

ENDGAME

THE INSIDE STORY OF SALT II

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for capitalist-imperialist encirclement of the U.S.S.R. When Jimmy Carter spoke out on foreign affairs, the Soviets tended to hear echoes of Brzezinski's anti-Sovietism. Carter's moralizing about human rights seemed, in Moscow's ears, like a blatant attempt to exploit the worldwide outrage over the repression of Soviet dissidents. His idealism about arms control was equally suspect. In his inaugural address, Carter voiced the hope that "nuclear weapons would be rid from the face of the earth." To most of his listeners around the world, it was a noble but innocuous sentiment. Indeed, the Soviets themselves had championed disarmament in their own propaganda. But coming from this particular politician during a politically imposed hiatus in SALT, Carter's long-term goal spelled short-term problems. "Already we felt Carter was maneuvering for publicity," recalled a Soviet diplomat of the inaugural address. "We felt he was weaseling out of the Vladivostok promises. We felt he was insincere."

The notion that irrevocable promises had been made at Vladivostok was firmly embedded in Leonid Brezhnev's mind. Carter had inadvertently misled the Soviet leader on that count during the campaign. W. Averell Harriman, the dean of the Democratic foreign policy establishment, had visited Moscow and met with Brezhnev in September 1976—after Carter's nomination but before his election. Carter authorized Harriman to tell Brezhnev that if elected, he would move quickly to sign a SALT II agreement based on the Vladivostok accord and incorporating a compromise on the issues left unresolved at Vladivostok. At the time of Carter's inauguration, Brezhnev gave a speech saying that the essential features of the Vladivostok accord should be ratified without renegotiation. Significant reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both sides might be possible in SALT III, said Brezhnev, but that was new business. First, there was some old business to be completed. Brezhnev made it sound as though the presidential elections had interrupted the two sides just as they had been about to sign the SALT II treaty.

In fact, however, Carter inherited from his predecessors an ill-defined commitment and a well-defined stalemate. Gerald Ford had committed the U.S. at Vladivostok to a SALT II treaty that would limit each superpower to 2,400 strategic launchers, of which 1,320 could be armed with multiple warheads. But the Ford administration was also committed to the development of cruise missiles and a new, supersonic heavy bomber from which to launch them. Ford's final budget, submitted to Congress his last week in office, earmarked money for

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Jimmy Carter was the newly elected President of the United States, and the Kremlin was nervous. After eight years of dealing productively with Henry Kissinger, the Soviets would have been uneasy about any change that confronted them with an unknown quantity. Even though they proclaim themselves revolutionaries, or at least guardians of a revolution, the Soviet leaders are among the most conservative on earth. They hate, and fear, change. Consistency is the hobgoblin of their bureaucratic minds, and the American political system has an annoying way of confronting them with new Presidents whose policies are often inconsistent with those of their predecessors. The Soviets are quick to interpret even capricious shifts as deliberate maneuvers directed against them. Many of them are paranoids who fancy themselves pragmatists. Idealistic rhetoric offends them and makes them suspicious—unless, of course, it is their own.

Thus, the prologue to the Carter presidency made the Kremlin especially nervous. Here was a politician who had capitalized on being an unknown quantity; he had criticized détente during the campaign; he had appointed as his national security adviser the Polish-born international relations expert Zbigniew Brzezinski, whose name itself, with its Slavic sibilants, connoted the special hostility of an East European emigré. Brzezinski's copious writings on the Communist bloc made him, in Moscow's eyes, the most dangerous sort of cold warrior. He was the author of works with titles like *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* and a leading proponent of the view that the U.S. must shore up its "trilateral" relations with Western Europe and Japan, a concept that naturally seemed to the Russians like a blueprint

eight B-1 penetrating bombers and for the cruise missile program. Whether those planes, armed with cruise missiles, would eventually count merely as heavy bombers against the 2,400 ceiling or as multiple-warhead weapons against the 1,320 subceiling was a contentious piece of old business, as Brezhnev knew perfectly well. Even the Kissinger compromise of January 1976 had made clear that the U.S. would limit bombers armed with cruise missiles only if the Soviet Union accepted constraints on the Backfire bomber. And that proposal had been abandoned by the Republican administration because Donald Rumsfeld and Fred Iklé felt it gave away too much for too little.

The Carter administration reached a similar verdict even before it formally assumed office. A group of arms control and military experts assigned to supervise the post-election transition at the Defense Department produced for Harold Brown, the secretary-designate, a series of reports, including a thick loose-leaf folder on the outstanding issues in SALT. It concentrated on the question of cruise missiles and concluded that any limits on the deployment of air-launched cruise missiles must be in exchange for greater Soviet concessions than Kissinger had extracted in Moscow.

The author of a number of Pentagon transition-team reports was Walter Slocombe, Brown's principal adviser on SALT. Slocombe, then thirty-six, had been educated at Princeton, Oxford and Harvard Law School, clerked for a Supreme Court justice and worked for a Washington law firm. But lucrative private practice was merely an interlude between ventures into the thickets of national security policy. At Oxford he had studied Soviet politics. After his term at the Supreme Court he worked for Henry Kissinger as a member of the Program Analysis Office of the National Security Council, specializing on matters of strategic nuclear forces, intelligence, the fate of the modern navy and SALT. He spent a year in London at the Institute for Strategic Studies, a prestigious, privately funded think tank, where he wrote a paper on "The Political Implications of Strategic Parity." Its message was that the U.S. should learn to live without the overwhelming superiority it had so long enjoyed; a delicate balance of nuclear power might very well contribute to the safety and stability of the world and would not—as many feared—impair the "nuclear umbrella" with which the U.S. protected Western Europe. In 1972, when Nixon was basking in the afterglow of SALT I and his first Moscow summit meeting with Brezhnev, Slocombe was a campaign aide to Nixon's quixotic opponent, George McGovern. He worked on a paper that attempted

to explain how a McGovern administration would implement the sweeping cuts in the defense budget that the candidate had promised. Shortly after the election of 1976, the Carter-Mondale talent scouts assigned Slocombe to the Pentagon transition team. His liberal background at first worried the admirals and generals with whom he worked, but he quickly impressed Harold Brown as disciplined, hard-working—and cured of McGovernism. Slocombe's title—Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and Director of DoD [Department of Defense] SALT Task Force—was quintessentially bureaucratic, in that it managed to make him sound both important and subordinate. The title also made him sound very busy. Slocombe's large but windowless office in the Pentagon was a nexus where the military and civilian perspectives on SALT came together. Slocombe knew he was in for a long siege. Soon after moving in, he installed a tape deck that played, as a kind of highbrow white noise, Beethoven symphonies and other classics continuously and at low volume. One clock on the wall was set to Geneva time; once the negotiations resumed, he would be in frequent contact with the U.S. SALT delegation there. His file cabinets, decorated with crayoned drawings by his children, were soon overflowing with paper—most of it stamped TOP SECRET and SENSITIVE—generated by the negotiators of the previous administrations, the Pentagon task force Slocombe headed and the hierarchy of interagency committees that set SALT policy and supervised the negotiations.

When Slocombe crossed the Potomac, it was often to call on his opposite number at the State Department, Leslie Gelb. Gelb had worked at the Pentagon in International Security Affairs during the Johnson administration. He had been a coauthor of the *Pentagon Papers*. He had worked as a diplomatic correspondent for the *New York Times* until two weeks before the Carter inauguration, when he quit to become director of the State Department Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs. He and Slocombe met at least weekly in Gelb's office for a "brown bag" lunch.

Where SALT was concerned, Slocombe and Gelb were the alter egos of Harold Brown and Cyrus Vance respectively, the cabinet officers who would have the largest roles to play in the development of a new U.S. position. But their ultimate boss, Jimmy Carter, did not have an alter ego for SALT or anything else. He came into office determined that no one in his administration—neither Brzezinski nor Vance nor Brown—would monopolize influence on presidential think-

ing in the way that Henry Kissinger had managed to do with both Nixon and Ford. Carter was determined that in SALT, as in other matters, he would make decisions on the basis of "cabinet government," a collegial consensus guided by his own ideals and instincts. The trouble was, Carter came into office without a clear or consistent idea about how he wanted to proceed in SALT.

His first week on the job, Carter told the Associated Press and United Press International he wanted to resume SALT quickly. He envisioned a "two-stage evolution": the first stage would be to "put firm limits on ourselves," and the second would be "substantive [sic] reductions . . . to demonstrate to the world we are sincere." As for the cruise missile and Backfire bomber, he "wouldn't let those two items stand in the way of some agreement." These initial pronouncements from the Carter White House found their most attentive audience four blocks away, at the Soviet embassy. Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and his fellow Americanologists seized on any evidence that might help them anticipate what sort of SALT position this unpredictable new President would espouse. In this regard, the interview with the two wire services was tantalizing but ambiguous. When Carter spoke of two stages, did he mean SALT II and SALT III? Were "substantive reductions" a goal he was willing to postpone until after the Vladivostok accord was enshrined as a treaty? Did the Vladivostok accord represent, by his lights, "firm limits"? And when he said he would not let the issues of the cruise missile and Backfire bomber "stand in the way of some agreement," was he signaling his willingness to accept a deadlock-breaking compromise of the sort Kissinger had proposed in January 1976? Or was he floating anew the idea of deferring the two troublesome issues, the "quick fix" that the Ford administration had suggested—and the Kremlin had rejected—in February 1976?

Those questions, so much in the minds of Dobrynin and other Soviet officials, were also in the air around the Pentagon, the State Department, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and in the west wing of the White House, headquarters of the National Security Council. Throughout the administration, there was uncertainty over exactly how to proceed in SALT. From the moment he began focusing on SALT during the transition, Carter had been ambivalent about whether, in effect, to get Vladivostok over with and move on—whether to try to leapfrog over Vladivostok directly into what he had called in his wire service interview the "second phase," in which the U.S. would seek deep reductions.

In a pre-inaugural meeting at Blair House across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, President-elect Carter startled the Joint Chiefs of Staff by asking what would be the minimum force of strategic nuclear missiles necessary to deter war between the superpowers. He then dismayed the nation's top brass, of whom he was about to assume command, by suggesting that perhaps a mere two hundred ICBMs on each side might constitute adequate mutual deterrence. At his first meeting with his staff on SALT after taking office, Carter declared with tight-lipped intensity that he had been serious in his inaugural address about dreaming of the day when nuclear weapons could be rid from the earth and that his "most cherished hope" was to contribute to progress in that direction. But how? In one step or two?

The first week after the inauguration, Carter ordered the National Security Council to coordinate preparations for renewed high-level strategic arms talks in late March or early April. With that directive, embodied in one of the first NSC "tasking memoranda" of his presidency, Carter turned the bureaucracy loose on SALT so that he could devote his own attention to other problems, such as how to proceed with American diplomacy in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. For about six weeks, the President left the government experts to their own devices in SALT.

They were prolific. Some of the paper that began to flow, then fly, back and forth across the Potomac was recycled from previous administrations. Some of it was attached to trial balloons launched by young men and women who had just entered the government and who were confident that their fresh perspectives, brimming energies and bright ideas could dissolve the impasse in SALT. But a common denominator was soon detectable in this flurry of option papers. There was widespread agreement that the administration should, as Carter had implied in his wire service interview, take SALT one step at a time; it should use the Vladivostok accord as a starting point for the resumption of negotiations; it should find some imaginative variation of the accord on which to base a SALT II treaty and then pursue deep reductions in SALT III.

In a way, the bureaucracy was letting history be its guide, and the historian of record was a young government SALT expert who had worked for the previous administration. He was Roger Molander, then thirty-six, a member of the Policy Analysis group at the NSC. Molander was what Jimmy Carter sometimes claimed to be—a nuclear

engineer. He had a Ph.D. in nuclear engineering from Berkeley and was a specialist in the technical aspects of arms control. He served as chairman of the interagency committee that drafted Presidential Review Memorandum No. 2,* a survey of the options available to the President in SALT. He was also the author of a confidential history of the negotiations commissioned by Brzezinski, classified EYES ONLY and distributed to Carter, Vance and Brown. The document stressed that until the 1976 political season intervened, the negotiations had been moving toward a refinement of the Vladivostok accord that would have included some kind of trade-off between cruise missiles and Backfire bombers. While a better deal than the one Kissinger had been working on might be possible, the momentum of the previous administration's approach should be preserved and harnessed to the diplomatic purposes of the new administration. PRM 2 and Molander's history took respectful account of Carter's declared intention of seeking reductions in the Vladivostok ceiling and subcelling as soon as possible, but the government experts canvassed for both documents seemed to agree that deep reductions would probably have to wait until the Vladivostok accord had been consummated. The reasoning was essentially Kremlinological: The Soviet leadership had staked its prestige on the Vladivostok accord as the basis for SALT II and therefore any attempt to short-circuit that understanding would blow fuses in Soviet-American relations.

One of the most influential proponents of that view was himself a Kremlinologist—and a veteran of Henry Kissinger's stewardship of SALT. This was William Hyland, a career specialist in Soviet affairs who had come up through the ranks of the Central Intelligence Agency. At the beginning of the Nixon administration he had joined Kissinger's inner circle, first at the National Security Council, subsequently at the State Department. In the last days of Gerald Ford's presidency, Hyland had been deputy director of the NSC. He agreed to stay on as an NSC senior staff member for nine months after the Carter team came into office, partly because he wanted to complete a full twenty-five years of government service, which meant better pension benefits, but also because he wanted to help complete SALT II. He was forceful and straightforward in advocating that the Carter administration follow through on the Vladivostok accord, although he

*PRM 1, initiated at about the same time, concerned another urgent matter inherited by the new administration—the renegotiation of the status of the Panama Canal.

was as interested as many of the newcomers in moving quickly to a follow-on agreement that would lower the ceiling and subcelling.

Where Soviet-American relations were concerned, Hyland embodied what little continuity existed between the upper reaches of the Republican and Democratic administrations. He knew not only the dosiers of the top Soviet officials, but was on a first-name basis with many of them. When Anatoly Dobrynin came to the White House for his introductory calls, Hyland could assure Carter and Brzezinski afterward that the ambassador's idiosyncrasies were deceptive and his skills considerable. Dobrynin's manner was somewhat nervous; he tended to jabber in his fluent but heavily accented and not always idiomatic English; and he had the disconcerting practice of almost never taking notes, nor did he bring an assistant to do so. Yet Hyland knew from numerous encounters over the years that Dobrynin was able to report home accurately, that he had a firm technical grasp of the most complex issues, and that the Soviet leadership was, as a result, usually well briefed on the nuances as well as the substance of American policy.

Along with Roger Molander, Hyland served as the NSC's institutional memory on the negotiations. The two often exercised a restraining influence during staff meetings early in the administration. What many of the incoming policy-makers lacked in experience they made up in enthusiasm, and some well-worn and discarded wheels of SALT were rediscovered at these sessions. After listening patiently as someone propounded what he thought was a brilliant innovation, Hyland or Molander would point out that the same thing had been rejected by Gerald Ford—or by the Soviets—a few years before. For example, measures to restrict antiaircraft and antisubmarine defenses were good ideas, in the abstract, because, in the terminology of their proponents, they would have increased the survivability of the bomber and submarine legs of the triad and thus enhanced strategic stability. But they would have been premature as contributions to a negotiation that left in much more immediate doubt the survivability of the crucial land-based leg of the triad, to say nothing of a negotiation that had not yet determined whether cruise missiles and Backfire bombers were strategic weapons. "A lot of us were pretty wet behind the ears," commented a colleague who came to the administration full of ambitious plans for SALT, "and Hyland and Molander had to spend quite a bit of time walking us back to reality."

The Vladivostok Options

The old-timers and newcomers soon focused on three options, all variations of the Vladivostok accord. The first option, nicknamed "Basic Vladivostok," had the strongest backing of Gelb and the State Department. It would have given the Soviets the benefit of the doubt on the Backfire by not counting the bomber against the Vladivostok ceiling of 2,400; and it would have counted U.S. bombers armed with cruise missiles against the subceiling of 1,320 multiple-warhead systems, although by a more lenient formula than the one Gromyko had suggested to Kissinger in January 1976. At the Pentagon, Slocombe and others tolerated this option, but called it, with a touch of scorn, the "As if Ford Had Won the Election Proposal."

The Pentagon favored "Vladivostok-Plus"—that is, the Vladivostok accord plus a separate but accompanying accommodation on Backfire. As to what kind of accommodation, there remained a split between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The JCS took its traditional hard line, pressing for the Backfire to be counted as a strategic weapon. OSD acknowledged the ambiguous status of Backfire but wanted to make sure that the long-range ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM), a comparably ambiguous weapon system being developed by the U.S., would be treated equally under SALT II. OSD, in short, urged a trade-off between Backfire and GLCMs.* The Vladivostok-Plus option included a trade-off between Soviet heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles, of which there were approximately 300, and U.S. heavy bombers armed with air-launched cruise missiles. This was in effect the prototype of a proposal that would find its way back onto the negotiating table in a variety of versions for many months to come. Vladivostok-Plus would also have lowered somewhat the ceiling of 2,400 total strategic systems and 1,320 multiple-warhead launchers.

The third option was "Vladivostok-Minus"—the 1974 accord minus a solution to the twin problems of Backfire and the cruise

*SALT acronyms tend to look bad and sound worse. GLCM is pronounced "glickum." ALCM—air-launched cruise missile—is pronounced "alcum," and SLCM—the sea-launched version—"slicum." In February 1977, while the SALT II options were taking shape, Harold Brown ordered a slowdown in the development of the antiship version of SLCMs because early tests of the drones over water had not been very successful. But at the same time, Brown recommitted the U.S. to the full-scale development of GLCMs, a weapon potentially of great use to the Western European allies

missile. The possibility of a quick fix was still very much on Carter's mind when he gave his first formal press conference in office on February 8. The President said he "would be willing to go ahead with the Soviet Union to conclude a quick agreement, if they think it advisable, and omit the Backfire bomber and the cruise missile from the negotiations at this stage." The Soviets had made quite clear to Carter's predecessor that they did not think it one bit advisable to defer restrictions on cruise missiles to SALT III, but the Carter administration thought the idea might be worth another try, especially if the Soviets remained steadfast in their refusal to consider what the U.S. saw as improvements in the Vladivostok accord. Gelb, Slocombe, Hyland and others felt that the Soviets might now reconsider a "barebones Vladivostok" proposal. Henry Kissinger—who was out of office but by no means out of sight or out of circulation—agreed. He commented that Carter could probably get "Vladivostok plus or minus 10 percent simply because he is a new President."

Slocombe laid out these three options in a stand-up display chart which he labeled "Decision Tree for Major SALT Issues." The chart managed to impose order—albeit a complex one—on the chaos of numbers and acronyms concocted by the bureaucracy in its orgy of brainstorming. With all its arrows and boxes, its permutations and combinations, its elegantly refined and precisely defined "excursions" or options-within-options, the chart looked at a glance like parallel genealogies of three rather overbred, indeed inbred, families. It became a regular fixture at staff meetings on SALT. Government officials, on the whole, loved it. It was a perfect exhibit for them to discuss with the aid of their aluminum pointers. Many of them could find their own ideas neatly schematized somewhere amid the connecting lines of "the Slocombe triptych," as the chart came to be called.

The President, however, did not love it. Neither did Zbigniew Brzezinski. Neither did Brzezinski's deputy, David Aaron. Neither, in fact, did Slocombe's boss, Harold Brown. These four men found the chart and the options it represented too complicated. More importantly, they found the Basic Vladivostok and Vladivostok-Plus recommendations insufficiently imaginative and ambitious. To be sure, Vladivostok-Plus did contain some "excursions" into substantial reductions. Slocombe himself had drafted a deep-cuts option in late February. But Brzezinski, Aaron, Carter and Brown all felt that the good ideas in the chart were undercut by the dizzying complexity and equivocal group-think of the document as a whole. Brzezinski com-

plained that the Vladivostok options were "pedantic," that they "counted trees rather than looked at the forest." He also felt that the option-makers were looking backward too much, at proposals that had already been aired, and not forward enough—at interesting new possibilities. "There are no sacred cows in the position of the previous administration," he admonished his staff at one point. The Soviets could have a quick-fix SALT II agreement based on the Vladivostok accord if they insisted, but the new administration was not bound to the tentative compromise on Backfire and cruise missiles that Kissinger had offered in January 1976.

Brzezinski was restless with what seemed the glacial pace and institutionalized cautiousness of the SALT process. He also nurtured a deep mistrust of the Soviet attitude toward SALT. An official who observed Brzezinski closely during that period sensed he was intrigued by the idea of SALT as a "truth test" of Soviet intentions. The next stage of the negotiations might reveal whether the Soviets were genuinely interested in arms control or whether they were using the negotiations to lull the West into complacency while they built up their already formidable war-making powers so as better to exploit political opportunities by military intimidation. Brzezinski sometimes spoke of his desire to "smoke the Russians out," to discover what they really wanted to do and were willing to do.

Brzezinski saw a connection between arms control and Soviet-American relations that was quite different from the one underlying Henry Kissinger's theory of détente. Kissinger believed that arms control was integral to a larger policy of improving Soviet-American relations. SALT was one means among others of inculcating the superpowers with a mutual interest in peace. Brzezinski was more concerned with pursuing arms control for its own sake. He wanted, insofar as possible, to insulate the talks and the treaties from the trade deals and summit conferences, as well as the tensions and crises, to which superpowers are prone. The purpose of SALT, in his view, was not so much to spur a cooperative relationship as it was to enhance the stability of an essentially competitive relationship and to blunt the military means by which the Soviets might pursue competitive advantage. He believed that the Soviet Union was aggressive by nature and far less encumbered—or perhaps less blessed—with built-in restraints on military spending and adventurism than was the U.S. Therefore he was all the more impatient with bilateral arms control agreements that froze weaponry at levels which had been arrived at unilaterally.

He reasoned that sooner or later such agreements would favor the bigger bully.

A number of Brzezinski's associates felt he had deep-rooted personal motives, as well as philosophical ones, for being reluctant merely to finish the work of the previous administration. "Why should Carter just step into Jerry Ford's shoes? Why should Zbig just accept Henry Kissinger's strait jacket?" asked a close colleague and defender of Brzezinski's at the time. Kissinger's strait jacket would be even more uncomfortable for Brzezinski than Ford's shoes for Carter. Ever since their days as fellow junior faculty members at Harvard, Brzezinski and Kissinger had been rivals. Both were immigrants—Brzezinski from Poland, Kissinger from Germany. Both had succeeded in building bases in academe—Brzezinski at Columbia, Kissinger at Harvard—for forays into government. Both had attached themselves to presidential aspirants in 1968—Brzezinski to Hubert Humphrey, Kissinger to Nelson Rockefeller. While Kissinger was exercising unprecedented power and enjoying unprecedented success in the Nixon and Ford administrations, Brzezinski tried in much of his writing, lecturing and extracurricular activity to establish himself as an advocate of an alternative world view and as a potential successor to Kissinger. From 1973 until 1976, he served as director of the Trilateral Commission, a private group that sponsored the strengthening of relations among the U.S., Japan and Western Europe. The very name of the commission was an implicit refutation of Kissinger's emphasis on bipolarity—the centrality of the Soviet-American relationship. Jimmy Carter was a member of the Trilateral Commission, and it was through that association that Brzezinski became his friend, tutor and—after the election—his special assistant for national security affairs. It was the same post Nixon had given Kissinger. In the early days after the Carter administration took office, Brzezinski displayed acute sensitivity about the comparisons he knew everyone was making between his performance and Kissinger's. He sought, sometimes defensively and gratuitously, to distinguish his style, his approach, his policies from Kissinger's. A number of high-ranking associates found Brzezinski inclined to dwell in private conversation on how determined he was to come up with a "better" SALT II treaty than Kissinger had been on the verge of concluding the year before.

Jimmy Carter shared this inclination to do more than just dot the *i*'s and cross the *t*'s on a document that would be widely perceived as Henry Kissinger's handiwork. Carter's campaign for the presidency

had been largely a campaign against Kissinger's foreign policy. "We've become fearful to compete with the Soviet Union on an equal basis," Carter had proclaimed during a televised debate with Gerald Ford in 1976. "The Soviet Union knows what they want in détente, and they've been getting it. We have not known what we wanted and we've been out-traded in almost every instance. . . . As far as foreign policy goes, Mr. Kissinger has been the President of this country." Yet now Carter was confronted with advice from within his own administration to the effect that he should allow Kissinger's influence to linger a little longer—long enough to conclude the agreement that Gerald Ford would have signed with Kissinger looking proudly on, had it not been for the Backfire and cruise missile issues.

Harold Brown and David Aaron were also unhappy with that advice, but they seemed to their colleagues less preoccupied with politics and personalities and more concerned about the strategic issues at stake in SALT. They were experts on those issues. Both had, in previous jobs, tried to push the Nixon and Ford administrations in the direction of more stringent, more ambitious SALT provisions than Henry Kissinger had been willing to attempt.

Brown was a physicist, a manager and a civilian who knew how to deal with—and give orders to—the military. He had been secretary of the Air Force in the Johnson administration and a part-time member of the SALT delegation during the Nixon and Ford administrations. As President of the California Institute of Technology, he was responsible for liaison between the delegation and the academic scientific community. When Carter named him secretary of defense, Brown quickly established himself as the single most influential SALT policy-maker in the new administration aside from the President himself. Since SALT affected the programs of the Defense Department more than those of any other government agency, the secretary of defense naturally had considerable say over the manner in which this ox would be goaded. But in addition to the institutional influence that came with his job, Brown had a reputation among Carter's closest advisers for combining one quality they knew they lacked—government experience—with another quality they felt abundantly endowed with—intellectual boldness. In this respect, Cyrus Vance suffered somewhat by comparison with Brown. His record of public service was every bit as distinguished—general counsel to the Defense Department, secretary of the Army, deputy secretary of defense, troubleshooter plenipotentiary for crises both domestic and foreign during the Johnson adminis-

tration. But his style was very much that of the corporate board room. Between stints in the government, he had been a Wall Street lawyer, a director of large companies and foundations. Some of Carter's more free-wheeling advisers found him stiff and stuffy, cautious and methodical to a fault, the token establishmentarian in an administration that prided itself as being comprised mostly of outsiders and innovators. "No one ever accused Cy of being a good ol' boy," commented one of the Georgians on Carter's staff.* No one ever leveled that charge at Harold Brown either, but he was more compatible with the Carter White House early in the administration than Vance, and the contrast made it almost inevitable that Brown would be the preeminent cabinet officer in the formulation of SALT policy during the first months, even though Vance was to be the cabinet member responsible for the conduct of the negotiations.

David Aaron had been an associate of Brown's for some time. As an official of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, he had served as an adviser to the SALT delegation when Brown was a negotiator. Aaron combined liberal credentials and a background in arms control with a quality that Carter approvingly called "aggressiveness." He advocated toughness when it came—as it soon did in the Carter administration—to rhetorical and political confrontations with the Soviet Union. Aaron got the job as Brzezinski's deputy at the NSC largely because he had spent more than two years as Walter Mondale's foreign policy adviser. Aaron and the Vice-President frequently discussed SALT over lunch in the White House Mess, as the senior staff dining room is known. Sometimes Harold Brown joined them. These conversations focused on Brown's and Aaron's shared worry about the eventual vulnerability of the U.S. land-based deterrent in the face of an increasingly powerful, increasingly accurate, increasingly MIRVed Soviet ICBM force. They were concerned that SALT I had left the Soviets with too many heavy missiles and that the SALT II options generated by the bureaucracy, including the Pentagon bureaucracy, would do too little to redress that imbalance. At one of these meetings, Aaron remarked that "the options ginned up by the working level symbolize how rarefied this whole process has become and how we're in danger of losing sight of where we want to go in SALT." Where they wanted to go was further in the direction of deep-cuts, further toward

*Nor did it count to Vance's credit among the Georgians that he had been a moving force behind Sargent Shriver's brief bid for the 1976 Democratic presidential nomination.

constraints on the Soviet MIRVed ICBM program which threatened the survivability of Minuteman, and when they wanted to get there was sooner than SALT III. Brown, Aaron and Brzezinski were all subscribers to the theory that both superpowers were still governed by the strategic doctrine of mutual assured destruction (MAD), whereby each side could deter an attack by being able to inflict unacceptable damage on the attacker. But while they were confident that MAD prevailed in 1977, they were deeply doubtful about whether some new and unpredictable Kremlin leadership in the early and mid-1980s—when SALT II would still be in force—would be adequately deterred from attempting a “cosmic roll of the dice,” as Harold Brown sometimes called a preemptive Soviet first strike. It was an old worry, and these particular worriers were anything but overeager greenhorns. But they now occupied much more important jobs than they had ever held before. They now had an opportunity to make policy, not just implement it. They shared a conviction that during the post-inaugural honeymoon with Congress and with the rest of the world, they had a unique opportunity to move boldly toward Carter’s publicly stated goal of “real arms control” measures which reduced arsenals rather than merely limited them. Mondale once remarked that a mere resubmission of some dressed-up version of the Vladivostok accord would be a “masquerade”: “Kissinger says he put a cap on the arms race at Vladivostok. Well, he did, but the cap was fifteen feet over the head. The Vladivostok agreement was basically a matter of taking the force levels of the two sides, adding fifteen percent, and stapling them together. It was certainly not real arms control.”

Another influential figure in the emergence of the new U.S. approach to SALT was not even a member of the administration. This was Henry Jackson, the Senate’s leading expert on—and critic of—SALT. Jackson breakfasted with the President at the White House two weeks after the inauguration. The senator rehearsed his misgivings about SALT I and the Vladivostok accord. The problem with the first, he said, was that it left Soviet forces intact and gave the U.S.S.R. a numerical advantage to boot; the problem with the Vladivostok accord was that, while it did set equal aggregates, the numbers were much too high. Nor did he like what he had heard about Kissinger’s January 1976 proposal: it provided for too many restrictions on cruise missiles and too few on Backfire bombers. The President expressed interest in Jackson’s views and asked him for amplification in writing. Jackson had his right-hand man for strategic affairs, Richard Perle,

draft a memorandum to the President. It arrived at the White House, with a covering letter from Jackson, on February 15. The twenty-three-page, single-spaced document was a catalogue of dos and don’ts—with heavy emphasis on the latter. The message, in essence, was: don’t continue in the direction in which Henry Kissinger was proceeding. The memo concluded: “If further negotiations were to begin where the Ford-Kissinger negotiations left off, you would unnecessarily assume the burden of past mistakes, and the options available to you will be few and narrow.”

The Jackson-Perle memo called for reductions not only in Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles but in intermediate-range ballistic missiles as well. It called for a reopening of the dispute over the definition of “heavy” ICBMs; Jackson did not think the U.S. should give up on categorizing the SS-19 as a heavy ICBM. And even if the definition of heavies was extended to include the SS-19, the Soviet allowance should still be reduced from the level of more than 300 established by SALT I. Moreover, the U.S. should have the option, forbidden under SALT I, of developing heavy ICBMs of its own, and the cruise missile program should continue apace, unhindered by SALT. As for Backfire, it should count as a heavy bomber, pure and simple.

Recognizing that they were placing a tall order, Jackson and Perle included their own fallback position: in the event that the Soviets balked at a U.S. proposal requiring them in effect to tear up the Vladivostok accord and dismantle a considerable portion of their existing arsenal, “it would be defensible to replace the interim agreement with a new interim accord which would at least codify the basic numerical equality and MIRV limitations of Vladivostok, as long as it were made clear that this accord would be replaced within a relatively short period of time by a more satisfactory resolution of the bomber and throw-weight issues.”

The Jackson-Perle memo was circulated to Harold Brown and Cyrus Vance, who in turn gave it wide, though classified, distribution in the Defense and State Departments. Paul Warnke, whom Carter had designated to be his chief SALT negotiator and director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, dismissed it as a “first-class polemic.” When Hyland saw it, he noted wryly that after bitterly denouncing the interim agreement and Vladivostok accord, Jackson and Perle had ended up recommending that those heinous covenants be extended. Carter, however, ordered that the administration send

deep reductions" in the overlapping categories of Soviet heavy ICBMs and MIRVed ICBMs. Aaron spoke of "the whole issue of Minuteman vulnerability coming up fast on the horizon" and urged a deep-cuts proposal as a way of "staving off our strategic problem."

Harold Brown seconded Aaron's suggestion and coupled it with one of his own—a limit on the number of missile tests each side could conduct in a year. Such a limit would, he said, both impede the modernization of rockets and reduce their general reliability. That would represent a net advantage to the U.S., since it was the side that most feared a first strike. Soviet missiles were still insufficiently accurate to threaten the American Minuteman deterrent, but in a few years, well before the expiration of the projected treaty in 1985, an unfettered testing program would turn those Soviet missiles into "hard-target killers." They would be able to hit Minuteman silos with such precision and explosive force that even the "superhardened" concrete covers would not protect the American rockets in the ground below. The CIA estimated that it took the Soviets at least fifteen flight tests to perfect a new missile. By that calculation, if SALT II restricted the Russians to two tests a year for each of their three MIRVed ICBMs (the SS-17, 18 and 19), it would take more than seven years to hone the performance of more accurate new versions. Seven years was nearly the duration of the treaty. Brown's suggestion had the crucial feature that it was verifiable. There was no way the U.S. could monitor improvements in accuracy *per se*, but by satellite reconnaissance it could monitor the flight tests by which greater accuracy was achieved.*

Also present at this meeting was Paul Warnke, whom the Senate had confirmed only the day before as director of the Arms Control Agency and chief SALT negotiator. Warnke had already established himself as by far the most controversial administration personality in the clamorous realm of SALT. He was an articulate and quick-witted lawyer who had the dual credentials—but at the same time suffered the double jeopardy—of having both worked at the Pentagon and been a vigorous advocate of arms control. Like Harold Brown, he had

*While the flight test limit was Brown's pet idea and he was its highest-ranking proponent, he was not the originator. More than to anyone else, that distinction belongs to Sidney Drell, a professor of physics at Stanford University. Drell had been toying with the idea since 1972. On a trip to Moscow in 1976, he found some Soviets expressing interest in the possibility of including a flight test limit in SALT. Drell then advocated the proposal with renewed vigor in a speech before a conference at the Aspen Institute in August 1976. Brzezinski and Aaron were in attendance. They found Drell's presentation intriguing.

Jackson a detailed, respectful, but circumspect response. There was some grumbling within the administration that Carter was being excessively solicitous of Jackson's support. Dark rumors circulated that Perle was at the White House "almost every day" and was functioning as a kind of ex officio member of the NSC. Those rumors were occasioned by nothing more substantial than that Perle was seen lunching with Slocombe and with Gelb, neither of whom had offices in the White House, was attached directly to the NSC, or was enthralled by Perle's recommendations. But while Perle's personal influence on the administration was exaggerated, the Jackson-Perle memo unquestionably reinforced the instincts of Carter, Brown, Brzezinski and Aaron to seek more than a mere consummation of the Vladivostok accord. The memo amounted to Jackson's preemptive rejection of any SALT II treaty based on either the Basic Vladivostok or the Vladivostok-Plus options which were then making their way toward the President's desk. Carter and his closest advisers were determined, if possible, to go beyond those options and find a SALT position that would be acceptable not only to the Kremlin but to the junior senator from the state of Washington as well.

By mid February the Special Coordination Committee of the NSC was thrashing out SALT in earnest. This was a cabinet-level body that met in the eerie privacy of the Situation Room, a windowless chamber in the basement of the White House west wing. Brzezinski was the chairman, although Aaron sometimes sat in for him. The secretaries of state and defense or their deputies, along with representatives of the Arms Control Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the intelligence community, sat around a polished board room table in deeply cushioned red chairs, with their SALT experts seated behind them along the wall—Hyland behind Brzezinski, Slocombe behind Brown, and Gelb behind Vance. The Slocombe triptych, with its variegated alternatives based on the Vladivostok accord, was one of the central exhibits. The Vladivostok-Plus option had acquired a new feature. After hearing Harold Brown suggest that the U.S. could perhaps live without a successor to Minuteman, Roger Molander came up with the idea of banning new ICBMs on both sides—sacrificing a successor to Minuteman in exchange for the Soviets' giving up their next generation of big missiles. At an SCC meeting devoted to SALT on March 10, Aaron proposed consolidating this and the other more ambitious elements of various options into a package that would entail "summary

been an official of the Defense Department during the Johnson administration. Like Walter Slocombe, he had worked for George McGovern in 1972. But unlike Brown and Slocombe, Warnke was openly impatient with many concerns of the Carter administration Pentagon. He sometimes found it hard to conceal his low regard for generals—and senators—who saw sinister purposes and apocalyptic prospects in every new piece of Soviet weaponry or doctrinal utterance. He was disdainful of the contagion of anxiety over the Soviet threat to the survivability of Minuteman. He believed that the indisputable superiority of two legs of the American strategic triad—the submarine and bomber forces—more than made up for the hypothetical vulnerability of the third, land-based leg. Not surprisingly, Warnke's confirmation hearings were extremely contentious. They presaged the difficulties that lay ahead for the ratification of SALT II. Henry Jackson accused Warnke of being "a tireless advocate of deep and, I believe, irresponsible cuts in the defense budget and of unilateral restraints in our defense programs." But Warnke's most vociferous detractor—and one of the administration's most formidable opponents on SALT—was Paul Nitze, a former colleague of Warnke's at the Pentagon, a member of the U.S. SALT delegation during the Nixon administration, and a founder, in 1976, of the Committee on the Present Danger, a private, unabashedly hawkish lobbying group. Nitze had become increasingly disillusioned with SALT and appalled at what he regarded as American complacency in the face of "a clear and present danger" from the Soviet Union. He saw Paul Warnke as the personification of that complacency, and he testified passionately against his confirmation. On March 9 the Senate confirmed Warnke 70-29 as director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, but by the much narrower margin of 58-40 as chief SALT negotiator. Jackson, Nitze and other SALT skeptics considered the latter vote to be a symbolic victory for their own position—and a stern warning to the administration, since 58-40 was less than the two-thirds majority that would be required to ratify the SALT II treaty. Warnke would be trying to negotiate.

By the time he was finally confirmed, Warnke was already the object of strong and divided opinion within the executive branch as well as on Capitol Hill. His dovish views, at least as characterized in the press during the debate over his confirmation, were anathema to much of the military. A number of members of Brzezinski's staff regarded Warnke with a jaundiced eye, and even before he was sworn

in, he was the target of sniping from the NSC. The civilian experts at the Pentagon also tended to mistrust Warnke. Cyrus Vance, however, had immense respect for Warnke's knowledge, judgment and debating skills; and Leslie Gelb, who had worked for Warnke at the Pentagon, regarded him as a mentor and an ally.

At the SCC meeting on March 10, Warnke joined good-naturedly in the jokes about his "landslide victory" in the Senate the day before. He then made a characteristic contribution to the discussion of Brown's and Aaron's proposal for far-reaching restrictions. Warnke urged that the U.S. SALT position contain at least one provision that the Kremlin would welcome and some Pentagon planners would resist. This was to impose strict limits on the range of cruise missiles, particularly ground-launched cruise missiles. Long-range ground-launched cruise missiles could threaten the Soviet Union from Western Europe. More specifically, the Soviets had an acute fear of such latter-day buzz bombs ending up in the hands of the West Germans. Having reviewed the negotiating record of the previous administration, which was replete with evidence of Soviet nervousness about cruise missiles, Warnke could not imagine the Kremlin accepting any new U.S. proposal that left long-range ground-launched cruise missiles unconstrained. Looking further into the future, Warnke also worried about what might happen when the Soviets finally closed the cruise missile gap. It was important, he said, to "get a handle on the problem now, while we have control of the issue, before it's too late." By the time the Soviets caught up with the U.S., they would no longer be amenable to limiting ground-launched cruise missiles. By way of cautionary example, Warnke often pointed out that the U.S. might have gotten the Kremlin to accept a ban on multiple warheads at the beginning of SALT and thus prevented the ominous proliferation of Russian MIRVs in the late 1970s. Instead, the U.S. chose to "protect" its own MIRVs early in SALT, only to end up feeling terribly threatened by Soviet ones a decade later. True to his reputation, here was Warnke, his second day in office, trying to persuade his colleagues to consider the long-term, destabilizing consequences of a still undeployed American weapon system, the cruise missile, rather than concentrating—as was their wont—on the more immediate and obvious dangers posed by existing Soviet weapons. Vance supported Warnke's position. He was skeptical of Brown's and Aaron's case for presenting the Soviets with a proposal that differed radically from the Vladivostok accord. Since the beginning of the administration, the secretary of state had

and thus, arguably, enhancing Soviet confidence in arms control negotiations. But achieving deep reductions and constraints on missile modernization would serve a higher, strategic purpose by remedying a dangerous development in the military balance—the impending superiority of Soviet land-based ICBMs. Carter listened intently, asked a few questions, then said emphatically, “Good, let’s do that.” Warnke did not oppose the plan, but he cautioned that there was at least one danger in making such far-reaching proposals: “If they’re shot down, and we end up with a compromise, then we’ll be criticized for retreating.” Whatever misgivings Vance felt, he suppressed them with relative ease. The President was obviously impatient with the notion of “validating Vladivostok” which Vance had preferred. The President plainly wanted a bold approach. And the President was the boss. Vance explained afterward that he simply became convinced an ambitious, far-reaching, albeit risky proposal was worth a try, and he made up his mind to support it “fully and enthusiastically.”

For at least two years, the very occurrence of that decisive meeting remained a mystery to the many government officials who were not present but who were otherwise intimately involved in SALT. In memos to his staff, Brown deliberately avoided noting that Carter had even been present—not to mention that Carter had presided over the meeting and given the go-ahead for a major decision. Brown told his colleagues he had been at an SCC meeting, which Carter would not normally have attended. One reason for the deception was that the Saturday session in the Cabinet Room had been intended as a gathering of the Carter team—not as a formal NSC meeting. Yet the decision to go broke with a radical deep-cuts proposal was more important than most NSC and SCC initiatives, and for months afterward there were rumors throughout the government about a “rump” or “phantom” NSC meeting sometime in early March at which the President had drastically and summarily changed the administration’s policy toward SALT. The misimpression lingered for a long time that a naive, impetuous, overambitious, overconfident Jimmy Carter had rammed the deep-cuts idea down the throat of an experienced and therefore skeptical Harold Brown. In fact, according to an official with firsthand knowledge of what happened, Brown was “the key man in presenting and selling the proposal to the President; but it was like a beautifully tied, juicy fly dropped right in front of a hungry trout’s nose. The President bit and swallowed right away.”

Immediately after the meeting, Brzezinski and Aaron assigned

tended to favor what he described as a “quick agreement validating Vladivostok.”

It had been a stimulating but inconclusive session. The participants at the SCC meeting came away still without a clear sense of where the administration was going in SALT. In retrospect, however, a number of them agreed that the meeting was a turning point. Brown and Aaron had given new, high-level impetus to the idea of reducing the levels and impeding the modernization of Soviet ICBMs. Those ideas had their antecedents in the three Vladivostok-based options favored by the bureaucracy, particularly in the Vladivostok-Plus option. But it was not until the SCC meeting of March 10 that those threads started to come together in a form and with a sponsorship that would make them attractive to the President. Carter read an account of the meeting afterward, and commented that it had clearly been “an especially good session.”

Two days later, on Saturday, March 12, Brzezinski summoned Vance, Brown, Warnke and Aaron to the White House for a “principals only” SCC meeting (no deputies allowed). It was billed as a tour of the horizon in foreign policy, with special emphasis on SALT. Also invited were General George Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Director of Central Intelligence Admiral Stansfield Turner, who, like Warnke, had been sworn in only a few days before (Turner was Carter’s second choice for DCI after Theodore Sorensen’s nomination was withdrawn because of overwhelming political opposition). Some of the participants came anticipating a follow-up SCC meeting in the Situation Room. Instead, the meeting took place in the Cabinet Room, with Carter and Mondale present. The President, in blue jeans and a flannel shirt at the head of the table, threw out questions and comments about a variety of issues. In the course of this relaxed and wide-ranging discussion, he reiterated his long-standing hope for “real arms control” and his impatience with the notion of “merely staying within the Vladivostok framework.” One participant later recalled Carter saying that he felt the bureaucracy had been “sloughing off” and that he was still interested in “a fundamentally new kind of proposal.” Brown explained the idea he and Aaron had discussed at the SCC two days before. Brzezinski argued—in the paraphrase of a colleague—that Nixon, Ford and Kissinger had “gone down a blind alley on the Soviets’ turf and it was time to get back on our own.” Consecrating the Vladivostok accord might serve a political purpose by establishing continuity between American administrations

Hyland the task of translating Carter's command—"Good, let's do that"—into a set of negotiating instructions for Cyrus Vance to take to Moscow at the end of March. For "philosophical guidance," Brzezinski referred Hyland to a Carter campaign paper on SALT. Hyland hardly needed such inspiration. Ingenious remedies to the looming problem of Minuteman vulnerability were strewn all over the historical and bureaucratic landscape. Hyland himself had helped design some and reject others in the previous administration. In 1974 he and Aaron had worked on an "equal MIRVed throw-weight" proposal that foundered in the negotiations leading up to the Vladivostok summit. There was a backlog of deep-cuts proposals that Kissinger had turned down on the grounds that they would not be negotiable with the Soviets. But now negotiability with the Russians was clearly not the criterion in which President Carter and his key advisers were most interested. Under Aaron's supervision, Hyland produced what became known as the comprehensive proposal. Its key features were reductions in the Vladivostok ceiling and subceiling so deep as to change the structure of the framework—from 2,400 total strategic launchers to a level between 2,000 and 1,800, and from 1,320 multiple-warhead launchers to a level between 1,200 and 1,100. An entirely new subceiling was added for MIRVed ICBMs. It would hold Soviet land-based multiple-warhead rockets to 550, a level equal to the number of America's MIRVed ICBMs, the Minuteman III. The comprehensive proposal would also have cut the Soviet heavy-missile force in half—from about 300 to 150. It incorporated Harold Brown's proposed limit on the flight testing of existing ICBMs and would have banned the development, testing and deployment of mobile ICBMs and any new ICBMs.

The proposal would not have counted the Backfire as a strategic bomber, as long as the Soviets adhered to a list of measures that would inhibit its range. A few provisions in the package would have impinged on American programs. The ban on mobile missiles and new ICBMs, for instance, would have brought a halt to the development of MX, the "Missile Experimental." This was to be a rocket larger than the Minuteman and capable of being moved around on trucks or tracks in order to thwart a Soviet preemptive strike. But MX was just a gleam in the Pentagon's eye, while many of the Soviet weapons slated for drastic reduction in the comprehensive proposal were already in place. They represented research and development completed, money spent and promises fulfilled. In the comprehensive

proposal, the U.S. was seeking substantial reductions in existing Soviet systems in exchange for marginal cuts in future American ones. Had it been negotiable, it would have been a very good deal indeed for the U.S. As Aaron later put it, "We would be giving up future draft choices in exchange for cuts in their starting line-up."

In its treatment of cruise missiles, the comprehensive proposal seemed almost calculated to provoke the Russians. It would have limited all cruise missiles to a range of 2,500 kilometers.* Applied to ground-launched cruise missiles, that range limit would have been especially upsetting to the Soviets, since it would have allowed GLCMs based in West Germany to reach over East Germany and Poland into the Soviet Union. In that respect particularly, the comprehensive proposal outdid the Vladivostok-Plus option in the Slocombe triptych. The Office of the Secretary of Defense had proposed a 2,500-kilometer range limit for air-launched cruise missiles coupled with various combinations of stricter limits for ground- and sea-launched ones. Roger Molander at the NSC along with experts in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency had favored a range limit of 1,500 kilometers for all cruise missiles, including ALCMs. They were assuming that the President would give a go-ahead to the supersonic B-1 bomber as a launching platform for ALCMs, and they calculated that a 1,500-kilometer range limit would be adequate for ALCMs as long as they were teamed up with the B-1. In a number of meetings, representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated they agreed. "In fact," remarked a JCS officer, "we figured that a 1,500-kilometer limit on ALCMs was sure-fire insurance that we would get the B-1, because without the B-1 the limit made no sense." Other aspects of the comprehensive proposal—notably the prospective sacrifice of the MX and the qualified acceptance of the Soviet definition of the Backfire as a medium, nonstrategic bomber—disgruntled the JCS when they found out about them. Later, when Brzezinski was asked why the comprehensive proposal had given the military more than it had asked for on cruise missile range, he replied that it was "the only way to get the

*The Soviet position on cruise missile range had already shifted several times, but in a way that showed Moscow was increasingly and especially worried about GLCMs. Shortly after the 1974 Vladivostok summit, the Russians maintained that the range of GLCMs and SLCMs should be limited to 600 kilometers. Then, at the Helsinki Ford-Brezhnev summit a year later, the Russians tentatively proposed counting GLCMs of intercontinental range (8,500 kilometers) against the SALT ceiling—in other words, treating long-range GLCMs as though they were ICBMs. The U.S. countered with the suggestion of a 2,500-kilometer limit, but GLCMs covered by that limit would not count against the ceiling. The Soviets then retrenched, arguing again for a 600-kilometer limit.

Chiefs on board" the entire proposal. But the fact remains that the across-the-board limit of 2,500 kilometers on all cruise missiles exceeded the Pentagon's own recommendations during the early months of the administration, and even those military planners who were unhappy about the treatment of MX and Backfire in the comprehensive proposal had to concede that deep reductions in the Soviet heavy and land-based MIRV forces were much more important.

At the time, some of Hyland's colleagues had the impression that he thought the comprehensive proposal was unrealistic in the extreme and that he drafted the instructions knowing they were foredoomed. Months later, Hyland said he had never had any illusion that the Kremlin would accept the comprehensive proposal in the form in which the U.S. presented it. But he justified the proposal as an opening bid that might have led to a compromise. With that in view, the negotiating instructions he helped draft for Vance included fallback positions on various features of the proposal. And even if a compromise based on modifications in the comprehensive proposal proved impossible to negotiate, Hyland reasoned that the Soviets would still accept a Vladivostok quick-fix that deferred the Backfire and cruise missile issues to a future round of negotiations. He hoped that by comparison with the drastic nature of the comprehensive proposal, the idea of "closing out" Vladivostok and deferring the gray-area systems to SALT III would look good to the Russians, and they would accept it in March 1977, even though they had already rejected it in February 1976.

However, it remained for Vance himself to insist on the inclusion of such a Vladivostok-Minus alternative in the package he was taking to Moscow. At a formal NSC meeting just before his departure, Vance argued that fallback instructions for various provisions of the comprehensive proposal might not be sufficient to meet the contingencies of the negotiations. What if the Soviets were to reject the entire concept of the comprehensive proposal, which was, after all, a wrenching departure from the established course of the talks? Perhaps there should be an overall fallback, presented to the Soviets simultaneously with the comprehensive proposal. Some of Carter's advisers complained among themselves that Vance was showing his colors once again as an overly cautious lawyer, fretting over what could go wrong. But Carter approved Vance's suggestion, as long as the Soviets understood that the comprehensive proposal was the "preferred" U.S. position and the so-called Vladivostok deferral was a stopgap second choice.

Carter also ordered that the negotiating instructions be revealed to no one outside those present at the NSC meeting. Vance and Warnke were authorized to brief members of their staffs who would be accompanying them to Moscow—but only on the broad outlines of the comprehensive proposal, not on the numbers and details. The existence of fallback instructions for the various provisions in the comprehensive proposals was to be kept the strictest secret, even from Warnke's and Vance's most senior aides. Prepared fallback instructions implied a willingness to compromise, and Brzezinski—who mistrusted both the bureaucracy and the press—feared that leaks about the existence of such instructions would prompt the Soviets to try to pry loose American concessions before they made any of their own.

Gloom Sets In

While Vance was willing to suppress his misgivings and give the comprehensive proposal a try, many of his colleagues back at Foggy Bottom were less sanguine. One official directly involved in SALT—but left out of the crucial round of meetings at the White House—was "flabbergasted and dismayed" when he learned what had happened. "All the work we've done is for naught," lamented another. A third official, whose job would require him to put the best possible light on the proposal in regular contacts with the Russians, commented sarcastically, "Kissinger initiated an *aide-mémoire* after Vladivostok that in effect said the Soviets could keep the heavy ICBMs they had if we kept all our forward-based systems, so I guess it won't be completely outrageous if they resist our suggestion that they throw away half of their heavies." Throughout the government the fear was expressed, in muted tones, that by asking for so much, the U.S. would get nothing—or would have to settle for so much less that it would look like a mammoth cave-in.

A week before Vance's departure for Moscow, Gelb was dispatched to Brussels to brief an assembly of North Atlantic Treaty Organization officials on SALT. He had still not seen the negotiating instructions drafted by Hyland, and he did not fully realize how sweeping and profound the proposed reductions would be. A number of the NATO officials who listened to Gelb's presentation came away with the impression that Vance would essentially be seeking to wrap up the Vladivostok accord. That indeed had been the approach Gelb earnestly favored, but it was no longer his government's position. Marshall Shulman, a Columbia University Kremlinologist who was serving as

Vance's part-time consultant on Soviet affairs, did not learn of the comprehensive proposal until the day before Vance and his party left for Moscow. Warnke's deputy negotiator, Ralph Earle, and his principal technical expert, James Timbie, were caught by surprise by the starkness and magnitude of the proposal when they learned of it. Walter Slocombe had only a few days' warning. Brown told him about the comprehensive proposal after the formal NSC meeting at which the instructions were presented, but that was nearly a week after the President had decided in favor of a proposal more ambitious even than the Vladivostok-Plus option in the Slocombe triptych.

The professional diplomats and Soviet affairs experts were especially skeptical about how the proposal would fare in Moscow. In a series of speeches Brezhnev had made clear that the Kremlin was in high dudgeon over Carter's human rights policy. Therefore the Soviet leaders would be more inclined than usual to see any new U.S. initiative as a provocation. In the very first weeks of the administration, the President had sent a letter to Andrei Sakharov, the leader of the dissident Soviet intelligentsia, and in early March Carter had received Vladimir Bukovsky, a prominent dissident in exile, in the Oval Office. Both gestures dramatized the Carter administration's determination to be bold, open and, above all, different from its predecessors in the way it handled the Russians. The Soviet leadership strongly protested what it called interference in the internal affairs of the U.S.S.R. The administration attempted to balance its criticism of repression in the Soviet Union with palliative assurances that the American concern with human rights would not harm U.S.-Soviet relations "in areas of common interest"—an often repeated phrase officially acknowledged to mean primarily SALT. Such disclaimers rang hollow. It took two to prevent the deterioration of détente from affecting SALT, and the Soviet Union clearly did not share the new American administration's desire to insulate the arms control negotiations from the sparks flying around the rest of the relationship.

When Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin arrived at the State Department for a briefing by Vance on the comprehensive proposal, he came anticipating trouble. The last-minute timing of the meeting was itself troublesome. Kissinger had routinely given Dobrynin a few weeks' advance notice of any initiatives he was planning to present to the Soviet leadership. Kissinger knew the Kremlin hated surprises. Dobrynin's superiors back in Moscow were inclined to reject out of hand anything new and complicated that they had not had ample opportunity to hear, sniff and hold up to the light. Yet now Dobrynin was

summoned to the State Department shortly before Vance was to make the first high-level contact between the Carter administration and the Politburo. After listening with arched brows to Vance's presentation, Dobrynin responded pointedly that the proposal seemed to have little to do with the Vladivostok accord, which, he reminded the secretary of state, the Soviet leaders considered sacrosanct. Vance stressed that while the comprehensive proposal was the preferred American position, he would submit the Vladivostok deferral at the same time. He would also be prepared, he added, to discuss ways of making the comprehensive proposal a basis for further negotiation. Vance intended this rather oblique statement as a broad hint to Dobrynin that his negotiating instructions contained fallbacks and that the Soviet leaders would find him authorized to compromise on various features of the comprehensive proposal. Vance's briefing of Dobrynin, while thorough, was entirely oral. That the Soviet ambassador was given nothing in writing, combined with his habit of taking few if any notes, led to speculation later that Dobrynin may not have fully understood the magnitude of the proposed American reductions and that his misunderstanding may have contributed to the unpleasantness of the surprise awaiting his superiors in Moscow. Vance himself, however, was convinced that Dobrynin both absorbed what Vance told him and transmitted it accurately to the Kremlin.*

As a result of the White House's insistence on keeping SALT paper work within the most restricted circle possible, the comprehensive proposal was not "staffed out" to government specialists in the usual fashion. The CIA, for example, was asked to provide predictions of the likely Soviet responses to various earlier options—but not to the final position. Carter had campaigned against the secret diplomacy of Henry Kissinger, and the new administration had, from the moment of Carter's famous inaugural walk down Pennsylvania Avenue, advertised its openness. Yet here was the Carter inner circle—and more specifically, Kissinger's old power base now under new management, the National Security Council—engaging in secrecy of Kissingerian dimensions.

The irony was compounded on the very eve of Vance's takeoff for *Henry Kissinger also received an oral briefing, although how thorough is in dispute. Kissinger, Vance, Brzezinski and their wives dined with the Carters at the White House just before Vance's departure. The President summarized the comprehensive proposal for Kissinger. The former secretary of state turned his eyes skyward, thought for a moment, and said, "Yes, I think they might accept it." Asked about the conversation two years later, Kissinger said he had no recollection of being briefed in great detail or venturing a concrete prediction of what the Soviets might accept.

Moscow. The administration, having virtually hidden the comprehensive proposal from itself, was seized by a spasm of openness. Carter revealed to the world both the main features of the comprehensive proposal and the second-choice, "deferral" option. The President lifted up the corner of the veil in an address before the United Nations General Assembly in mid March, his first major foreign policy speech in office. The U.S. would pursue "strict controls or even a freeze on new types and new generations of weaponry," he said, and "a deep reduction in the strategic arms of both sides." If such an agreement could not be concluded quickly, then he would settle for "a limited agreement based on those elements of the Vladivostok accord on which we can find a complete consensus."

Harold Brown had misgivings about the tactical wisdom of such sneak previews. Having negotiated with the Russians himself in Geneva, he knew that the Soviet Union would interpret the publicity as a propaganda ploy; the Kremlin would see the U.S. attempting to establish itself as the most vigorous proponent of disarmament and to put the Soviet Union on the defensive before Vance even reached the negotiating table. But Carter continued to go public with the proposals in even greater detail. One reason for doing so he spelled out in a press conference the day before Vance left: "I believe that it's very important for the American people to know the framework within which the discussions might take place and to give me, through their own approval, strength as a party to some of the resolutions of disputes and also to make sure that when I do speak, I don't speak with a hollow voice." Carter the populist was in effect going over the head of his own government to seek a mandate from the people. By floating the proposal before national television cameras, Carter was also seeking support from Congress, particularly from Senator Henry Jackson, who had been informed about the comprehensive proposal in advance of Carter's public statements. Once Carter had unveiled the proposal, Jackson issued a statement to the press praising it as a step in the right direction—away from what he saw as the folly of the "Kissinger-Nixon-Ford approach." Finally, Carter was trying to go over the head of most of the Soviet bureaucracy as well. He had a notion, encouraged by Brzezinski, that he might be able to shock the highest level of the civilian leadership in Moscow into paying close attention to his initiative before the rigidly conservative Soviet military and diplomatic establishments had a chance to pick the proposal apart and lobby against it.

In the question-and-answer portion of his press conference, Carter said, "We will be taking new proposals to the Soviet Union. We're not abandoning the agreements made in the Vladivostok agreement. As you know, all previous SALT agreements have been in effect limitations that were so high that they were in effect just ground rules for intensified competition and a continued massive growth in nuclear weapons." It was a telling non sequitur. The second sentence—"We're not abandoning the agreements made" at Vladivostok—was a sop to the Soviets and to the Sovietologists in the U.S. government, but it was a meager one, coming between a frank declaration that the U.S. was sending "new proposals" and an equally frank dismissal of "all previous SALT agreements." At the end of the press conference, Carter made an extemporaneous statement that caused even his most loyal and obedient supporters to wince: "If we're disappointed—which is a possibility—then we'll try to modify our stance." Now the President was *inviting* the Soviets to reject both proposals out of hand and simply to wait for the U.S. to come back with something more to their liking. Not that the Soviets needed any more inducement than they already had. Disappointment in Moscow was not only possible—it was inevitable.

began to change. The cameras, the lights, the array of dignitaries at the foot of the steps to the Air Force plane, the limousines, the motorcade, the VIP guesthouses in Lenin Hills—all this was heady stuff, even for Vance. The skepticism began to dissipate. Maybe something would come of these talks after all—the Soviets almost certainly would not accept the whole proposal, but maybe they would accept something. But what exactly *was* the whole proposal? That question still disturbed the members of Vance's entourage who had been briefed generally on the plane but had not been permitted to see the formal negotiating instructions drafted by William Hyland. Walter Slocombe, Lieutenant General Edward Rowny, the SALT representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and others went to Hyland and complained that it was ridiculous for them to accompany the secretary to Moscow without being allowed to see the centerpiece of their mission. Hyland went to Vance and said, "We've got a morale problem. Can I show them the proposal?"

"All right," replied Vance, "but only up to a point." That point did not extend to the fallback instructions within the comprehensive proposal. Those remained the most closely held secret. The President had made clear at the National Security Council meeting that he did not want the Soviets even to know that the U.S. was prepared to compromise on the comprehensive proposal until they demonstrated their own willingness to engage in genuine negotiations. Even if Carter had seriously undercut the appearance of take-it-or-leave-it resolve at his press conference, the NSC secrecy order still stood.

Hyland went to the U.S. embassy, where an office had been set up for the delegation in the "vault," the inner sanctum which was specially insulated against Soviet electronic eavesdropping. Hyland began clipping out of the negotiating instructions those passages that Vance did not want the entire delegation to know about. While he was in the midst of this hasty cut-and-paste job, a number of members of the delegation arrived early for their first look at the text. They surprised Hyland in the act. That evening there were sour jokes at the guesthouses about how Hyland had been "caught shredding our marching orders."

Brezhnev presided at the opening session in the Kremlin. It was a chilly welcome. Echoing a speech he had given at a trade union congress in Moscow a few days before, Brezhnev railed against the Carter human rights campaign. The constructive development of relations was impossible, he said, if the U.S. did not respect "the princi-

4 The Making of a Compromise

Just before he flew off to Moscow, Cyrus Vance sounded a characteristically cautious note about his mission. The talks would be "exploratory," he told the press. The meeting would probably not produce a new agreement right away. He hoped it would provide the foundation for further negotiations, both in follow-up meetings between Gromyko and himself and in the resumption of work by the permanent SALT delegations in Geneva. En route to Moscow, Vance stopped in Brussels to brief NATO. Contrary to the impression left by Leslie Gelb in his own consultations with alliance officials a few days before, the Vladivostok accord was no longer the order of the day. Instead, President Carter had decided to find out if the Soviets were interested in deep reductions right away. Gelb himself—who had now been informed about the main provisions in the comprehensive proposal—prepared the "talking paper" that Vance used in Brussels. Often in such circumstances, the secretary would distribute his prepared text so that the assembled West European diplomats and military officers could send copies to their governments. On this occasion, however, Vance read the paper aloud, then put it in his pocket. Vance was under orders not to discuss the numerical levels of the proposed new ceiling and subceiling. The secrecy seemed excessive, given all the publicity that had preceded Vance's departure. Carter's press conference—with all its candor about what Vance would be proposing and about the U.S.'s willingness to modify its position—was still ringing in everyone's ears. Moreover, the widespread pessimism of Vance's staff was infectious.

On arrival in Moscow, however, the American delegation's mood

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instructions to seek a maximum reduction of 600 in the Vladivostok ceiling (from 2,400 to as low as 1,800). Nor could the Soviet suggestion be interpreted as a hint of willingness to accept the Vladivostok deferral, since that backup American position would have excluded both the cruise missile and the Backfire from SALT II.

Gromyko's talking points contained another gesture intended to demonstrate that even in the face of what he considered to be extreme American unreasonableness, the Soviet government was determined to be as magnanimous as possible. At issue were two Soviet rockets, the SS-16 and the SS-20. The SS-16 was unique among the new generation of Soviet ICBMs in that it was propelled by solid fuel. That feature made it theoretically more advanced than the SS-17, SS-18 and SS-19, since many American military analysts believe that solid-fuel propulsion, when it works properly, is more efficient and reliable. But unlike its three liquid-fueled, MIRVed siblings, the SS-16 was armed with a single warhead. Moreover, its testing history had been a series of blowups and fizzles. The Soviet breakthrough into solid-fuel technology for ICBMs had been something less than a stunning success. In the files of the Pentagon and the Arms Control Agency, this accident-prone rocket bore the designation "SS-X-16." The "X" stood for "experimental." The U.S. wanted that particular experiment stopped in its tracks, before the SS-16 could be made to work properly and deployed, for the SS-16 had a much more proficient junior partner, the SS-20. The SS-20 is an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), not an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). IRBMs were not to be covered by SALT II. The SS-20 is a two-stage version of the three-stage SS-16. While the SS-16 was a single-warhead weapon, the SS-20 is MIRVed, and while the SS-16 was still in an experimental phase, the SS-20 was ready to be deployed. Moreover, it was to be deployed "in a mobile mode," on trucks. Mobile missiles enhance unilateral security but undercut bilateral arms control agreements, because they are harder to find, harder to count, harder to hit as targets of retaliation. Mobiles are more survivable but less verifiable than fixed-site rockets. If the Soviets ever perfected the SS-16, they would be able to stockpile the third stage and, in an international crisis, rapidly convert mobile IRBM launchers in mobile ICBM ones. That danger had a name in the lexicon of SALT. It was called "breakout": the Soviets might be in a position to break out of the agreement—to abrogate it abruptly in a way that gave them an immediate, potentially decisive strategic advantage. One of the goals in SALT II has been reducing the danger

END GAME

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ples of equality, noninterference in each other's internal affairs and mutual benefit." SALT had become "stagnant," continued Brezhnev. He launched into a lecture on the Vladivostok accord, hailing it both as a momentous diplomatic achievement in its own right and as the only acceptable basis for further progress. Andrei Gromyko picked up the same theme at the beginning of the first working session. He stressed that there was a long and complex history to the negotiations, that both sides must respect the history, and that any attempt to depart from the continuum would jeopardize what had already been accomplished. Even by Soviet standards, the message was not subtle. A number of Americans listening to the foreign minister had the distinct impression that he was rejecting the comprehensive proposal before it was formally presented. After Gromyko finished his statement, he declared a recess and left the Americans sitting at the table to mull over what he had said. Gelb turned to Vance and said, "I think we just heard their answer." The secretary was incredulous. "You mean they're not going to come back with a counterproposal?" "That's right," said Gelb, and he bet one dollar on his prediction.

Warnke, too, could tell that the Soviets were anything but receptive. He was especially struck by Dobrynin's demeanor. Normally so ebullient back in Washington, the ambassador was strangely subdued at the opening of the talks in the Kremlin. Warnke wondered if the transformation was because he was cowed by his bosses. But that hypothesis did not adequately explain Dobrynin's moroseness. It was as though he knew the meeting was already a failure. Still, Warnke guessed that however unhappy Dobrynin's comrades were with the comprehensive proposal, they would at least respond with a counterproposal, if only to keep alive those few American provisions they welcomed—the offers to sacrifice the MX and to leave the Backfire uncounted by SALT. Vance figured that Gromyko was setting the stage for tough bargaining—not for outright rejection.

Vance formally presented the U.S. position by passing out a stark, one-page version of the comprehensive proposal, in English and Russian, that he, Warnke, Hyland and Gelb had drafted on the airplane. The Soviets were at first noncommittal. For almost two days Gromyko and his colleagues picked and probed and sparred. In the process they suggested they might be willing to lower the Vladivostok ceiling from 2,400 total strategic launchers to 2,200 if the U.S. was willing to include the cruise missile and exclude the Backfire. A reduction of 200 was hardly cause for jubilation among the Americans, who were under

of breakout. That was the purpose of the long-sought ban on ICBM launchers that could be rapidly reloaded and the ban on the storage of excess missiles. The SS-16 represented a particularly threatening sort of breakout because of its similarity to—and therefore interchangeability with—the SS-20. Seeming to confirm the worst suspicions of the U.S., the Soviets had begun testing the intercontinental SS-16 from a mobile launcher virtually identical to the one on which the SS-20 was already deployed. As the Soviet delegation circled around the comprehensive proposal, Gromyko took note of the U.S.-proposed ban on mobile ICBMs and said the Soviet Union might be willing to promise not to deploy the SS-16 "in a mobile mode." That was, as an American negotiator grumbled afterward, a "nonoffer," for it left wide open the possibility that the Soviets could at any time transform the SS-20 into a mobile SS-16 simply by adding the third stage. As long as the SS-16 program continued, the U.S. anxiety would remain, and Gromyko indicated no willingness to abort the program altogether.

On the third day Brezhnev rejoined the talks. His manner was grim and his rejection of both the comprehensive proposal and the Vladivostok deferral was categorical. He said that his government especially objected to the proposition that the Soviet Union should destroy half of its land-based heavy missiles while the U.S. would only postpone some technological innovations. All this talk about a triad was in a way deceptive; the U.S. had a fourth threat to use against the Soviet Union—its forces based in Western Europe. As another Russian official paraphrased Brezhnev shortly afterward, Soviet intermediate-range weapons, such as the controversial SS-20, "can't hit you from anywhere. But you can drop thousands of missiles on us from Europe. The words strategic and tactical don't mean anything. It is my people who will be killed." Brezhnev was reminding the Carter administration that he had agreed to omit American forward-based systems from SALT II in exchange for Kissinger's agreement at Vladivostok to leave intact the Soviet heavy ICBM force.

Brezhnev did not close the door on dealing with some aspects of the comprehensive proposal in SALT III, but he made clear that there would never be a SALT III unless first there was a SALT II based on the Vladivostok accord. As for the deferral of an accommodation on cruise missiles to SALT III, the Soviets were just as adamant in their refusal now as they had been a year earlier, when the Ford administration proposed the same thing. The Soviets chose, in effect, to pretend

that a third American option—Kissinger's January 1976 compromise—had the endorsement of the Carter administration, and they made clear they were willing to engage in further negotiations on that. But the American delegation was under orders to bargain on the basis of the Carter proposals, not a left-over Kissinger one. Vance's mandate made it impossible for him to resort to his fallback instructions, since the Soviets were clearly unwilling to negotiate on the basis of the comprehensive proposal. Instead, he moved quickly to try to salvage the appearance of progress on some ancillary issues. He and Gromyko agreed to set up eight working groups to negotiate a comprehensive test ban, prior notification of missile tests, the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean, and curbs on civil defense as well as chemical, radiological, conventional and antisatellite weapons. They also deputized aides to conduct regular meetings on the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Vance and Gromyko themselves would meet again on SALT. It was a hastily improvised grab bag of consolation prizes, and no one was really consoled. "What are you trying to do—kill SALT?" asked one Soviet official in private conversation with his American counterpart. Gromyko's deputy Georgy Kornienko took Paul Warnke aside and admonished him, "You shouldn't have disregarded the fact that Brezhnev had to spill political blood to get the Vladivostok accords." Kornienko said that the Soviet leader had been especially incensed by the American attempt to cut the heavy-missile force and by the across-the-board 2,500-kilometer range limit on cruise missiles.

The Soviets were willing, indeed eager, to downplay the failure and to muffle their accusations in public. TASS issued a terse statement saying, "The two sides agreed to continue their exchange of views on SALT and other subjects." Vance, however, was determined to adhere to the spirit of openness to which the Carter administration had committed itself with enthusiasm if not with total consistency. The two men in his entourage who were most doubtful about the wisdom of advertising the failure of the mission were Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Philip Habib and William Hyland. A professional diplomat and a professional Kremlinologist, they knew that a public airing of the disagreement would be bad diplomacy and a psychological mistake in the handling of the Soviet leadership. The Russians would conclude that the U.S. was yet again trying to put them on the defensive, just as Carter had done on the eve of Vance's departure. But when Vance returned to Spasso House, the residence of Ambassador Malcolm Toon, after the last negotiating session, Hyland and

Habib remained in the Kremlin to draft a communiqué aimed at downplaying the failure and keeping SALT alive. They missed Vance's press conference and thus missed a chance to talk Vance out of going public with the failure.

"Good evening," said Vance to the chamberful of newsmen, microphones and cameras. "We met this afternoon with General Secretary Brezhnev and Foreign Minister Gromyko and other officials. At that meeting the Soviets told us they had examined our two proposals and did not find either acceptable. They proposed nothing new on their side." Vance went on to spell out in even greater detail than had Carter the week before the main features of the comprehensive proposal—although he still did not reveal the numbers. Vance pronounced himself "disappointed," but said the talks had been "useful" and that "U.S.-Soviet relations will continue to be good." He was confident, he said, that a SALT II agreement could be reached before the expiration of the five-year SALT I interim agreement on October 3.

Back in Washington, Jimmy Carter struck a less conciliatory note. He said it was "very encouraging" that the Soviets had agreed to keep talking, but he vowed that the U.S. would not give up in its pursuit of its goals. Then came a threat: "Obviously, if we feel at the conclusion of the discussions that the Soviets are not acting in good faith," he said darkly, "then I would be forced to consider a much more deep commitment to the development and deployment of additional weapons." That statement, coupled with the President's indication that the U.S. intended to stand pat on its main proposals, infuriated the Soviet leadership more than ever. As Dobrynin later explained: "President Carter seemed to be saying, 'Either you accept our position or we start the arms race and the cold war again.' His statement was taken as a *diktat* or ultimatum."

No sooner was Vance heading westward than Gromyko gave a rare press conference of his own. He denounced the comprehensive proposal as a "cheap and shady maneuver," aimed at achieving for the U.S. "unilateral advantages." Gromyko made public the Soviets' own threat which Brezhnev had hinted at in his rejection of the American position: if the U.S. persisted in seeking deep reductions in Soviet force levels, especially heavy missiles, the U.S.S.R. would "have the right to raise the question of liquidating" U.S. bases in Western Europe, submarines belonging to NATO, medium bombers and "other vehicles capable of carrying nuclear arms" but so far excluded from SALT.

Then Gromyko did something entirely unprecedented on either side: he revealed for the record the numbers in the U.S. comprehensive proposal. He was going Vance one better, showing that two could play the game of mixing diplomacy with propaganda. Gromyko apparently calculated that telling the world how drastically the U.S. had proposed to cut the Vladivostok ceiling and subceiling would dramatize his charge that the Americans were being grossly unreasonable. Jody Powell, the presidential press secretary, defended the comprehensive proposal as "extremely fair and equitable." Zbigniew Brzezinski appeared in the White House press room to deliver a lengthy rationale for the controversial provisions.

As Vance headed home, the strategic arms limitation talks were degenerating into an intercontinental shouting match. Morale and discipline in Vance's party were in shambles. A spate of news stories appeared reporting the dismay of anonymous officials on Vance's plane over the Powell statement and the Brzezinski press briefing. Tempers were frayed back in Washington, too. When he saw the newspaper accounts of the angry and embittered mood aboard the plane, Brzezinski demanded, "Who is the leaker? We must find the leaker!" The fact was that virtually every official aboard the secretary's plane, with the possible exception of the secretary himself, was making no secret of his shock and discouragement to the accompanying reporters; and while Vance's upper lip may have remained stiff, his eyes had a glazed, traumatized look.

Unhappy Homecoming

Even before Vance's return, the Carter administration divided into factions over whom to blame for the diplomatic disaster. The intelligence community was ordered to produce an analysis of what had gone wrong. "We'd been left out of the huddle and then cut out of the play," bitterly remarked a high CIA official, "and now they were coming to us and demanding to know in this accusatory tone of voice why they'd dropped the ball." With the acuity of hindsight, most of the experts agreed on at least six reasons why the meeting had been a debacle: the old boys in the Kremlin were testing the mettle of the new boys in the White House; the Soviets resented the American attempt to conduct diplomacy out in the open; they resented the new administration's trying to change the rules in a game that had been going on for eight years; they resented the effort to put them on the

defensive; they resented the administration's assumption that it could keep SALT on an even keel while rocking the boat of Soviet-American relations with propaganda about human rights; but most of all they resented what they saw, with justification, as the one-sided nature of the comprehensive proposal itself.

Only those who had been involved in the concoction of the comprehensive proposal doubted that the proposal itself was the biggest of the booby traps that had blown up in Vance's face. Hyland, for instance, argued for more than a year afterward that the Soviets were so annoyed by the way the proposal was sprung on them that they never considered it on its own merits. Carter said the Soviets had rejected his initiative because "it [was] so substantive and such a radical change from the past." Even Warnke, who had nurtured—and expressed—strong misgivings about the political wisdom of seeking drastic cuts, felt afterward that the primary problem was an American misjudgment about the workings of the Soviet system: "The military and political bureaucracy [in the U.S.S.R.] turned out to be too contented to digest the proposal." David Aaron made no apologies for the substance of the initiative. "If we'd taken the same position in 1972," he said, "we'd be better off today." It became the party line at the NSC that the proposal had been "mishandled politically" in Moscow—that Vance should never have gone public with the Soviet rejection, that he should have left the Soviets to ponder it quietly—perhaps to come back later with a counterproposal of their own. Henry Kissinger, commenting from the sidelines, seemed to agree. He had gone to Moscow and been rebuffed many times, he said, but he had never held a press conference about it afterward.

Vance's aides and partisans within the administration responded with the charge that the comprehensive proposal had been made up out of whole cloth within the NSC and foisted on Vance; under orders but against his better instincts, Vance had done his best to sell the NSC's shabby goods to the Russians, and in holding a press conference at the end of the visit he had only been following the President's example of diplomacy in the sunshine. Vance himself made no excuses, nor did he join in the game of pin the tail on the NSC that suddenly became the number one sport in Foggy Bottom. But he still managed to stumble into a fresh controversy with the White House. Vance's inherent cautiousness in those days was exceeded only by his candor. At yet another news conference shortly after his return to Washington, Vance was asked if the whole venture had been a mis-

take. "No one can say that one never makes any miscalculation," he replied. It was a double negative that translated loosely into an affirmative—and indisputable—admission. The next day Jody Powell felt obliged to "clarify" what the secretary of state had said. Powell denied that Vance's statement had contained "any implication" of a "significant miscalculation." The Soviets' "initial rejection," continued Powell, simply meant that the Kremlin needed more time to consider the proposal.

While considerable energy was expended in self-justification, obfuscation and recrimination, some officials were engaged in the more constructive, though not necessarily more convincing, exercise of trying to find a silver lining in the thunderhead Vance had encountered in Moscow. Some middle-level Pentagon and NSC officials concluded that there were a few useful if discouraging lessons to be learned from the rejection of the comprehensive proposal. The U.S. was fooling itself if it thought the Soviets shared the belief that in the age of arms control, less is better. The Soviets had now revealed their own fundamental conviction that more is better. By so abruptly and reflexively refusing to consider substantial reductions in force levels, the Soviets had betrayed the basic primitiveness—and dangerousness—of their own strategic doctrine. They still put their faith in brute power and had no use for elegant theories about parity and crisis stability. American concerns that the vulnerability of Minuteman might have a destabilizing effect on the strategic balance simply did not impress the Russians. The protection of Minuteman was a problem for the U.S. to solve, and the U.S. could not count on Soviet cooperation. Or so it seemed. "Vance's experience in Moscow," concluded one official philosophically, "was good for us in that it made us less naïve about the Russians. It gave us a clearer-headed idea of what we were dealing with."

Some optimists in the government argued an almost diametrically opposite point: however feckless the American handling of the comprehensive proposal may have been and however rude the Russian rebuff, at least the proposal had established the U.S.'s determination to impose upon the Soviet-American relationship a more sophisticated concept of strategic stability than the Russians had traditionally accepted. The Carter administration was going to make the Russians address the problem of Minuteman vulnerability whether they liked it or not. Carter had shown he was committed to reducing force levels rather than merely limiting them—that he was bent on reigning in the

technology that had always run away with arms control agreements in the past. Said one proponent of this view: "The comprehensive proposal put the Kremlin on notice that we were serious about a more meaningful sort of arms control than previous administrations had attempted, and it forced the Soviets to pay attention to some problems they'd managed to ignore when SALT was pursued much more timidly by Kissinger."

But even the most Panglossian analysis could not conceal that the comprehensive proposal had done damage, and the damage outweighed whatever didactic or cathartic good may have been accomplished. The proposal led the Soviet leadership to conclude that the new administration did not really know what it was doing—and to the extent that it did know, it was up to no good. The episode damaged institutional and personal relations within the Carter administration, especially between the State Department and the National Security Council. But most important, the comprehensive proposal established a yardstick against which the critics of SALT could evaluate subsequent compromises. By such a measure, any reasonable, negotiable agreement would seem to be an ignominious retreat. Thus, the yardstick of the ill-conceived, ill-fated comprehensive proposal was destined to become, in the jaundiced eyes of the skeptics, a benchmark of failure—and in the hands of the opponents of the SALT II treaty a bludgeon with which to beat the Carter administration over the head in years to come.

Trying Again

The administration threw itself into the task of preparing to compromise while minimizing the appearance of retreat. Having been baptized by fire in Moscow, Vance became a more assertive adviser to the President. In a number of private conversations and written memoranda, the secretary of state urged a fundamental change in the handling of SALT. The negotiations could no longer take place in an atmosphere of high drama and intense publicity. In such conditions, the Soviets' natural suspiciousness became raving paranoia, and their reluctance became intractability. As Vance later recalled his advice to the President: "In dealing with the Soviets, we couldn't be as open as we had hoped we could. Out in the open is just not the way that they are prepared to negotiate. Informal, exploratory discussions are an essential part of the process. Without those kinds of discussions, it was

going to be impossible to make the kind of progress we wanted to make. You have to be able to sit down and talk very directly, with essentially nobody else around. Then they will open up and tell you, 'Well, now, this is what our problem is. . . .' So you understand their problem and can see if there are ways to take it into account while still achieving your own objective. They [the Soviets] can't possibly do that in an open session, with all their colleagues around. Those kinds of discussion are critical."

There had to be, in short, a return to secret diplomacy in the "back channel"—regular, informal, unpublicized contacts in Washington, away from the klieg lights of press conferences, full-dress ministerial meetings and summits. In essence, Vance was telling the President that the Carter approach to SALT had not worked and that they must do it Henry Kissinger's way instead. This was easier advice for Vance to give than for Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski to accept. Vance had immense respect for Kissinger, and that respect seemed almost completely undiluted by envy. Washington, especially early in the administration, reverberated with comparisons between Kissinger and Vance, many of them unfavorable to Vance. By contrast with Kissinger, Vance was dull, and dullness was close to a mortal sin in the eyes of the capital's arbiters of favor. But Vance was also a profoundly secure individual. He knew his strengths. They were experience, judgment, integrity, an ability to absorb and argue a brief, and a quality that he sometimes referred to with a characteristically inelegant but utilitarian phrase—"stick-to-itiveness." He had no hope or aspiration to compete with Kissinger as a charmer, an intriguer, an explicator or a grand master of the global concept. Therefore Vance had no deep psychological aversion to adapting his and the administration's style of operation to Kissinger's when it seemed to make sense. Also, by background and temperament he was more at home and more effective in confidential deliberations behind closed doors than on the hustings or at the podium. Thus, back-channel diplomacy more naturally suited him than the open, confrontational style favored by Carter and Brzezinski.

The President and his national security adviser were driven much more by a sense of competition with Kissinger than was Vance, and it was to the White House, not the State Department, that Kissinger was obviously speaking early in April, in his first public address since leaving office. He warned against "self-imposed deadlines or rhetorical battles that publicly stake the prestige of both sides." Gerald Ford,

lecturing at the University of Michigan, said, "There was too much public rhetoric before the negotiations" in Moscow. Even Henry Jackson engaged in some after-the-fact kibitzing about how best to handle the Russians: "Frankly I would not have gone public," he said. "You never want to push them into a corner." This counsel, however sound, had a ring of unintended irony, coming from the author of the Jackson Amendment which had linked U.S. trade concessions to Soviet emigration policy and pushed the Russians so far into the corner that they lashed out at Kissinger when he came to Moscow to negotiate SALT in 1974. It was also ironic coming from the senator whom Carter had been most eager to impress with his bold and very public March initiative.

Vance argued forcefully that lowering the volume and visibility of the talks would make SALT less subject to the ups and downs of the Soviet-American relationship. He was particularly concerned about the downs, since almost from the first day of the Carter administration, the relationship had been in decline. The primary irritant had been the human rights policy, but the Kremlin's adventurist activity in Africa, the conflicting interests and tactics of the superpowers in the Middle East, and a range of other quarrels had exacerbated mistrust and misunderstanding. As part of his own post-mortem of the Moscow debacle, Vance's adviser on Soviet affairs, Marshall Shulman, now upgraded to a full-time special consultant with ambassadorial rank, prepared what he called a "tabular account of related events." It was a device he had often used as a teaching aid in his course on Soviet foreign policy at Columbia—a diagram showing the coincidence of developments in different areas. It was a handwritten, fold-out, chronological chart illustrating that the Kremlin's mounting complaints over the new administration's emerging arms control policy had closely paralleled the escalation of tensions on other issues, particularly human rights. Vance and Shulman felt that by reducing the public drama associated with SALT, the administration might be able to diminish the "negative linkage" between the negotiations and the rest of the Soviet-American relationship. Here, too, Vance was following a course on which Kissinger had embarked at the end of his term. Kissinger, too, used to complain that SALT was difficult enough without having to negotiate under the additional burden of being "held responsible for the peace of the world." Of course, it was partly because of Kissinger's own earlier overselling of SALT in the heyday of détente that public opinion and the press tended to identify the

negotiations as the "cornerstone," "touchstone," "bellwether," "linchpin" and "acid test" of détente. But as that fancy French word fell out of favor in 1975 and 1976, Kissinger attempted as much as possible to separate the pursuit of a treaty from the more elusive and politically controversial pursuit of Soviet-American friendship. Vance shared that objective.

Reactivating the back channel meant reengaging Anatoly Dobrynin as a central figure in SALT. Dobrynin had been Kissinger's principal negotiating partner on SALT. Throughout SALT I and at the beginning of SALT II as well, Kissinger had found Dobrynin more intellectually versatile, more self-confident, more conversant with the strategic ramifications and technical complexities of SALT, more capable of give-and-take, and altogether a better negotiating partner than Gromyko. Largely because Dobrynin had been so closely associated with Kissinger, the Soviet ambassador was suspect at the Carter White House. He and Brzezinski were particularly wary of each other, and each found it difficult to resist the temptation to play mischievously on the other's sensitivities. Dobrynin made a point of keeping in close touch with what he once called "the shadow foreign ministry," Kissinger's office at the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies. For his part, Brzezinski seemed to enjoy Dobrynin's discomfiture whenever his principal rival for influence and prestige, Georgy Arbatov, came to town. Arbatov was the director of an institute for America-watchers in Moscow, and he was for a while rumored to be destined to succeed Dobrynin.

Aside from mistrusting Dobrynin as a holdover from the Kissinger era, Brzezinski, Aaron and others in the administration had another, less personal reason for wanting to "cut Dobrynin down a peg or two," as one of them put it in the early spring of 1977. During his sixteen years in Washington, but especially in the Nixon and Ford years, Dobrynin had enjoyed far more access to the upper echelons of the host government than had his various American counterparts in Moscow. The Carter administration wanted to restore a degree of reciprocity in the treatment of envoys. At the very least, they wanted to open a second back channel through Malcolm Toon in Moscow. But it was not to be. Toon was a career diplomat with considerable experience in Soviet affairs, whom Gerald Ford had nominated for the Moscow post. Carter had decided to keep him on because he had a reputation for toughness, even gruffness, in dealing with the Soviets, and the new team in the White House was eager to cultivate a bit of that

its own ranks, what answers were desirable and feasible. The President told his aides that while he was willing to change the style of his approach to a SALT II treaty, he wanted to preserve as much of the substance as possible. The administration must find an imaginative way of accomplishing the main goals of the comprehensive proposal—slowing down the modernization of Soviet missile and postponing if not eliminating the threat to the survivability of Minuteman. David Aaron and Leslie Gelb both saw it as their task to “repackage” the provisions of the comprehensive proposal. Warnke described the objective as a “synthesis” of the preferred comprehensive proposal, the Vladivostok deferral second choice, and the Soviet proposal then on the table—i.e., the Kremlin version of the compromise Henry Kissinger had suggested in January 1976. Hyland spoke of the need “to get the Soviets’ attention this time in a way that we didn’t before because our come-on was too stark.” Erzevinski described the new objective as a “staged fusing” of the short-term and long-term goals contained in the comprehensive proposal.

The administration set about to divide and conquer that tangle of problems. The most important of many informal but intensive brainstorming sessions turned out to be a two-and-a-half-hour luncheon between Gelb and Hyland in the executive dining room on the eighth floor of the State Department. Hyland marked off three columns on his paper napkin. The two men then sifted through the wreckage of the Vance mission to Moscow and sorted SALT into three categories: (1) those elements necessary to satisfy the Russians that the Vladivostok accord would be enshrined in the SALT II treaty; (2) interim measures to cover the weapons that had proved most contentious in Moscow—cruise missile, mobile missiles and new types of Soviet ICBMs; and (3) long-term goals for the period after the expiration of SALT II. Column 1 on Hyland’s napkin became the outline for the treaty to run until 1985,* column 2 a three-year protocol to the treaty,

*Within the administration, the main document was almost always referred to as a treaty. The assumption was that it would be submitted to the Senate in that form, thus requiring ratification by a two thirds majority. However, the precedents were mixed and the future was uncertain, so Carter did not want to rule out altogether the possibility of submitting the main document as an agreement to be approved by a simple majority of both the Senate and the House. SALT I included the antiballistic missile treaty of indefinite duration, which was ratified by two thirds of the Senate, and the five-year interim accord on offensive weapons, which was an agreement. The prospective SALT II accord had already evolved—or in the view of some, degenerated—from an agreement of indefinite duration to one that would expire in 1985. But almost everyone in the administration assumed SALT II could be concluded before the October 1977 expiration of SALT I. That would give the new accord a life span of eight years

END GAME

reputation for itself. The Kremlin tolerated Toon but never granted him anything like the special position that Dobrynin had carved out for himself in Washington. Eventually, reluctantly, the Carter White House came to accept Dobrynin not only as the indispensable Russian but as a much more vital link than Toon.

Within a week after Vance’s return from Moscow, Dobrynin began shuttling back and forth between his embassy and the White House and State Department. He held a series of unpublicized meetings with Carter, Erzevinski, Vance and Warnke. In order to avoid the reporters who regularly staked out the diplomatic entrance to the State Department, Dobrynin’s limousine took him into an underground garage. From there he ascended by private elevator to Vance’s office on the seventh floor. The first meetings were devoted to an assessment of why Vance’s mission to Moscow had gone so badly and to assurances that both sides were determined to put that episode behind them. Dobrynin recalled how much importance the U.S. had attached to the principle of equality in the aggregates negotiated at Vladivostok. The Soviet Union, too, was interested in equality, he said. Moscow was no less committed than the U.S. to the goal of reductions, but they must be “fair and equal.” The comprehensive proposal would have required the U.S.S.R. to make drastic cuts in existing systems, “while you would give up nothing.” At one point he asked almost woefully, “Don’t you realize that for us, too, this is an insecure world, an unstable world?” The American officials told Dobrynin that the U.S. was prepared to work hard to find some compromise that took account of the Soviet objections to the comprehensive proposal but at the same time was consistent with the goals of the proposal.

Brezhnev and Carter traded encouraging words in public early in April. The Soviet leader said: “a reasonable accommodation is possible”—if the U.S. abandoned its “one-sided position.” Carter replied three days later that while the comprehensive proposal as a whole was fair, he would be “very eager to change” any provisions that Moscow could prove were inequitable. It was a somewhat puzzling statement, but it was clearly meant as a signal of flexibility, and Moscow took it that way.

The primary questions that Vance and Gromyko would have to address at their next meeting, scheduled for May in Geneva, were two: what could and should SALT II accomplish? What form should the agreement take? Before the Carter administration could hammer out mutually acceptable answers with the Soviets, it had to agree, within

and column 3 a statement of principles to govern SALT III.

As conceived at the time, the SALT II treaty and the SALT III statement of principles were fairly straightforward devices to accommodate, first, the Kremlin's fixation with the Vladivostok accord and, second, Jimmy Carter's devotion to "real arms control." The protocol was more ingenious and more problematic. The Soviets had complained in Moscow that the comprehensive proposal unfairly demanded they make sacrifices in their one area of strength, land-based ICBMs, without comparable concessions on the American side. In the newly conceived protocol, the Soviets would be asked to accept temporary constraints on the modernization of their ICBMs in exchange for temporary constraints on the American weapon system they most feared, the cruise missile. But here the brainstormers had to be careful to distinguish between ground- and sea-launched cruise missiles on the one hand and air-launched cruise missiles on the other. The U.S. had no plans to deploy SLCMs and GLCMs within the period of the protocol and it would therefore be relatively painless to accept a ban on such deployment. But air-launched cruise missiles—ALCMs—figured crucially in a decision already facing the President. Carter was still trying to make up his mind whether to proceed with the development of the B-1 supersonic penetrating bomber. He was tantalized by the idea that cheap cruise missiles aboard reliable old B-52s might be just as effective at penetrating Soviet air defenses as the crushingly expensive B-1. Therefore the designers of what became known as the three-tier proposal had to be sure that they protected the option of deploying long-range ALCMs against any constraints on cruise missiles in the second tier. Dobrynin said in April that Moscow could live with a SALT II agreement that permitted the U.S. to have long-range ALCMs as long as there were no ground-launched cruise missiles "within striking distance" of Soviet targets from American forward-based systems. The proposed protocol, therefore, would ban the deployment of long-range GLCMs and SLCMs. Any cruise missile with a range greater than 600 kilometers would be considered long-range. While air-launched cruise missiles with a range greater than 600 kilometers would be permitted under the new American proposal, it was tentatively decided that SALT II would permit ALCMs a maximum

and hence make it worthy of submission as a treaty. Not until 1978, when time was running out for SALT II and opposition to ratification was mounting, did the White House actively—and abortively—press to keep open the possibility of submitting it as an agreement.

range of 2,500 kilometers—the same limit that the March comprehensive proposal would have imposed on all varieties of cruise missile.

Like the comprehensive proposal, the three-tier proposal that Vance would take to Gromyko in May came about with a minimum of involvement by the bureaucracy. The circle of those who knew about, and contributed to, the refinement of the plan was widened somewhat to include Marshall Shulman, one of Gelb's assistants, Charles Henkin, James Timbie at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and a handful of others. But many experts at the Pentagon, the CIA and even the NSC were, once again, left mostly in the dark. There was some feeling around the State Department and the Arms Control Agency that since Harold Brown had been largely responsible for the disastrous comprehensive proposal, Brown's "boys," if not Brown himself, deserved to be frozen out of the rescue operation. Brown's principal "boy" on SALT was Walter Slocomb, and he was for the most part bypassed during the preparation of the three-tier proposal.

If the Pentagon felt left out of the flurry of repackaging in April and early May, it could commiserate with the U.S. SALT delegation in Geneva, which was just resuming work. The permanent negotiators learned of the existence of the new proposal less than forty-eight hours before Vance arrived to meet with Gromyko. But an important difference from the comprehensive proposal in March was that this time Gromyko himself had ample time to ponder the new U.S. position. Vance, Brzezinski and Warnke had held another round of unpublished, intensive meetings with Dobrynin in Washington to go over the proposal well in advance and in great detail.

Picking Up the Pieces on Neutral Ground

Gromyko came to Geneva authorized to accept the general contours of the three-tier proposal—but instructed to fight the Americans every inch of the way over which weapons would be covered in each tier. He was also under instructions to deliver yet another stern lecture on how obnoxious his government had found the March comprehensive proposal, in particular its provisions for a MIRVed ICBM subceiling of 550, a reduction in Soviet heavy missiles and a 2,500-kilometer range limit for all cruise missiles. Those provisions epitomized, said Gromyko, the American "attempt to achieve unilateral advantages." Vance and Warnke both replied that the U.S. had only been attempt-

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ing to prevent the Soviets' emerging advantage in large, land-based MIRVs from undermining the stability of the relationship and the utility—indeed, the political acceptability—of the agreement. To that same end, the U.S. proposed that the three-tier proposal halt the headlong MIRVing of Soviet heavy missiles. The SALT I interim agreement had frozen Soviet heavies at about 300; the U.S. was now suggesting that SALT II contain a freeze-within-the-freeze of 190 MIRVed heavies. It was what Warnke called an "offer to marry" the MIRVed ICBM subceiling and the reduction of heavy missiles proposed in March. Gromyko rejected it. Refinements in the Vladivostok accord might be in order, he said; modest reductions in the Vladivostok ceiling and subceiling might be further discussed, although the magic numbers 2,400 and 1,320 must appear in the treaty as starting points to be lowered later on. But the Soviet side would steadfastly reject efforts to "tamper with the spirit" of Vladivostok or to "disregard" the accord. Any new proposal aimed at Soviet heavy missiles—whether it concerned all heavies or just MIRVed ones, whether it would reduce them or just freeze them—was completely out of order. Moreover, American persistence on this point could jeopardize the negotiations.

The revised U.S. position on cruise missiles—that the three-year protocol should ban deployment of long-range ground-launched and sea-launched cruise missiles, but not air-launched ones—prompted Gromyko to reiterate, with new vigor, another of the Soviets' well-worn demands: there must be no "special privileges" for air-launched cruise missiles. Heavy bombers had been designated at Vladivostok as strategic nuclear launch vehicles, and by logical extension of the Vladivostok understanding, a heavy bomber armed with cruise missiles was a multiple-warhead vehicle and therefore should be covered by the 1,320 subceiling.

In their initial presentation of the three-tier proposal, the Americans had envisioned the three-year protocol as an executive agreement, which the U.S. Congress could consider separately from the longer-term treaty. Gromyko objected to any such arrangement, for it might allow the Congress to approve the treaty but reject the protocol. Since the protocol contained the cruise missile limits in which the Soviets were most interested, the protocol must be integral to the treaty in whatever legislative form the final agreement took. Vance agreed: the administration would submit the treaty and protocol to the Congress as a single package.

After his final session with Gromyko, Vance held a news conference. He unveiled the three-tier proposal and announced that "the differences between the two sides have been narrowed." While Vance was striking an upbeat note in the press center at the Intercontinental Hotel, Gromyko was doing just the opposite at Geneva Airport before boarding his plane to fly back to Moscow. "Major, serious difficulties remain," intoned Gromyko, looking more dour than usual. The U.S. was continuing its "attempts to achieve unilateral advantages." News-men who had covered the Gromyko departure rushed back to the hotel downtown to find out whether the Soviet foreign minister and the American secretary of state had indeed been at the same meeting for the past three days. U.S. officials were genuinely puzzled by Gromyko's dyspeptic remarks. Subsequently, a Soviet diplomat explained that Gromyko had decided to grumble over his shoulder at Vance for three reasons: (1) he objected to Vance's going public with the three-tier framework and stressing only what had been accomplished—it all smacked of the new American administration's apparently incorrigible penchant for blabbermouth diplomacy, and it looked as though the U.S. was taking credit for the breakthrough; (2) he wanted to underscore that whatever progress had been made, the Soviet Union was not going to be stampeded into an agreement; and (3) he deeply resented the U.S.'s seeking a moratorium on MIRVed heavy missiles—a proposal that Vance had left on the table despite Gromyko's summary rejection.

Gromyko's parting shot notwithstanding, Vance returned to Washington confident that the Carter administration's pursuit of SALT II, after a giant misstep in March, was now back on track.

