

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, W. AVERELL HARRIMAN AND  
PRESIDENT CARTER, THE WHITE HOUSE, JUNE 6, 1979

I saw the President this morning at 10:30 a. m. in the Oval Office. Zbig joined us. The President was most cordial and attentive to what I had to say.

I told the President that I had dealt with the Soviet leaders for over fifty years and probably saw Stalin more than anyone. I said I thought I was able to judge when they were saying what they really believed and when they were talking for effect. I had gained some opinions from these talks in which I was convinced I was right, and in some subjects I could perhaps make an informed guess. In others I would reserve judgment.

I told the President I thought I had seen Mr. Brezhnev more intimately than any of his advisors, as I had not represented the government and Brezhnev talked to me personally and, I believe, quite frankly. I did not always agree with his statements. I was convinced that Brezhnev and the President had deep mutual concern on two subjects--one, the desire to do everything possible to reduce the danger of nuclear war, and two, to avoid any confrontation between our two countries that might lead to war. Brezhnev had told me on more than one occasion that his great interest was to work for the rest of his life to prevent war on Soviet soil, particularly nuclear war. Tito had convinced me that the

present Soviet leadership was very defense-minded on preventing any invasion of Soviet territory so their people would never have to go through the agony that they did in World War II. Brezhnev was now ready to have serious discussions on MBFR. I felt it was particularly important to have a strong statement coming out of a Summit Meeting on SALT III, both in early timing and in serious intention for mutual reduction in nuclear weapons. The President told me that our Joint Chiefs of Staff were ready to support substantial reduction. I explained that I felt that our liberal friends in the Senate and in the country would be unhappy that we would not have ~~another~~ reduction in spending on nuclear arms--and in fact an increase. If he could indicate agreement on a substantial reduction I thought it would be helpful in Senate support.

An agreement on an anti-satellite treaty would be helpful, but I had been told that it was unfortunately technically not ready.

Trade would be one of the most important subjects for Brezhnev. Realizing the difficulties, I said I hoped he will find a way to talk about immigration at an early meeting and then later, without referring to immigration, discuss the Jackson amendment waiver. The President indicated they had been unreceptive. I said I knew that, but some of my friends with the business group US/USSR Trade & Economic Council were hopeful that the above procedure might work.

I told the President that he had had great success with Tito in establishing<sup>a</sup> warm relationship--and also with Ceausescu. I told him I

thought Brezhnev hoped to be able to achieve a personal mutual understanding as a result of the meeting. I mentioned Kosygin's statement to Forrestal that a cooperative policy between the United States and the USSR on political and economic questions had been approved by not only the Politburo but the Supreme Soviet and other policy agencies. I thought this was possible, as it shows Brezhnev would have support from his associates.

I told the President that in my hour-and-a-half talk with Brezhnev in December I found his mind clear, alert, and the discussion completely coherent. On the other hand, Brezhnev did not seem as well as he had the last time I had seen him, and I thought he no longer had the energy to dominate his colleagues as he had in the past.

I said the Soviets have, as he knows, a spectrum of hardliners to reasonable people on policy towards the United States. This was true even in Stalin's day. I found that Stalin sometimes changed his position after talking with his associates. The people I call reasonable are the ones who want to use their resources to develop the country for the benefit of the Russian people rather than for international adventure. The hardliners are the ones who are militarily suspicious or are still strongly imbued with the cause of expanding communism in the world.

I suggested that the President might want to have a good talk with Brezhnev on nonproliferation, and I thought Brezhnev would be receptive to the President's own strong views.

I said I had occasion to speak of his views in public recently. As he had made his position so clear to me, I thought he would be interested in the reaction in Kansas City to my statements at the Truman Library. I showed the President a copy of the Independence Examiner--marking particularly the sentence in which they quoted my praising the President. He seemed greatly interested and said: "even in Kansas City, particularly important." He asked if he could keep the newspaper, which of course I agreed to.

I had a chance to tell him that I had heard from some of my business friends that Zbig was making a good impression in his speeches on SALT.

At one moment I had a chance to tell him that I hoped he would avoid conflict--that we had irreconcilable differences on one subject.

They believe their "support for liberation movements" is justifiable as our support for democratic non-communist regimes. I had said this in San Francisco in 1945, and had been considered by some as a warmonger. But it was considered a reality there was no use discussing

I also told him that I hoped he would be able to explain to Brezhnev his problems with the Senate. Brezhnev thought it was entirely people who wanted to maintain superiority and did not want to accept equivalence. I thought this might stand him in good stead if we get in trouble with the Senate on unsatisfactory amendments. I told him I was delighted to

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hear him say that even if the Senate goes against the treaty, he would still try to carry out the treaty, although I didn't know if that was wise to repeat that again in the United States as I thought people should realize the real disastrous danger that would happen with the collapse of our relations as a result of the treaty failure. I believe that the Senate would eventually pass the treaty after a full debate on the advantages. But an understanding by Brezhnev of the situation might well stand him in good stead if he had difficulties.

I told him that the Soviets were very much upset by our failure to carry out our October 1977 agreement on the Middle East. I was satisfied that Brezhnev felt it was to their interest to have a settlement in the Middle East but disagreed with us on the method. He might want to discuss this with Brezhnev and leave with him a feeling that he agreed on objectives even though he disagreed on method. I mentioned my Ben Gurion story about no settlement possible without cooperation between the US and the USSR. I agreed with it, for obvious reasons. He said Sadat was not keen about the Soviets, and I said laughingly that of course that was mutual. I don't believe the Russians had ever been treated similarly as when they got thrown out.

Throughout the discussion the President took notes, seemed interested, and thanked me. He said he had enjoyed and learned from our discussion. The talk was about a half hour, or perhaps a little bit over, and we covered a lot of ground.

Add to Memorandum of Conversation, W. Averell Harriman and President Carter  
The White House, June 6, 1979

I spoke to Zbig on the telephone the day before they left for the summit. (He had agreed to stop by N Street but couldn't make it.) I told him that I had neglected to mention to the President that Breznev was not as well informed on military details as the President was, as there are no inter-departmental committees and no NSC in the Soviet government to check and report on information. The Soviet Defense Department reports directly to the Politburo and frequently Brezhnev parrots what he hears. I said I hoped the President would not take Brezhnev's statements about military matters too seriously. If he disagreed, of course, he would have to say so, but he should suggest that the two ministers of defense--Brezhnev's and Secretary Brown--might get together and get at the facts rather than getting into an acrimonious argument which would be profitless.

## NOTES FOR MY TALK WITH THE PRESIDENT:

1. It is a habit for Brezhnev to make a statement, either first or second. When he starts reading the statement, it is better not to interrupt him. Let him finish what he is reading but make mental or physical notes on what you want to comment on when he is finished. Sometimes he ad libs additions to his statement.
2. I hope there will be a strong statement supporting SALT III promptly and effectively -- hopefully to prevent the necessity for the extraordinary expense of making MX mobile.