

RECORD OF THE MAIN CONTENT OF  
A.A. GROMYKO'S CONVERSATION WITH  
THE US PRESIDENT J. CARTER

September 23, 1977, Washington

J. CARTER. I am very happy to greet you here in the White House. It is an honor to meet you.

A.A. GROMYKO. I am very happy to meet you, Mr. President, and to discuss the questions which are of interest to both sides.

I want to use this opportunity to tell you that L.I. Brezhnev and the Soviet leadership send their greetings and best wishes to you.

J. CARTER. Thank you and upon your return home please give my warmest and most sincere regards and best wishes to L.I. Brezhnev.

At this meeting I would like to set forth in a general form my personal views on the questions of mutual relations between the USA and the Soviet Union. Then, you, if you like, could respond to my general statements, and after that we could discuss some concrete questions in more detail.

A.A. GROMYKO. I agree with such a procedure of our conversation.

J. CARTER. I would like to say right away that as President I attach special significance to good relations with the Soviet Union. I believe that friendly relations and close cooperation between the USA and the Soviet Union are of utmost importance and I will do everything necessary in order to guarantee the steady development of good mutual relations between our two countries.

Certainly, because of the differences between our social systems there will inevitably be competition between our countries. I do not think, however, that this is an unhealthy situation and I believe that we can conduct this competition to our mutual benefit in the spirit of respect for each other.

Like the Soviet Union, our country will support its own defenses on the high level necessary to guarantee the preservation of peace. I am sure that this will not prevent us from developing our mutual relations.

The USA has a highly developed technology. We have powerful economic potential, produce many food items, conduct large scale trade with other countries.

The Soviet Union has its own strong qualities and it too has an ability to offer many benefits to the international community.

question.

We also are interested in achieving a settlement in the Middle East. Vance reported to me that judging from his conversation with you, the Soviet position on this question is close to ours. In the past the Soviet Union was close to the Arab states and the USA was close, mainly, to Israel. But even today we are interested in the preservation of peace in the Middle East, in guaranteeing the independence of Israel by peaceful methods. Over the last several years we won the respect and trust of a number of Arab countries. We are trying to conduct a just and even handed policy in this region and we hope that together with you we will be able to further a peaceful settlement. Sometimes the Soviet Union's approach to the problems of the Middle East, in our view, was not constructive enough. I only state the fact, however. I am not complaining.

We intend to keep you informed on the development of the situation in the Middle East, on the position of those countries with whom we have regular contact. And I hope that you too will keep us informed, in particular about the PLO position.

Another region that worries us is Korea. We hope that the South and North Korea will live in peace with each other. The USA intends to withdraw its troops from the South Korea in 4 - 5 year period. However, we have to do something so that South Korea will be able to provide for its own defence.

The introduction by North Korea of the 50-mile zone of the sea borders concerns us. We hope that the Soviet Union will be able to persuade the North Korea to exercise the required restraint in order to prevent unnecessary aggravation in this region.

A few words about relations between the USA and China. We are striving to normalize our relations with China not for the purpose of creating a kind of alliance with it against the Soviet Union but for strengthening peace, developing trade and other relations with that country. We hope that the problem of mutual relations between PRC and Taiwan will be resolved by peaceful means. But we do not want to abrogate our obligation to guarantee the peaceful life of Taiwan.

In the past few years we witnessed the improvement of the Soviet Union's relations with some Western European countries which are our allies. We too would like to improve our relations with the Warsaw Pact nations. Our alliance with our friends in Western Europe is solid, like your alliance with your friends. And we hope that this situation will last.

We conduct the negotiations with you on a number of questions of arms limitation. We would like to reach an agreement on demilitarization of the Indian ocean in the future. We also are counting on an agreement on the ban of chemical weapons. We would like to reach an agreement on advance notification of missile launch tests in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. We hope that these and other negotiations which we conduct with you will be successful.

We hope to achieve an agreement on banning hostile actions against alien satellites. We know about the Soviet program of the creation of the means intended for fighting the satellites of other countries. We also could develop such a program, but we would like to ban such actions. Both

USA that I will sincerely strive to overcome all existing disagreements between us. I hope that in the course of a few months we will be able to achieve such progress in our mutual relations, which would justify the meeting between myself and L.I. Brezhnev. I would very much like him to visit the USA where we would be able to discuss with him for two- three days here, in Washington, or, even better, in Camp David, all the questions which interest both of us.

Before that, however, I would like us together to have made such progress in solving the problems of particular importance to us, that would demonstrate to the whole world our mutual aspiration to consistently improve our relations. I spoke about it publicly and I use this opportunity to express my appreciation to L.I. Brezhnev for his public reaction to my speech in Charleston.

The American people sincerely strives for cooperation and friendship with the Soviet Union. I hope that I, as the political leader of our country and L.I. Brezhnev as the political leader of the Soviet Union will not create obstacles on the path which our peoples so sincerely strive to follow. And I hope that our meeting today will be useful and constructive in this respect.

A.A. GROMYKO. I attentively listened to your statement in which a whole specter of question between our countries has been touched upon. On my part I would like to express my opinion on the questions you have touched upon and maybe on some others.

First of all, I would like to emphasize that all Soviet leadership, L.I. Brezhnev personally, and all our people sincerely aspire to maintain good friendly relations with the USA, not just normal business relations but precisely good friendly ones. I think, you, yourself, made such a conclusion from L.I. Brezhnev's speeches, in particular after your speech in Charleston.

Incidentally, I would like to linger a bit on some of your speeches, bearing in mind the importance of this question. You made some statements where you touched upon mutual relations with the Soviet Union. In some of these speeches you emphasized the importance of mutual understanding and cooperation with the Soviet Union. In some others you just mentioned the Soviet Union without definite statements. And yet in some others you criticized the Soviet Union, in your own way, but I repeat, criticized it. Sometimes you did it indirectly but it was not difficult to guess to whom you addressed these criticisms, whom you had in mind.

And so we ponder which of these statements reflect your true policy as the President of the USA, the policy of the USA as a state. We would like to think that it is those statements, in which the need of cooperation was emphasized, the necessity of maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union for the interests of both of our countries, for the interests of the whole world.

But this is our desire too, however only you can interpret your own statements. And that is why we would like you to do it now. I would like to bring to Moscow a definite answer on the question of how you, yourself, imagine the prospects for development of relations with the Soviet Union.

There is hardly a need for a lengthy discussion about the significance of these relations for the peoples of our countries as well as for the whole world. It is self-evident that these relations

never allow others to interfere in our affairs.

You mentioned someone called Sharansky. Nobody knows him at all except, may be, doctors and some representatives of authorities who oversee the order in our country. Such questions have an infinitesimal significance. Certainly, you, Mr. President, have a right to act as you believe is needed, but speaking impartially such position of yours on this question can only harm the climate of our relations. Besides, we think that the gain you get, acting in a such a way, is enormously disproportionate to your political loss.

You touched upon the so called Jewish question. The Soviet Union during the war saved millions of Jews. These are known facts. This is an open book. Right after the war we together, or to be more precise, at the same time as the USA we introduced in the UN the proposal on the creation of an independent Jewish state. Since then we always supported the right of Israel to independent state existence. We are trying to convince the Arabs, including the most extremist groups, to recognize Israel as an independent state, i.e. to recognize the reality. But at the same time we are blamed that we act wrongly in regard to Jewish question. In general, the question of emigration from the Soviet Union of any nationality, whether the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Armenians, the Georgians, the Jews or others, is our domestic problem, which is to be resolved in accordance with the laws of our country. If you use the facts then you probably know that dozens of thousands of Jews have left the Soviet Union over the past several years.

With satisfaction I have heard your words that you expect positive results from the Belgrade Conference, the results in the spirit of the Helsinki agreement. It would be good if Belgrade would become a constructive forum instead of a place of mutual accusations, some kind of a box of complaints. The Soviet Union is ready to play in Belgrade its own constructive role and hopes that other participants will do the same.

Now, about the situation in the South of Africa. Our policy for this region is simple. We do not have any military bases, and no military personnel in this region. If one feels the influence of our ideology there then who in the world can build the barriers against the dissemination of any ideology? The only thing we want there is that all the problems should be solved by the majority of population, by the peoples themselves. The majority of population there are Blacks, so the power belongs to them, not to the White racists. We are against any delays in the transition of power. Such is, in short, our position in regard to Namibia, Zimbabwe, the South Africa. Incidentally, to the question of the SAR I will come back in connection with the problem of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Now about Angola. We hailed the birth of this new independent African state. Not so long ago we met A. Neto in Moscow, on the highest level, with the participation of L.I. Brezhnev. We did not find that Angola took a hostile position in regard to the USA. As for the Cuban troops in Angola, it is the business of Angola and Cuba and I am not authorized to discuss this question. It would be right, however, to ask in this regard: whose personnel supports the anti-Angolan movement, the troops that are based in Zaire and invade Angola? Whose foreign troops acted in Angola even before arrival there of the Cuban troops. The answers to these questions are clear.

become known and the appropriate consequences would follow, including those in the area of the US-Soviet relations. We would like to hope that the USA does not intend to play the Chinese card against the Soviet Union. In the past under other American administrations we have been assured many times that the USA does not have such intentions. We will see what the reality turn out to be.

Presently relations between China and the USA are normal and, possibly, even friendly whereas our relations with China are tense. We do not object to the existence of normal relations between China and the USA. But be on guard so that they do not pull you into games dirty and dangerous for our both countries. We too once had good relations with China. If the Chinese would be able to embroil the USA with the Soviet Union they would gladly use it for their own advantage. Would this be good for the USA? We do not have a crystal ball so that we could see the future, however, the history teaches historians a lot. It have taught us, in any case, and the USA, too, should have already learned.

You have mentioned the Indian ocean. Certainly it would have been very good if an agreement would be reached between us on this question. Objectively, there are grounds for this. But it so evident that you stubbornly cling to one rock in the Indian ocean which is called Diego Garcia. In our view the USA has no real need for this, but at the same time this is being done with the intention of stepping on our toes. This is being done against the interests of our security. The American side should see this problem in a broader context. On our part we are ready to continue the exchange of opinions on this question that has already begun.

We conduct negotiations with the USA on a range of other questions, including the arms limitations at the expert level, working groups. We are ready to continue these negotiations and would like to believe that they reach positive results.

About the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Our interests in this issue are essentially identical. We both should expect a great danger if this problem will not be effectively resolved. This is a fact that the SAR step by step is moving forward to the creation of its own nuclear weapon. There are also other states who are close to the creation of nuclear weapons. It would be good if the USA and the Soviet Union would work more vigorously in the direction of reliable prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation. We are ready for it.

You touched in general upon the question of arms sales to other countries. This question is certainly connected to the general climate that exists in the world, to the existence of hotbeds of tension. If the conditions for stopping the arms sales had been created, we would have been ready to make an appropriate agreement. We stated it many times. But first the hotbeds should be removed. One of these hotbeds is the Middle East.

I think that it was not accidental that you lingered on the question of stopping the nuclear tests. We would like to hope that the Soviet-American agreement on some partial steps in this sphere, which have been concluded between us and which are being considered by the US Congress, will be ratified as soon as possible. And we hope that the negotiations, that are being conducted between us on the broad treaty will have also be successfully concluded.

Now we again decided to meet the USA half-way in order to reach the agreement. Secretary Vance, probably, has already informed you. We are talking, in part, about the total number of land-based ICBM equipped with MIRV. Yesterday during my conversation with Vance I announced that we would be ready to limit the number of such missiles to 820 units under the condition that in the agreement a our proposed limitation would be stipulated for the missiles "air-land" class. I would like to get a definite reaction of the American side to our proposal before my departure from the USA.

Now, there is another thing. We would like you, here, in the USA, to stop scaring the people by the statements about an ability of making the first strike at America by the Soviet Union. Why is it being done? As we understand it, it is being done only to excite the atmosphere so that one could easily build up the military budget of the USA.

What first strike you are talking about? We are not going to make a first strike at anybody. Moreover, together with the other states of the Warsaw Pact we proposed to all countries signatory of the Final Act on Security and Cooperation in Europe to sign an agreement on the non-first-use of nuclear weapon against each other. So stop scaring the American people by this nonexistent Soviet threat. The Soviet Union did not have, does not have, and will not have such an intent.

And now I would like to read what L.I. Brezhnev, whom I met before my departure to the USA, asked me to tell you in person. Besides the greetings I extended to you in the beginning of our conversation, he asked me to tell you the following: "I and the whole Soviet people are struggling for peace and struggling for it conscientiously. But I am firmly convinced as well as all our leadership that this issue must be resolved not arithmetically but politically. We do not have any other alternative. No calculations will lead to anything good. I ask the President to think about it. Such an approach would only elevate the authority of our states. And the peoples of the world would take a sigh of relief".

Now a few words about your meeting with L.I. Brezhnev, which you have mentioned. L.I. Brezhnev, personally, and the Soviet leadership are not at all against such a meeting, in general. We believe that such a meeting would be an important threshold if it had been thoroughly prepared and concluded with a major political outcome. The US, we think, should also be interested in this. In addition, a meeting would not be in anyone's interests if it were a meeting just for the sake of meeting, or if such a meeting would push our relationship backwards.

This seems to coincide with what you said.

J. CARTER: Let me shortly comment on your statements. My attitude toward the Soviet Union is consistent. On my part, there were no words of criticism as such toward the Soviet Union or Brezhnev personally. At the same time in the Soviet press there had been critical statements toward me personally. Recently such criticism significantly subsided, which I appreciate. The point is that such criticism gives concern to our people. And I hope that in the future there will be no more.

I would like to emphasize that I am deeply devoted to maintaining the constructive friendly

purposes. This research shows that the application of nuclear explosions for building canals or changing the flows of rivers is unadvisable.

Now on the problem of concluding a new agreement on strategic offensive weapons in more detail. We think - although we are aware that you do not recognize it - the Vladivostok agreement took place in a different situation from the one that has developed today. And at that time we thought about a different perspective. As we understand it the issue of cruise missiles was not mentioned in Vladivostok. I certainly understand why the current different interpretations arose. We do not intend to use for our advantage the fact that the question of the cruise missiles was not discussed in Vladivostok. And we do not want to use our current technological superiority in this regard. And in general, we do not want any advantages for ourselves in the area of strategic arms, since attempts to get such an advantage could upset the general balance and create disharmony.

In our country, however, even a unanimous agreement of the whole government is not enough for securing the ratification by the Congress of any signed agreement.

The Soviet side, apparently, does not give any significance to a question of its own heavy missiles, which are three times more destructive than any of our missiles. In this respect I am very worried by your statement that "there is no land behind the Volga" for you, i.e. that you are against any further discussion and concessions on the questions which interest us. I would like to hope that the Soviet side will display more flexibility.

The question of Soviet heavy missiles is a subject of concern for us as a question of our cruise missiles is a subject of concern for you. You said that you intend to strive for the achievement of the mutually acceptable agreement, however, my first impression is that the Soviet side does not display enough flexibility.

We already put forward many proposals directed to achieving an agreement, but the Soviet Union turned them down. We are ready, however, to show further flexibility - although there are limits to it - in the hope that the Soviet side will act the same way.

In the end, I hope, we will be able to totally eliminate nuclear weapons. If in the course of the third round of negotiations on the limitation of strategic arms we would be able to cut back the upper limits on this types of weapons by 50 per cent then we would be ready in the course of the following round to go even further, under the condition, of course, that China and France will start to build up their nuclear weapons on a large scale.

You said that you made concessions to us when you agreed on some decrease of the upper limit of the means of delivering the strategic nuclear weapons. But we do not see it as a concession to us. We would find ourselves in the same situation. It would have been a mutual step leading to a conclusion of a better agreement than the one which we talked about earlier. And still we have the issue of the Soviet heavy missiles.

You said that you made concessions to us on the question of counting ICBMs with MIRV but this too is not unilateral concession, because otherwise it would be needed to check every single

We agreed to cut back during the term of the agreement the overall level for the number of delivery vehicles of strategic nuclear weapons from 2,400 to 2,250. You mentioned the figure 2,160. What we have proposed is a compromise figure leaning toward the American side.

As for the land-based and submarine-based cruise missiles for some reason you speak not about a full ban but actually about permitting them to be tested on an air platforms. It attracted my attention even yesterday while listening to Mr. Vance's statements. It is clear that if a cruise missile intended for submarine or land basing, is tested on the air platform then it is possible to produce them by the hundreds and thousands, like pancakes.

There are also other questions to which I can draw the attention of the US Government. We will have another opportunity to talk about them with the State Secretary. However, those two questions which I have mentioned are the main obstacle to the agreement. These, I repeat, are the question of our heavy missiles and the issue of cruise missiles on heavy bombers. I would like to hear your opinion about how we can settle these issues.

(In order to exert pressure on Carter we specifically emphasized that if the American side wishes to stick to their previous unacceptable positions, then the concessions in other issues made by us to the USA become invalid.)

J. CARTER: I have spent many hours studying the history of the negotiations between the Soviet Union and the US on the question of strategic arms limitation, and analyzing the fundamental interest of the Soviet Union and the US in this area. We hope that you understand what and why is our concern.

On the basis of my understanding of what the main concerns of the Soviet Union are, we now are ready to leave aside the question of modern heavy Soviet ICBM. In other words, their number could reach 308 units as it was stipulated by the interim agreement.

We also are ready to agree on the sublevel of 820 ICBM equipped with MIRV (which also includes our heavy missiles).

We are ready to leave at the level established in Vladivostok the total level of carriers with MIRV in the amount of 1,320 units, including ICBM with MIRV, submarine-based ballistic missiles with MIRV, and also heavy bombers equipped with cruise missiles with a range exceeding 600 km.

We propose, however, that in the limits of this level (1,320 units) a sublevel of 1,200 units for ICBM and submarine-based ballistic missiles with MIRV would be established.

This combination almost fully agrees with the Soviet side's position except for the sublevel of ICBM and submarine-based ballistic missiles with MIRV (1,200 units).

Under such a settlement the difference of 120 units between the total number of carriers with MIRV (1,320 units) and the number of ICBM and submarine-based ballistic missiles with MIRV (1,200 units) could be used by both sides for heavy bombers equipped with "air- land" class



by the interim agreement.

A.A. GROMYKO: The solution to this question was found in Vladivostok. According to this solution the Soviet Union got the freedom to equip the heavy missiles with independently targetable warheads. The USA, in exchange, got the possibility not to stipulate in the agreement, that is now being developed, its concrete obligations for dismantling their mobile ground-based systems. That was the meaning of the solution of these two difficult questions which had long been an obstacle to an agreement. I did not talk about it before, believing that you know it very well. Now, I thought I should remind you how it had been done. But since then nothing has changed in regard to the American mobile ground-based systems. What has changed is only the US administration, but the situation with the mobile ground-based system is the same. So why anybody would ask us to change our position on the heavy missiles?

J. CARTER: May be you did not understand me correctly. We do not demand anymore that would change your position on the heavy missiles. We accept your position. I only said that this is the only aspect where there is some inequality to the Soviet Union's advantage. In the rest the obligations of both sides are identical: what is permitted to the Soviet Union is permitted to us. And only in the question on heavy missiles the Soviet Union has some advantages. I hope, however, that you do not take me for a fool who would put forward proposals damaging to the interests of the US.

The Soviet side wanted to preserve the upper limit of carriers with MIRV to 1,320 units. We agreed to it.

You proposed to include the heavy bombers equipped with cruise missiles in that upper limit. And we agreed.

However, this is not at all a sign of the US weakness. I think such solutions should satisfy your strategic and political needs and that they are in accordance with the Vladivostok agreement reached by my predecessor President Ford and L.I. Brezhnev.

You will be able in the last part of the day to continue the discussion of these questions with Vance. If further difficulties should arise I will be ready directly or via Vance to make every effort possible to resolve them. In general, I think that solutions proposed by us should satisfy all your wishes as well as to modestly satisfy our special interests.

A.A. GROMYKO: We will be ready to discuss in more detail all these questions with Vance.

Let me thank you for this conversation. I would like to emphasize once more that the Soviet side would like to achieve, in the end, the conclusion of a new agreement on limitation of strategic arms. This would be a great success, but it depends, of course, on both sides.