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13 May 1994

The Hon. Jimmy Carter
The Carter Center
1 Copenhill Street
Atlanta, GA 30307

Dear President Carter:

Last weekend, at Musgrove Plantation, we held the first major conference of our project devoted to understanding the evolution of U.S.-Soviet relations when you were president and Chairman Brezhnev led the Russians. Our efforts were greatly facilitated due to your personal involvement, namely your letter last October to President Yeltsin, requesting that he open up the Russian archives on East-West issues during the Carter-Brezhnev period. President Yeltsin did indeed issue the order.

The result was the first conference ever held in which significant declassified Russian documents from so recent a period were made available before the meeting, so that all parties to the conversation could absorb them. This, in turn, added to the interest shown in the meeting by Cy Vance, Zbig Brzezinski, Harold Brown and Stan Turner, who led the American team at Musgrove. Their presence, and also the American documents we were able to provide, in turn assured the participation of a top-level Russian delegation, led by Anatoly Dobrynin, and also including three Russian generals (Viktor Starodubov, Nikolay Detinov and Sergei Kondrashev, from the general staff, central committee and KGB, respectively), Sergei Tarasenko (former aide to Andrei Gromyko and Georgy Kornienko, Gromyko's first deputy at the Foreign Ministry) and Viktor Sukhodrev, long-time aide and interpreter for Brezhnev and Gromyko. The results reflected the level, seriousness and enthusiasm of the participants. It was, according to the senior participants themselves, a fascinating and revealing discussion. Whether others find it so must await the availability of the transcript of the conference. It should be available sometime in June.

1. MISTRUST: THE "LINKAGE" BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

Historical fascination alone would not have drawn any of the senior participants, on either side, to Musgrove last weekend. What drew them instead was the feeling that there may be lessons from the Carter-Brezhnev period that are applicable to the present precarious moment in U.S.-Russian relations. It was noted by many participants--especially by Cy Vance and Zbig Brzezinski on the American side and by Anatoly Dobrynin among the Russians--that mistrust is on the rise

in U.S.-Russian relations. At Musgrove, Vladislav Zubok, a Russian scholar now living in Washington, DC, helpfully played the role of an American skeptic regarding Russia and put it this way:

Russians are in Bosnia. Why are they there? What are they trying to prove? Russians are seeking membership in the G-7. Why? Surely they must be kidding. What are they up to? Russian troops have been sent to various parts of what the Russians call, ominously, their "near abroad," in order to "stabilize" the situations in these areas. What is their real motive? Are we witnessing the return of imperial Russia? If not, why then do Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev constantly huff and puff about Russia being a "great power"? If Russian imperialism is once again on the rise, hadn't we better resist it now, before it is too late? Aren't they serious about this detente, this period of relaxation of tension? Attention must be paid. For they are a nuclear superpower and a regional hegemon, whatever else they may be.

In short, Zubok pointed out, "we"--the American body politic--don't really trust the Russians. This, many conference participants agreed, is what provides the "linkage" to the Carter-Brezhnev period, when the evolution of mistrust led to the collapse of detente itself.

At Musgrove, we were reminded many times of the distance between the optimism in Moscow and Washington at the time you took office, and the deep pessimism on both sides as you left office. Brezhnev, for example, said in his 18 January 1977 speech at Tula that "detente means willingness to resolve differences and disputes not by force ... but by peaceful means at a conference table ... We are prepared," he said two days before your own inauguration, "jointly with the new administration in the United States, to accomplish a major advance in relations between our two countries." Two days later, you said in your inaugural address "we will move this year a step toward our ultimate goal--the elimination of all nuclear weapons from the earth." You added, in a message issued later the same day: "The United States alone cannot lift from the world the terrifying specter of nuclear destruction. We can and will work with others to do so." Statements like these, and the optimistic political atmosphere in which they occurred, caused a writer for the Washington Post shortly thereafter to make a prediction: "We are," wrote Victor Zorza, "approaching one of those rare moments in history when a lucky combination of circumstances on both sides opens the way to a breakthrough in international relations."

A little more than four years later, after your administration left office, Tom Watson, your ambassador to the Soviet Union and the founder of my center here at Brown University, gave the commencement address at Harvard. Tom Watson, the incorrigible

optimist, gave a dark and brooding message to the Harvard class of 1981. "An anthropologist writing the history of the past forty years since the first atomic explosion," Tom said, "might well conclude that we human beings have been preparing for our own demise ... The hour is late. The imperative of realism and reason is urgent. And we confront many illusions."

The question on the minds of all the participants in the Musgrove conference last weekend is simple yet not easy to answer convincingly: what happened? How did good intentions on both sides lead to an outcome that was bad for both, and for the world as a whole? At Musgrove, we came as former colleagues, adversaries, scholars and citizens, seeking answers.

Bob Pastor followed up the remarks stimulated by Zubok with what he said is a well-known saying in Georgia: "It's best to repair your roof when it's not raining." While this elicited some laughs at Musgrove for its home-spun quality, it was also at once understood to be a serious remark. Bob was emphasizing that, for the present, we have the luxury of looking back at our recent past for clues as to how to proceed in the present. But, as he pointed out, we may not have forever, or even very long, to do our work of connecting the past and the present, of learning from both successes and mistakes, of preventing the rise of the kind of mistrust that proved fatal to detente the last time around.

2. WHY DETENTE COLLAPSED: A PSYCHOLOGICAL/CULTURAL DIVIDE

While it is in one sense an over-simplification to attribute the decline in Russian-American relations in the late 1970s to any single factor, there is no question about the factor that loomed over all others in the discussions at Musgrove. Underlying virtually all the specific discussions of various issues related to the SALT II process was unmistakable evidence of American and Russian psychological and cultural incommensurabilities. In case after case, it seemed clear to the Americans that the Russians had in the Carter-Brezhnev period been afflicted with extreme feelings of cultural inferiority with regard to the Americans, which caused them to act defensively, in what seemed at times an almost paranoid fashion, in the face of American initiatives. In our discussions of SALT II, of course, the prime example was the bitter, vitriolic and utterly unhelpful Russian reaction to the "deep cuts" proposal carried by Cy Vance to Moscow in March 1977.

At the same time, the Russians at Musgrove expressed the view that the Americans during the period in question seemed to be unwilling to treat the Russians, in any respect, like another superpower, like an equal, like a "partner," to use a term that has once again gained currency in the American debate over how to deal with the Russians. One Russian participant called it "the American superiority complex", exemplified in the American inclination to ignore the past, to move too fast and to feel compelled to "teach"

the Russians, in effect, how to be more like Americans. The Russians also used the March 1977 nuclear arms discussions as a prime example of this: the U.S. ignored the Vladivostok agreement, on the table since November 1974, and arrived in the midst of what the Russians took to be a non-stop lecture from the Carter Administration about human rights abuses in the Soviet Union.

The transcript of the Musgrove conference will be rich in examples of these very different psychologies, which are themselves based on different beliefs about the individual cultures and their relation to one another. I cannot here begin to do justice to this richness. But let me offer you just a few examples of the sort of thing to which I am referring.

♦ The human rights orientation of the Carter Administration was regarded cynically by the Russians as an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Soviet regime and as an unwarranted interference in their internal affairs. Many of the Russians at Musgrove said they did not necessarily doubt your personal sincerity, but regarded it also as an attitude that could be used "as a wedge", according to one Russian, to drive between the Soviet government and its people. Because of this, an idealistic initiative was reacted to as if it were a new weapon in the Cold War, and the reaction actually assisted the hard-liners in the U.S. who did seek to undermine the Soviet regime.

♦ The concept of crisis stability, which lay at the foundation of the configuration of U.S. nuclear forces, was regarded by the Russians as both self-serving and yet another didactic exercise by Americans convinced that the Russians are somehow "backward." A marvelous exchange on this occurred between Harold Brown and Les Gelb on the American side, and Generals Viktor Starodubov and Nikolay Detinov for the Russians. Brown and Gelb enumerated the principles of crisis stability, as the U.S. side tried to embody them in particular SALT II proposals, while the Russian generals (both of whom participated in the SALT II negotiations) repeatedly responded by saying that crisis stability was regarded as only a kind of trick to justify the U.S. desire to get rid of the bulwark of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, the land-based heavy missiles, especially the SS-18s.

♦ One of our sessions dealt with Third World areas of confrontation and conflict between the Americans and Russians. A good deal of quite heated, but also enlightening, discussion occurred regarding the Horn of Africa, for example. Anatoly Dobrynin rejected the concern voiced by Cy Vance and Zbig Brzezinski on the point by saying that areas like the Horn of Africa were so inherently "trivial," so dwarfed by the need for nuclear arms reductions and their centrality in East-West relations, that American complaints about Soviet activity in such areas simply couldn't be taken seriously. Instead, Dobrynin asserted, it was always assumed that The Horn of Africa, Shaba/Angola and other so-

called "issues" were really just pretexts used by American hard liners in their attempts to destroy the kind of U.S.-Soviet relationship that would be necessary to sign and ratify a SALT II agreement.

In each of these discussions, the Russians found it impossible then, and find it very difficult now, to treat the issues on their own terms, without attributing sinister motives to the Americans. Likewise, it was impossible not to notice a certain amount of frustration on the American side at the Russians, who even at Musgrove seemed often to see evil motives behind so many American initiatives. In addition, the more the Americans tried to explain why the Russians were wrong, the more the Russians seemed to resent be lectured to by the Americans. And the more they resisted, the more frustrated the Americans seemed to become.

Yet again it seemed that we had run up against a cultural divide: in fact, as several Russians said privately, the Russians then did feel inferior to the Americans. Deep down, they agreed with Zbig Brzezinski's remark at Musgrove: that he sought stability in the nuclear arms arena, because he was confident that, as a society, America would ultimately triumph over the Russians because our society was simply superior in all relevant respects. And the kind of attitude voiced by Brzezinski could not then, and cannot now, come across to the Russians in any way other than smug, self-righteous and threatening, particularly because so many of them, so much of the time, seem to have believed Zbig was right. And one must admit that at present, the evidence at hand supports Zbig's view. The Soviet Union is no more and Russian society is in chaos.

3. A CASE STUDY: THE MARCH 1977 MOSCOW MEETINGS

We called our Musgrove conference "SALT II and the Growth of Mistrust." Our feeling was that we should start with nuclear arms control negotiations, because that was where the U.S. and Soviet Union started with each other. (Other issues will be dealt with in subsequent conferences. As former Soviet Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh said at a preliminary meeting of our project: "the nuclear arms control talks constituted 95% of the total relationship, more or less.") In retrospect, of course, we know that the SALT II treaty was eventually signed and observed, even without ratification. But we also know that by the time of the Vienna summit and signing in June 1979, relations had soured. Six months later, the Soviets would occupy Afghanistan and a new Cold War would be brewing. The question thus arose: when did the mistrust begin to develop between Brezhnev and his colleagues on the one hand and, on the other, the Carter Administration?

There was no question about it on either side at Musgrove: the March 1977 Moscow discussion on arms control was the key event. I thought you might find interesting some of what we learned at Musgrove about the Soviet reaction to the proposals Cy Vance

carried with him to his meetings with Brezhnev and Gromyko. You of course must recall vividly what happened: the Russians rejected the comprehensive proposal; they rejected the back-up proposal; they brought forth no proposal of their own; and they concluded the affair with a vindictive press conference called by Gromyko.

News accounts in the U.S. asked, by the end of March, only two months into your administration, whether detente was already dead. Cy Vance said at Musgrove that when he thinks about that trip he likens it to getting a "cold wet rag across the face" from the Russians. March 1977, as both Americans and Russians at Musgrove recalled, was where they remember beginning to doubt the purposes and seriousness of the other side. This was the beginning of the end of the chance for moving quickly and decisively in the direction you laid out in your inaugural--a non-nuclear world. Why? Why this extreme, and, to the U.S. participants, irrational Russian reaction to the Vance mission just weeks after Brezhnev's conciliatory speech at Tula, on 18 January? Did the Russians not want detente? Did they not want a SALT II treaty?

On these points we learned a good deal at Musgrove. I will just list them here. The details will follow in the transcript of the conference.

♦ Brezhnev and his Generals. Brezhnev, according to several Russians, "spilled political blood" with the Soviet General Staff over the Vladivostok agreement in November 1974, with Ford and Kissinger. Sergei Tarasenko reported to the Musgrove meeting that Brezhnev even had to take the risky step of issuing an ultimatum to Marshal Andrei Grechko, the defense minister, over the Vladivostok agreement. He telephoned Grechko about it and, when Grechko resisted, Brezhnev challenged him to bring up his protest at a special Politburo meeting when he returned to Moscow. Grechko backed down. But Brezhnev's hand was severely weakened with his own military, having forced them, as one Russian participant at Musgrove said privately, to "eat the Vladivostok agreement."

♦ Brezhnev's First Stroke. It was revealed at Musgrove by Sergei Tarasenko that, at the conclusion of the Vladivostok meetings with Ford and Kissinger, Brezhnev had suffered a stroke. Moreover, he exacerbated his situation by insisting on meeting an obligation in Mongolia on the way from Vladivostok back to Moscow. Georgy Kornienko, then the first deputy foreign minister (and a participant in the Vladivostok negotiations), is the source of Tarasenko's revelation. According to Kornienko, Vladivostok was thereafter associated in Brezhnev's mind with the beginning of his physical decline, which was to continue throughout the late 1970s. Kornienko speculates that this association of Vladivostok with the stroke made the agreement achieved there with Ford and Kissinger personally very dear to him. It seemed to Brezhnev as if he had, in fact, paid for the agreement with his health.

♦ The "Heavy" Missiles. Then, and now, Russian land-based ICBMs ("heavies") have been regarded, in American strategic doctrine, as the most de-stabilizing weapons in the Russians' nuclear arsenal, due to their vulnerability and their consequent utility as primarily a "first-strike" weapon. As you will well recall, this was behind much of the discussion in the U.S. government leading up to the Vance mission to Moscow in March 1977, specifically the attempt to cut into the Soviet heavy missile force via the comprehensive proposal presented by Cy Vance. Key Russian strategists (two of whom were at Musgrove, Gens. Starodubov and Detinov) rejected the American logic. Instead, they saw the comprehensive proposal as a transparent attempt to limit the weapon the Soviets most depended upon for deterrence of an American attack. Lacking good ports and high-tech bombers, reliance on the land-based heavy missiles was, they said, the last resort of a land-rich but technologically inferior superpower, a fact they were sure at the time motivated at least some in the U.S. government who were responsible for drafting the March 1977 comprehensive proposal.

♦ Inevitable Linkage with Human Rights. In a key chapter of his memoirs, Zbig Brzezinski speaks of what he calls "SALT Without Linkage." He repeated at Musgrove what he meant: that nuclear arms negotiations should be carried on in a manner unrelated to other matters on which the Americans and Russians might disagree. The Russians at Musgrove told us, however, that by March 1977 the Carter Administration's human rights activities, such as meeting with Soviet dissidents, responding to the letter from Sakharov, and so on--was already "linked" in Brezhnev's mind (and in Gromyko's mind) with the arms control negotiations. For example, according to Viktor Sukhodrev, interpreter for both men, each could tolerate discussions of the Third World with American leaders, though they regarded the issues involving them as trivial, as compared with U.S.-Soviet relations and arms control. However, according to Sukhodrev, each regarded human rights as "an illegitimate issue," having no place at the bargaining table. Their reactions, he said, were visceral and negative. Like it or not, he concluded, this contributed greatly to the psychological atmosphere in Moscow in March 1977 even though, logically, arms reductions and human rights need not have been connected.

♦ Psychology of Vladivostok. In a conversation several of us had with Gens. Detinov and Starodubov, the pivotal psychological significance of the Vladivostok meeting started to emerge. Far from being merely an arms control agreement, it was, according to Detinov, "to us, the ratification of our status as the other superpower." Starodubov said one must try to understand the "psychology of the one who is always trying to catch up" in order to understand the significance the Russians invested in Vladivostok. Ford and Kissinger had come to frozen Vladivostok, in the winter, to meet with Soviet leaders and to initial an agreement. There was no discussion of "human rights." There was no discussion

of the Third World. It was just exactly what the Russians had been waiting for: evidence that along with parity in nuclear weapons came, in some sense, parity in general, as societies, and recognized as such by the Americans. As Dobrynin said, the Vance mission in March 1977, however, taught them that the Carter Administration would have none of that--that they would seek to re-draw U.S.-Soviet relations virtually from scratch. They felt as if they were being asked to go back to square one, to defend themselves and to fight the same battles they thought, after Vladivostok, were finally behind them.

Thus, by the time Cy Vance and his colleagues reached Moscow in late March 1977, the Russian leadership was highly suspicious and in a mood to show the Americans that they could not be pushed around. Although they never articulated to the Americans in Moscow even a fraction of their reasons for the mistrust and anger they obviously felt, they nevertheless acted as if the Carter Administration, from top to bottom, was out to do them in.

This accounts, according to all the Russians at Musgrove, for the virulence of Gromyko's press conference, called just as the Vance party was leaving Moscow. According to those Russians present at Musgrove who knew Gromyko, his anger was of the calculated variety, but it was calculated to embody the very real outrage felt by his boss, Brezhnev, for all the reasons just cited. Gromyko's performance, of course, only made matters worse, and heightened the growing suspicions on the America side that the Russians, whatever they were up to, were up to no good. From the March 1977 meetings onward, the SALT II talks would proceed only with difficulty, and slowly. As the SALT II process bogged down in details, mistrust between the Russians and Americans began to spill over into other areas of disagreement: China, the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and so on.

4. THE "LEGVOLD THESIS": THE ACCUMULATION OF THE MARGINAL

Because few of us who were in the room at Musgrove are historians, the conversation repeatedly turned toward possible connections between the historical narratives--what Les Gelb called "this buffet of anecdotes"--and the present situation in U.S.-Russian relations, especially as they concern nuclear danger. Granted that we learned some things. What difference might that difference make in our understanding of the Carter-Brezhnev period? Is it important to learn from this recent history? If so, why? And how ought we to think about the way the recent past might connect, in our thinking, to the needs of the immediate future?

The leading "veterans" participating in the Musgrove conference thought the exercise a useful corrective to the historical record. Zbig Brzezinski, for example, remarked toward the end that it had never occurred to him at the time that Brezhnev might be so "emotional" (this was the word the Russians tended to use) about

the Vladivostok agreement. That is why, as is revealed in one of the declassified documents Zbig himself worked to get released for the conference, Zbig felt it acceptable to put forth the comprehensive proposal "as a bargaining tactic," before falling back, if necessary, to the back-up proposal Cy Vance also had with him. But of course, there was to be no falling back during the March 1977 Vance mission. The Russians wouldn't hear of it.

Cy Vance said several times that, as he now sees it, the U.S. should have agreed to the Vladivostok numbers and gotten on with it. He tends to agree with Georgy Kornienko's assessment: that the greatest loss was that of time. If a SALT II of the Vladivostok variety could have been signed by late 1977, Cy believes, there is no telling what might have followed. In that case, the negotiation process might, he said, have outrun mistrust, instead of the other way around.

Marshall Shulman, turning his attention to Russian-American omissions at the March 1977 discussions, expressed regret that Brezhnev and his colleagues could not tell the Americans in Moscow what was "on their minds." Marshall said that if the conversation in Moscow in March 1977 had been similar to that which we had in Musgrove last weekend, then an agreement might have been reached quickly, leading to other kinds of agreements, leading ultimately to the kind of atmosphere of trust in which the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan would have been less likely. And if the Russians had stayed out of Afghanistan? This was a heady train of thought.

It was on just this point that the chairman of the Musgrove conference sessions, Prof. Robert Legvold of Columbia University, made what I think is a seminal contribution to our deliberations. Bob Legvold challenged Marshall in a friendly way by asking: "what changes in the situation in March 1977 would actually have permitted, for example, Brezhnev to say what needed to be said to Vance?" What must have been different for something like this to have taken place and, thus, for the scenarios such as Marshall's to have some credibility? Rejecting the idea of critical "turning points," Bob articulated the idea of "the accumulation of the marginal." What, he asked, seems on the basis of our historical investigations might conceivably have changed in such a way as to make another outcome more likely--especially a more positive outcome? This, Bob argued, should be the primary analytical task on the agenda of those of us who study these matters as professional scholars. We must, he said, find a middle ground between the cavalier rejection of history as irrelevant, due to history having been in some fashion "determined" (a view that Les Gelb put forth at Musgrove, with what seriousness I am not sure) on the one hand and, on the other, the spinning of "there but for fortune" scenarios in which history can be made to seem fundamentally different, but for a decision here or there.

As Bob Legvold reflected on the Vance mission to Moscow in March 1977, much did seem more or less determined. It is clear in the light of what we learned at Musgrove that the American cultural and psychological style was meant to clash with that of the Russians, to a certain extent. The key Americans in the new administration, racing hard for the new, the innovative and the theoretically coherent were willing, if need be, to try to "teach" the Russians how they ought to think about nuclear arms reductions (and human rights). The Russians, having raced hard to catch up to the Americans in this central arena of their competition, were particularly sensitive to slights, real or imagined, and to what might be interpreted by the extra-wary as attempts to undermine their security or their legitimacy. Nothing could have changed these facts. To that extent, Les Gelb was right. History is powerfully determined.

But Bob Legvold's counterpoint was this: though heavily determined, history is not immune from human intervention at points of marginal gain or loss. To put it another way: in every situation there are not only broad historical forces at work. There are also highly specific aspects which one might imagine could have been very different. Moreover, if in the light of the historical record the difference had occurred, a rather different outcome might have been made more probable.

For example, what if the Americans had known about Brezhnev's stroke at Vladivostok and drawn the conclusion that he would therefore regard the agreement reached there with particular attraction? One can imagine the former much more easily than the latter: that is, knowing about the stroke would not necessarily have changed the American attitudes or policies. Likewise, what if the Americans had known about the face-off between Brezhnev and Marshal Grechko over the terms of the Vladivostok proposal? What if Brezhnev had been able to talk about that? It might have made considerable difference in the way Brezhnev was regarded by those, like Zbig Brzezinski, who contributed in important ways to the drafting the March 1977 proposals.

Alternatively, what if Brezhnev and Gromyko had really understood the depth of feeling about human rights in the American leadership--yourself, Cy Vance and Zbig Brzezinski, especially? What if Cy Vance, perhaps in response to something Brezhnev or Gromyko had said in Moscow, had been able to engage the Russian leaders in a discussion of the way a concern for human rights was rooted in the experience of all of you? I mention this because several people at Musgrove, including Zbig Brzezinski and Marshall Shulman, made a point of anchoring your own dedication to human rights internationally in your personal experience as a white southerner in the civil rights movement. Can one imagine such a conversation occurring in 1977 between the various leaders in Moscow? Maybe. Maybe not.

But can one draw lessons from the fact that such a conversation as occurred at Musgrove last weekend is difficult to imagine happening in Moscow nearly two decades ago? The "Legvold Thesis" holds that one can. The drawing of lessons from recent history, according to "the Legvold thesis" consists of five stages:

1. Get the history straight. Discover, insofar as possible using documents and oral testimony, what it was really like for leaders on all sides, during an episode in question.
2. Make a judgment regarding the incommensurabilities in the views between leaders, or groups of leaders, that gave rise to mistrust.
3. Try to imagine what might realistically have been different about the situation and how that difference might conceivably have led to a different outcome.
4. Imagine a series of such "marginal" changes occurring which lead cumulatively, and realistically, to a better outcome.
5. Cautiously begin to generalize the thought experiment to include factors in the present situation of interest.

As you can see, we spent most of our time at Musgrove at stage one. This is as it should be. For if we do not get our history straight, it does not matter what lessons we draw, for chances are we would be drawing them from a world of make-believe.

On the other hand, getting the history straight in relations between Russians and Americans has never really been possible until now. We have willing and knowledgeable participants on both sides. We have, for the first time, relevant declassified documentation on both sides. And we have some time to work with though, as Bob Pastor pointed out, maybe not much time at that. All of us at Musgrove were sobered by such thoughts as these: might detente once again collapse? Might it already be collapsing, due to the accumulation of mistrust that is scarcely visible at present? If U.S.-Russian relations are already becoming infected with mistrust of the sort that brought them down last time, what will be the effect this time around on nuclear weapons, nuclear danger and regional stability?

I conclude with reference to both Marshall Shulman's scenario of what might have been and Bob Legvold's careful articulation about how we ought to connect that past with our present. The question that arises in my mind is this: Can we imagine, via a plausible string of "marginal gains," rooted in accurate history, a way in which we might have avoided what some have called "Cold War II"? If so, and if our Musgrove group's reading of American

and Russian psychological and cultural differences is on the mark, what will that historical exercise tell us about avoiding another such collapse of detente this time around? That is the task we have set before us. We have only just begun. But, as I read the conclusions of the senior Russian and American participants at Musgrove, we are off to a good start.

55. BACK TO THE PRESENT & FUTURE: CARTER-BREZHNEV & CLINTON-YELTSIN

Drawing specific lessons from the Musgrove conference must await a detailed analysis of the transcript and the voluminous declassified documentation which all participants used to prepare for it. The Musgrove discussions, however, point to certain kinds of questions that today's American and Russian leaders should ask themselves, in the context of their relations with one another and with other countries. Whether it is President Clinton considering policies toward Russia, China or the former Yugoslavia; or President Yeltsin pondering his policies toward the U.S., Ukraine or China; the experience of U.S.-Soviet relations in 1977-80 leads to such searching questions as these:

1. Can I prevail in confrontation? Are their aims so antithetical to mine, and are they so committed to them, that the relationship will necessarily be a confrontational one? What instruments, including force or the threat of its use for deterrence or coercion, are available to advance my aims and thwart theirs, without counterproductive results?

2. Is limited partnership possible? Even if the relationship will inevitably be confrontational, are there issues on which our interests coincide sufficiently to make it possible to compartmentalize those issues and make progress despite the over confrontation?

3. Can domestic politics be overcome? Are their domestic political considerations on one or both sides that make compartmentalization difficult, and if so are there things that I (and my opposite number, if he will cooperate) can do to minimize these difficulties?

4. Is a breakthrough possible? How can I explore whether a seemingly confrontational relationship, particularly one in which there are some issues on which our interests coincide, is susceptible to a breakthrough? Are the other side's aims (that seem antithetical to mine) immutable? Do those aims emanate from one leader? Are there other figures or forces in the wings that might change his mind or replace him? Are there emotional or domestic political pressures on the other side that I can accommodate at little cost? Is the other side bogged down in tactics that obstruct progress, and is there a way to convince them to drop such tactics? Are my own tactics best-suited to advancing my aims, or are they in some respects counterproductive?

These are questions that current leaders should be asking themselves today. The discussions at Musgrove Plantation last weekend begin to show how we can anchor these abstract queries in the hard empirical reality of recent U.S.-Russian experience. We think this is very important, especially in light of the great number of high-ranking officials in the U.S. and Russia today who also served in official capacities in the Carter-Brezhnev period. Once our investigations are further along, we intend to do everything we can to bring the message home in both Washington and Moscow.

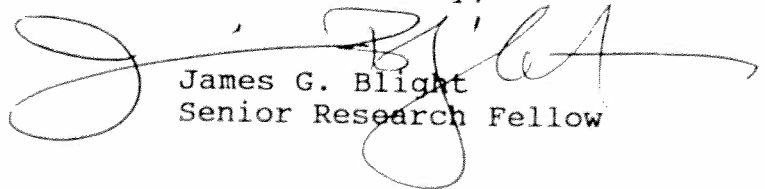
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At this point, two more conferences are planned: next February/March 1995, in which we will take up some of the issues that seem greatly to have contributed to Russian and American mistrust, such as human rights, the Horn of Africa and the Soviet "brigade" in Cuba; and we will conclude this phase of our deliberations with a conference in Oslo, Norway in August 1995, at which we will focus on Afghanistan. Vance, Brzezinski, Brown and Turner have already made commitments for the second conference, as have Dobrynin and other key Russians. We have already begun the process of declassifying and collecting important material from American and Russian archives for both subsequent conferences.

I will send you a copy of the transcript when it is ready. I would, moreover, be pleased to brief you in person on the Musgrove conference and our project generally at your convenience in Atlanta. In any case, my colleagues and I are grateful for your interest and welcome whatever form of participation in these matters you deem appropriate.

With all best wishes, I am

Yours sincerely,


James G. Blight
Senior Research Fellow



JIMMY CARTER

June 11, 1994

To Dr. Jim Blight

Thank you for sending me a summary of the Musgrove Conference on U.S.-Soviet Relations. I found the analysis and comments very useful. As the project proceeds, I would welcome continuing assessments.

Congratulations on such a successful conference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy Carter".

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