

PRIME MINISTER'S 3

PERSONAL MESSAGE

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EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LONDON

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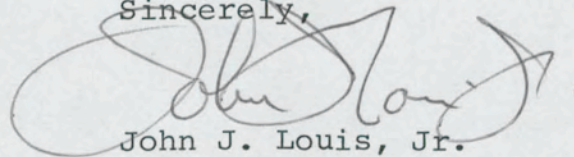
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US Declassified

Dear Prime Minister:

I have been asked to deliver the attached message to you from President Reagan, which was received at the Embassy early this morning.

Sincerely,



John J. Louis, Jr.
Ambassador

Enclosure

SECRET

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.

S E C R E T

Dear Prime Minister:

The death of President Leonid Brezhnev brings to a close an eventful eighteen-year period in Soviet history. Whether his departure will open a period qualitatively different in important respects remains to be seen. In the near term we expect little change in Soviet behavior, either as regards the Soviet Union's relations with others, or the internal ordering of its own society.

Over the long term, however, there may be changes in the Soviet Union of a sort which could present the West with new opportunities as well as new challenges. The direction of such change can be influenced, for better or worse, by the manner in which we Western leaders conduct our relations with the Soviet Union in the coming months. At this important juncture, therefore, I want to share with you my thoughts on the path ahead.

Our approach to the Soviet Union has been premised upon the principle that one must hold that government responsible for its actions, and base one's relationship with it on the realities of Soviet behavior. This means we must stand ready to improve these relations, and add new content to them, when Soviet actions so merit, just as we have sought to express in recent years through a cooling of our relationship, disapproval of Soviet actions in Afghanistan, Poland, and Indochina. As the current Soviet leadership looks into the future, and a new generation of leaders emerges to take its place, it is particularly important that they recognize that their relationship with the West will depend upon the way they conduct Soviet policy.

Under current circumstances, I believe we, as Western leaders, should, in our public and private pronouncements directed at the Soviet leadership, affirm the opportunity for improved East-West relations. At the same time, we should stress that such improvement must require solid evidence of Soviet willingness to abide by accepted standards of international behavior. I have sent a message of condolence to First Deputy Chairman Kuznetsov in this spirit. Secretary Shultz has written in a similar vein to Foreign Minister Gromyko. Vice President Bush will lead our delegation to President Brezhnev's funeral, and communicate the same message to the Soviet leadership.

Continuity will mark the nature of our contacts with the Soviet Union in the period immediately ahead. We will continue all the discussions and negotiations we

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have presently under way, including those being conducted in Geneva, Vienna, and Madrid. We will be alert to any possibility of forward progress and will maintain our regular contacts in Moscow and Washington. Secretary Shultz will be ready to meet with Foreign Minister Gromyko for another in-depth exchange when mutually convenient.

I think it particularly important at this time that Western conduct toward the Soviet Union be marked by unity of purpose. It would be tragic indeed if the Soviet leadership were to perceive divisions in the West, either as regards our willingness to respond to positive steps from Moscow or wavering in our insistence that the East-West relationship be based upon Soviet adherence to the norms of responsible international behavior. I hope, therefore, that in the days ahead our governments can maintain an intensive exchange as regards developments in the USSR, analyses of their possible consequences, and intentions regarding our respective policy statements.

The meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers next month offers an early opportunity for an authoritative exchange of Western views on the future course of developments in the USSR, and its impact on Western policies. It will also provide an opportunity to send the sort of positive, firm, and concerted message to the Soviet leadership which I trust will mark all our actions throughout this important period.

In the days ahead, we will be following events in Moscow and elsewhere closely. We shall share our information and perceptions with you and will very much appreciate your doing the same with us. I am confident that we will work closely together to ensure that the approach of a united West during this period will have upon the new Soviet leadership the effect we all desire.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ronald Reagan