

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: June 16, 1979
TIME: 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
PLACE: U.S. Embassy, Vienna

SUBJECT: First Plenary Meeting between President Carter and President Brezhnev

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June 16, 1979

Approved by: Reginald Bartholomew

The President welcomed President Brezhnev and said that according to the lot that was cast, he would speak first at this meeting.

Brezhnev nonetheless said he would speak first and proceeded to read his prepared statement.

Brezhnev said that he was happy to meet President Carter and get personally acquainted with him. Naturally, without ever having seen each other in person, they had already known each other for a long time. Nevertheless, such knowledge can never replace personal contact between the leaders of states, particularly such large states as the Soviet Union and the United States.

Brezhnev noted that the attention of people throughout the world was riveted on this meeting. Naturally, not everybody would wish them success. There were some people in the world who thought of nothing but what they could do to worsen Soviet-American relations, to frustrate detente and intensify international tensions. Fortunately, most people throughout the world had pinned their hopes on this meeting, believing that it would reduce the risk of war and consolidate peace.

Brezhnev was firmly convinced that it was his and the President's duty to do all in their power to justify those hopes. The SALT Treaty which he and the President were to sign will, of course, be the major outcome of this meeting. Along with this, however, they will also be in a position to discuss a number of other problems that were far from simple.

Brezhnev said that it had been agreed to start the discussion by addressing fundamental problems of Soviet-American relations. After all, if one had complete knowledge of the fundamental premises on which each side based its policy, it would become much easier to get to the bottom of the problems and resolve them. Brezhnev expressed the hope that the discussion between them would be frank and constructive. Of course, it would not be possible to accomplish everything all at once. But, by getting a better understanding of the position of each side, they could engage in an attempt to bring the positions of the sides closer together, to come to mutual understanding on some problems and to resolve them. Brezhnev felt that it was his and the President's duty to accomplish that and he expressed his trust that the President would agree with him in this respect. In view of their economic and military power and their broad international activities, the Soviet Union and the United States bore a special responsibility for the destiny of peace. In essence, the matter could be put

as follows: "If we have good relations and mutual understanding between our countries, there will be peace, there will be no nuclear war. For jointly we will always be able to prevent that. And what we must do, I want to repeat and emphasize--we must." In Brezhnev's view, this alone should promptly move our two countries toward putting the relations between them in order, so as jointly to move toward peace and not aggravate relations between them. This is by no means simply a kind wish. Soviet-American relations began to develop not just yesterday. They are based on a certain foundation and long experience, in some cases negative, in some others positive. Brezhnev could recall a time when our two countries were allies in the fight against a common enemy--Hitlerite Germany. That was followed by the long and fruitless period of the Cold War with all the crises it produced, which was detrimental to the interests of both our countries and poisoned the political atmosphere in the entire world. It had not been a simple thing to start restructuring Soviet-American relations which had been burdened by the inertia of the Cold War. The efforts of both sides were required for this; the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union met each other several times and eventually a turn in the relations between the two countries was achieved. It led to normal contacts and in some cases even to mutually advantageous cooperation. There is no doubt at all that this has been a major achievement. It is true that there are some people in various parts of the world, including some in the United States, who are not at all pleased by that turn of events. They began to allege, for example, that detente is a one-way street, that it was of greater benefit to the Soviet Union than to the United States. In substance, these people looked at things from the standpoint of who derived greater benefit from peace. But, Brezhnev would ask, is there any instrument that could measure who stands to gain more from peace? For his part, he and his people believed that peace was equally necessary for all the people of all the countries on earth. He would repeat and stress "all the people."

Brezhnev said that in thinking of Soviet-American relations he had always proceeded from the principle of peaceful co-existence between states with different social and economic systems. Indeed, there were fundamental differences between the economic and social structures of our two countries. But, he would ask, did that mean that it was necessary to exacerbate relations between us, thereby creating the risk of nuclear war? After all, neither country would be in a position to wipe the other off the face of the earth, nor will either country be able to restructure the other. He believed that in recognizing such differences, it was important to proceed in a peaceful manner and to resolve disputes in a peaceful way. It was necessary to respect the right of each people...

(Pointing across the table, Brezhnev said: "He is the only one who does not want that" Brezhnev noted that everybody had smiled at this comment of his, so it must be true. In any case, he heard no rebuttals.)

A turn for the better in the relations between our two countries had become possible precisely because the leadership of the two states had agreed to structure the relations between them on the principle of complete equality, equal security, respect for each other's legitimate interests, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs; in brief--the principle of peaceful coexistence. That understanding had been sealed by signatures at the very highest level. On that basis it had become possible to conclude the first agreement on the limitation of arms, above all, strategic arms; it had also become possible to sign a joint document of profound fundamental importance--the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War. It had also become possible to cooperate on a number of international problems. On that basis a whole network of bilateral agreements had been established which made up the living tissue of the ties and contacts between our two states. Of course, a steady development of relations between states becomes possible only if each partner observes continuity in pursuing his policy. Without that, agreements between states would not be worth very much.

Brezhnev noted that at this meeting President Carter and he would be discussing a number of serious issues and adopt important decisions with regard to these issues. What would happen, however, if subsequently one of the sides, for reasons of its own, were to start revising those decisions or begin acting as if they did not exist at all? Would the time and effort expended on these negotiations have been worthwhile? The answer, of course, was--hardly. As far as the Soviet Union was concerned, it pursued a consistent policy. The Soviet state and party leadership, and the entire Soviet people believed that Soviet-American relations should be peaceful and should provide for broad cooperation over the long term. Brezhnev said that on more than one occasion he had said just that, and he was prepared to reiterate this now: the Soviet Union did not have any hostile intentions with respect to the United States. It did not seek any advantages or benefits at the expense of the United States

anywhere in the world. He referred to the so-called "Soviet threat" that was so frequently cited. Any attempt to ascribe any bellicose intentions or designs to the Soviet Union were based on sheer fabrications and could only play into the hands of those who wanted to sow enmity between the Soviet Union and the United States and even set the two powers against each other. Of course, the Soviet Union, like the United States, is a state with broad global interests and has certain principles on which its policy was based, principles it could not give up. The Soviet Union has allies and friends, it has treaties providing for certain obligations with respect to these allies and friends, with whom it has interests in common that would be safeguarded against any encroachment. The Soviet Union had declared its solidarity with people who were struggling for independence and social progress, because it believed this to be just. It was by no means by Soviet efforts that a number of rotting regimes had collapsed and that a number of countries had asserted their independence. That process was governed by its own inexorable laws. Revolutionary changes occur as a result of conditions within a national territory, and it would only be self-deception to ascribe such changes to "Moscow intrigues". The Soviet Union was opposed in principle to the export of revolution, just as it was opposed to the export of counter-revolution. That had been said a long time ago by Lenin.

If one were to read a number of articles in the U.S. press or certain statements by certain politicians, it would appear that the only thing the Soviet leadership was thinking of was how to organize a coup d'etat in one part of the world or another. Sometimes attempts are made to base practical political action on such false premises. In Brezhnev's view, this was nothing but a dangerous self-delusion. He would stress over and over again that the Soviet Union did not have any hostile designs against the United States, that it was not in any way striving to prejudice legitimate American interests. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was entitled to expect a reciprocal attitude on the part of the United States. Brezhnev repeated and emphasized that thought. Regretfully, he had to state that in recent years the development of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States had been uneven. In a number of directions these relations had evidently been thrown back. He was deeply convinced that this was not in accord with the fundamental interests of either country.

Brezhnev told the President that the Soviet leadership had noted with great satisfaction those statements the President had made which favored good relations between our two countries and spoke of ridding mankind of the threat of war. But, speaking frankly, he would ask what, then, was the purpose of those ever increasing military outlays and the persistent buildup of military forces? Was it to achieve superiority over the Soviet Union? For its part, the Soviet Union was not seeking superiority over the United States, but could not, of course, allow such superiority to be acquired by the United States. What, then, was the sense in whipping up an arms race? Experience clearly showed that an arms race did not result in greater security or peace, but rather the opposite. The true path toward strengthening security was to lower levels of military confrontation, reduce existing stocks of arms, nuclear as well as conventional. Of course, this would only be possible if there were no attempt to upset the obtaining balance of forces, if there were no attempt to violate the basic principle of equal security. Whether or not the United States will take that path would depend above all on what general policy the United States intended to follow with respect to the Soviet Union. Quite frequently the concept of combining competition and cooperation between our nations was voiced in the United States. In the Soviet view, that formula rests on quicksand. It could hardly serve as a reliable reference point for policy. In the United States the U.S.S.R. was frequently referred to as an adversary. By competition or rivalry our two countries would not be able to resolve a single problem of bilateral or international relations. Quite frequently the unfavorable atmosphere deliberately generated in the United States with respect to Soviet-American relations was explained to the Soviet leadership by references to the stand taken by the mass media or by sentiment of certain Congressmen. That, the Soviet side was told, was beyond government control. He had to note, however, that sentiment was necessarily formed and influenced by the policy pursued by the government itself. He was mentioning this not because he wanted to start a debate on that subject; he was saying this simply because he wanted to eliminate whatever impeded the development of good relations between our two countries. The present meetings, in his view, should be aimed at just that, and should serve to improve Soviet-American relations. He would therefore call on the President to overcome the present stagnation and to continue their joint move toward peaceful and constructive purposes.

Brezhnev said that the main question to be clarified at the present meeting was the following: did the United States, like the Soviet Union, want the relations between our two countries to be truly good and stable and continue to develop to the mutual benefit of our nations and in the interests of universal peace? Was the United States prepared to conduct its policy toward the Soviet Union on a basis of equality without attempting to hide a stone under its shirt front?

For the moment Brezhnev would conclude his remarks on this note, and would express the hope that he would have the opportunity to hear President Carter express his own frank views on the fundamental aspects of the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The President thanked Brezhnev for his statement and said that he had listened to it with great attention. As Brezhnev had said, they were here addressing matters of great importance not only for the Soviet Union and the United States, but also for the people of the entire world. He and Brezhnev not only represented two great nations, perhaps the two greatest nations on earth, but also two nations that had never been military adversaries throughout history.

Brezhnev interrupted to say: "But our nations had been allies in the past".

The President said yes, it was his firm hope and highest goal to structure our relations with the Soviet Union on a stable basis in order to preserve peace in our common interests and in the interests of people throughout the world.

Brezhnev interrupted to say that he certainly welcomed this.

The President noted that the first words he and Brezhnev had exchanged when they first met yesterday were to the effect that this meeting was long overdue and that future meetings should not again be delayed for so long a period of time. When the President had said yesterday that they must succeed, President Brezhnev had said that if they failed, God would not forgive them.

Foreign Minister Gromyko added that God in His Heaven was in a position to see all.

On the President's view, the most important single item for their current meeting was to conclude and sign the SALT Treaty.

Brezhnev said he fully agreed.

The President continued that in view of the rarity of meetings between them, they should also take full advantage of this opportunity to make progress on other matters of great importance to our two nations.

He and Brezhnev represented two great and strong nations, having different interests and different goals in some respects, but also nations which shared the search for greater security for our respective peoples, for peace between our nations and peace in the world and for the development of a stable and productive relationship. Quite often unnecessary differences arise between us as a result of lack of understanding and lack of adequate consultations on a regular basis. Brezhnev had been quite right in noting in an aside that the two Foreign Ministers had met quite frequently. Sometimes the President had the impression that the two Foreign Ministers did not share the same objectives.

Gromyko interrupted to say in protest: "That is a very bold statement."

The President noted that the top military leaders of our countries had not met since 1946, when a meeting took place between General Eisenhower and Marshal Zhukov. Sometimes when our heads of state had met--he believed it was ten times since World War II--the results had been less than productive. He wanted to salute President Brezhnev for initiating the concept of detente, which provided for increased stability between us. In the area of control over nuclear weapons, progress had been steady but slow. At Glassboro the groundwork had been laid for SALT I, primarily for the limitation of anti-ballistic systems. Now, after seven years of negotiation, we were approaching the conclusion of the SALT II Treaty which for the first time set ceilings on missiles and in some instances provided for reductions, but still permitted both sides large increases in the number of nuclear warheads. The negotiations for SALT III will be different and very important. Because of increasing accuracy our strategic missiles would become increasingly vulnerable, and that was a destabilizing factor. It made verifiability of the terms of

the SALT agreement much more important and concealment of information by both sides much more serious. We needed to explore deep cuts in nuclear arms, non-use of force, and limitation or termination of the production of nuclear weapons. He and Brezhnev will be discussing SALT further this afternoon. It was obvious that peaceful competition was inevitable and will remain, but some elements of that competition are of deep concern to us and are potentially destabilizing. Those actions of both sides which concerned the other nation should be discussed fully so as to understand them, alleviate concerns and resolve difficulties. Neither nation can hope to dominate the other. Each is too powerful to be dominated by others. At the same time, there is enormous waste of natural and human resources, in the arms race, in nuclear and conventional weapons. There is also waste in the development of unnecessary capabilities, and in taking actions to prevent regional hegemony by one nation which might concern the other. As the President had heard Brezhnev say many times, the cost of miscalculation or misunderstanding that could result from the explosion of just one atomic weapon would indeed be catastrophic and must be avoided. Because of human nature, each country tended to exaggerate the actions of the other. The natural desire for secrecy is counter-productive and could lead to harmful consequences because it could build up suspicions and induce the other country to develop counter-measures when they may not be necessary.

Brezhnev interrupted and said he wanted to say something off the record, requesting that no notes be taken. He noted that President Carter had already approved a military budget for the coming year which significantly increased by billions of dollars the sums of money allocated to military use. Brezhnev did not know whether this was to be believed or not. The basic issue was this: when he and President Carter sign the SALT Treaty, that will, of course, be a major step, but they still will not be ridding mankind of the risk of perishing in an all-out war. Whether they believed it or not, the danger was very great indeed because just one button could set off a nuclear catastrophe that would blow the whole world to smithereens. In his view, he and President Carter had the duty of getting their nations used to the idea of limiting strategic arms, and this warranted their moving forward to further steps in SALT III. That was the main reason why he and President Carter were signing the SALT II Treaty. He added that this was just an off-the-record remark.

The President said he, too, would like to make an off-the-record remark. He said it was our understanding that year after year in the last fifteen years the Soviet Union had steadily increased expenditures for weapons of all kinds, and that it had done so at a much greater rate than the United States. He said that it was incumbent upon us to exercise greater restraint.

Brezhnev said: "But we look to the United States for guidance (on military expenditures)."

The President said that he realized that we look at each other.

Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union was not spending at a faster rate.

The President said that it was, and that is what our data show.

Brezhnev said: "In any event, we should not hide the truth from each other."

The President continued by saying that the fact was that the Soviet Union is a great and powerful nation, not afraid, and very confident in its own abilities and strength. It was also a fact that the United States was a great and powerful nation, not afraid, and very confident in its abilities and strength. We were looked upon by the rest of the world as being of approximately equal strength. This was a compliment to us both. The world also looked upon us as leaders. The President believed that Brezhnev and he should not let other countries or leaders hold them back if they saw clearly how to proceed in the interests of improving relations and making progress together. He hoped that his meeting would let them embark on a new and more productive course and practical steps toward defined objectives we shared. The President said that we should make a genuine effort to understand each other's concerns, the things that we do that concern each other.

Brezhnev interjected: "Yes, on the course of truth."

The President said each generation of leaders must make a maximum contribution to peace and stability. As Brezhnev well knew, elected leaders were frequently held back by committees and bureaucracies, but they could not always depend upon their successors to take actions they had failed to take

themselves. The President would like to see a greater frequency of routine consultations between our two countries, particularly consultations between our military leaders. And both countries should recognize that there can be no superiority and no victor in nuclear war. It was critical that we exercise restraint in regional political competition, that we restrict our military intervention in trouble spots in the world, either directly or by proxy. It was important that we take care not to deprive either of our countries or, for that matter, any other country, of access to crucial natural resources.

In closing, the President wanted to repeat that arms control at this present stage in our relations was the centerpiece, that verification of agreements was of crucial importance and that we should not wait for completion of an agreement before taking further steps, that step-by-step progress be achieved as we reach agreement. This applied in equal measure to the strategic arms limitation talks, to the comprehensive test ban talks, to the negotiations concerning anti-satellite weapons, to conventional arms transfers, mutual and balanced forced reductions in Europe and obviously SALT III. The President was eager for progress in all these matters without any further delay. The President was also very eager to understand Soviet concerns about us and to explore, while here in Vienna, every possibility for cooperation. He was eager to lay the groundwork for resolution of present difficulties and misunderstandings and for progress in the future.

Brezhnev said: "Lunch time."

The President concluded by saying that he looked forward to seeing Brezhnev this afternoon and expressed the hope that the network of our bilateral relations can be strengthened.

Brezhnev said that they would sign the Treaty right after lunch.

Gromyko said: "No, two days from now."