letter from L.I. Brezhnev to President J. Carter:

"To His Excellency
James E. Carter
The President of the United States of America

Dear Mister President,

I want on my own behalf and on behalf of my colleagues in the leadership to congratulate you once more on your assumption of the position of the President of the United States.

I attentively familiarized myself with your letter of January 26, and find it in general constructive and hope inspiring. We accepted with satisfaction confirmation of the fact that the goal of your policy is improvement of relations with the Soviet Union, and also your intention to pay attention to this. This coincides with our basic approach, which I expressed again in public not long ago. I want to stress now that we are ready to realize by mutual efforts a new major shift in the relations between two our countries.

As far as I understand we are establishing with you a business-like, trustful dialogue.

It is important, of course, that from the very beginning of our contact we have clarity and mutual understanding of principle questions.

The most important thing here--and it is confirmed by past experience--is the necessity to strictly observe the basic principles of equality, mutual consideration of lawful interests, mutual benefit and non-interference into the internal affairs of the other side. With this, and only this approach from both sides, in complete accord with the "Fundamentals of Mutual Relations" between our countries signed in 1972, can a stable, progressive development of relations between the USSR and the USA, and the potential to find mutually acceptable solutions to emerging issues, be provided.

For objective reasons, at the present time the central sphere of relations between the USA and USSR really is to ensure cooperation between our two countries with the goal of stopping the arms race and of disarmament. Only in this way can the main task of our peoples, as well as that of all other peoples--elimination of the threat of war, first of all, of course, nuclear-missile war--be completed.

As you also recognize, we have to finish the development of a new agreement on limitation of strategic offensive weapons without delays. We believe that this task is completely manageable. Because the main parameters of the agreement are, in fact, already determined on the basis of the agreement which was reached in Vladivostok. The successful conduct of this exclusively important and necessary affair to its conclusion would allow us to start hard work on more far-going measures in this area and, undoubtedly, would give a new impulse for a constructive development of Soviet-American relations in general.

We believe that it is these questions of limitation of strategic weapons that will occupy the main place in the conversations with Secretary of State C. Vance when he comes to Moscow.

In our opinion, without further delay we have to put into practice Soviet-American Treaties on limitation of underground tests of nuclear weapons and on explosions for peaceful purposes. At the same time we have to--and we are ready to cooperate with the USA on this issue--intensify our efforts directed at a total and universal ban on nuclear weapons tests and at prevention of nuclear proliferation.

We want to bring about a shift in the Vienna negotiations on reduction of armed forces and weapons in Central Europe. We would like the new American government to treat with attention the proposals which were introduced there by the countries of the Warsaw Treaty last year.

There are other questions of limitation of weapons and of disarmament which are waiting to be solved. The Soviet Union has put forward concrete proposals on many of them, and we hope that your government approach this review constructively.

Of course, under conditions when it is still not possible yet to achieve a halt to the arms race in the world, we can not but take care about security of our country and our allies. Our defensive potential must be sufficient so that nobody will risk to attack us or threaten us with attack. In this respect, using your expression, we do not want anything more or less for ourselves.

Yet I want to stress once more with all determination that the Soviet Union does not strive for superiority in weapons. We are deeply convinced that genuine security for all countries and for each of them in particular is based not on competition in the sphere of weapons, but in the sphere of disarmament, and in the elimination of the material foundation for war. Our future efforts also will be directed at achieving this goal.

I will touch briefly on some other questions.

An important direction of joint or parallel efforts of our countries, because of their objective role and responsibility in world affairs, is assistance in solution of problems, which cause international tension. In our opinion the task here is to remove the original reasons which cause these problems.

The primary meaning in this respect, as you, Mr. President correctly note too, is the establishment of a strong and just peace in the Near East. Almost 10 years has passed since the war of 1967. This "jubilee" with all its sharpness reminds us not only of the time we have simply lost in the matter of settling the Near East conflict, but also of a possibility of new dangerous explosions--as happened in October 1973 and just recently in Lebanon.

Moreover, we are convinced that if in our approach to the Near East problem we

soberly and objectively take into account all the lawful rights and interests of all sides--both Arabs, including the Palestinians, and Israel--then the reliable elimination of this permanent source of international conflicts is quite possible. Finding the necessary understanding between the USA and the USSR on this question, in particular relating to the reconvening of the Geneva conference, will undoubtedly make success possible on the great matter of achieving a political settlement in the Near East.

Cooperation between our two countries would also be vitally important, we believe, on other international questions--whether it is further steps toward strengthening European security on the basis of decisions adopted in Helsinki, strict observance of the Four-Power treaty on Western Berlin, or, say, a settlement on Cyprus.

In your letter you, Mr. President, mention the problem of the south of Africa. Our principled position on this question is very well known: we are united with the struggle of the South African peoples for their freedom and independence. We recognize the right of nobody but these peoples themselves to determine their fate. Despite what is sometimes said about this, the USSR does not look for any benefits for itself in this region, and the rivalry with the United States there does not interest it either.

Noting the great significance, which you, Mr. President, give to improving trade-economic relations, on my own behalf I would like to stress that we did and still do want our relations in this sphere to develop consistently and to acquire a more and more broad-scale character, leading to mutual--I stress, mutual benefit for both sides. But it is necessary for this that they be freed of all kinds of discriminatory limitations and artificially created obstacles. Without this, without rejection of attempts to somehow or other link trade with questions relating to the domestic competence of governments, not only will economic contacts suffer, but overall relations between our countries will also suffer a blow.

I hope, Mr. President, that with good will and sincere readiness for constructive cooperation between us you and I will be able to make a good contribution towards solving the problems that we have. Some of these, including the problem of strategic weapons limitation, apparently will be the subject of an exchange of opinions soon during Mr. Vance's visit to Moscow.

In conclusion, I want to stress that I, like you, place special emphasis on our personal meeting. I will be ready to consider questions relating to the conduct of such a meeting with Mr. Vance, who you wrote, will be entrusted with this task.

With my best wishes and respect.

L. BREZHNEV
February 4, 1977

In Vance's own opinion, it is a good letter. It will be given to the President today.

Ambassador of the USSR in the USA
[signature]

/A. DOBRYNIN/