

April 9, 1968

**Excerpts from Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev's speech at
the April 1968 Plenum of the Central Committee of
the Soviet Communist Party**

Citation:

"Excerpts from Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev's speech at the April 1968 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party", April 9, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI: fond 2, opis 3, delo 95, listy 35-44. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/177818>

Summary:

Brezhnev discusses negotiations with the United States over the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

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[...] Comrades, another question that was discussed at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee was the question of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. This is a problem of great principled importance, which has currently become one of main fronts of our struggle on the international stage.

We see the conclusion of the non-proliferation treaty as a means of barring West Germany access to nuclear weapons.

To stop further proliferation of nuclear weapons means also to eliminate the possibility of creation of such weapons by other states. The fact is that not just West Germany but also Japan, Israel, Italy, Canada, the South African Republic, India, Sweden, Brazil and a range of other countries have or almost have the scientific-technical and industrial wherewithal to begin the production of nuclear weapons.

New capitalist countries joining the nuclear arms race could mean that the nuclear potential of the capitalist camp would probably grow faster for 10-15 years than the relevant potential of the member states of the Warsaw Pact. Understandably, this is not in our interest^[1] would^[2] amount to a great danger for the task of peace.^[3]

Negotiations with the Western powers on the question of non-proliferation faced many difficulties. For a long time the US, supported by some of their NATO allies, essentially blocked all progress in negotiations in the Eighteen Nation Committee. We had to apply active diplomatic pressure on the US. A useful role in this was played by the 21st session of the UN General Assembly. There, on our initiative, a resolution was adopted that no state take any steps, which would obstruct the quickest conclusion of the negotiations on non-proliferation. On the basis of this UN decision we managed to unite a wide front of states, including some capitalist countries, against the obstructionist tactics of the FRG, supported by the US.

The United States were compelled to make a series of significant concessions.

For example, we managed to obtain US agreement to include in the treaty a provision, which would prohibit all types of proliferation of nuclear weapons, all - direct or indirect - forms of transferring these weapons to anyone, as well as the transfer of control over such weapons. Those states that do not currently have nuclear weapons are prohibited from creating them. And this means that neither specific states not groups of states, i.e. military blocs, cannot come in the possession of these weapons. This in essence confirms the abandonment of the plans of creating multilateral or any other nuclear forces on the part of NATO, which, as you know, is something we struggled towards for a number of years.

The United States were compelled in the end to give in on such a significant question as treaty compliance verification. This is the question with regard to which the FRG government put the US under strong pressure in the sense of not placing nuclear reactors in West Germany under international control but keeping them under the control of Euratom, i.e. the organization of six Western European countries, where West Germany itself is playing the leading role.

On our insistence, the draft of the treaty includes a provision, which extends the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency over all countries that have signed the treaty. The ways and forms of this control have been developed by qualified experts with the participation of scientists from the Soviet Union and other socialist

countries. What is especially important is that inspectors-controllers include representatives of socialist states.

Analysing the correlation of forces surrounding the draft treaty, we come to a conclusion that there are possibilities for bringing the matter to an end, although one still has to overcome a series of obstacles on the way.

Other than the Soviet Union, the United States of America and England, among the nuclear powers, are prepared to sign the treaty. France will probably not sign the treaty but it supports the idea of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and assures us that it will not do anything that will obstruct the conclusion of the treaty or facilitate the proliferation of such weapons.

The fifth nuclear power - China - has taken a negative position. Mao Zedong's group is conducting a vicious campaign against the draft treaty. Such a position is derived from the general policy of Mao Zedong's group. It is clear that the PRC will not join the treaty. One has to take this into account. But if those countries, to which the Chinese could transfer nuclear weapons, become participants of the treaty, then this, too, will solve the problem, so to speak, from the other side.

West Germany continues to act against the conclusion of the non-proliferation treaty. Bonn is adopting the tactic of procrastination, trying to undermine the treaty on the excuse that it is not perfect and has to be improved.

Of course, we are adopting the necessary measures against the FRG government. We also have the assurance from the US government that the FRG will sign the treaty. We based [\[4\]](#) ourselves on this assumption when negotiating the draft. If it suddenly turned out that the West German government has no intention of signing the treaty, we'd have to review our attitude to this whole question.

Now the opponents of the treaty in the FRG are bidding on some wavering states from among those that are close to creating their own nuclear weapons. Let's take Brazil, for example. It is run by a military dictatorship, whose leaders do not hide their plans of turning Brazil into a nuclear power. Israel, the South African Republic, [and] Japan also show no enthusiasm with regard to the conclusion of the treaty.

There is a struggle around the question of non-proliferation in the Indian ruling circles. There are forces that state that India should create its own nuclear weapons. One cannot help but admit that the policy of Mao Zedong's group with regard to India helps these circles in putting pressure on Indira Gandhi and on other adherents of the non-proliferation treaty.

Comrades! In the course of preparing the non-proliferation treaty we worked in close contact with the socialist countries (members of the Warsaw Pact), developed a common position and implemented it both at the UN and in the Eighteen Nation Committee. All participants of the Warsaw Pact except for Romania unanimously support the prepared treaty draft and consider that it should be signed as soon as possible. This opinion was once again confirmed at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Sofia and enshrined in the appropriate statement of the six states. Romania has a special position; allow me to dwell on this question.

When the treaty has been basically agreed upon in the Eighteen Nation Committee, the Romanians proposed a number of amendments, which, according to their statements, are supposedly aimed at improving the treaty.

In particular, they proposed to include in the treaty the demand that the nuclear

powers participating in the treaty undertake to cease the production of nuclear weapons, to destroy their stockpiles and the means of delivery. In other words, the Romanians demand to link the question of nuclear non-proliferation with complete nuclear disarmament. But if we connected these two questions with the general question of nuclear disarmament, then of course^[5] we'd now have neither this nor the other treaty.

If the Romanian amendment were accepted, the non-proliferation treaty would not be concluded in the foreseeable future. Who will win from this? First and foremost, the West German revanchists and the neo-Nazis. The nuclear arms race will intensify, and there will be new capitalist states in possession of atomic and hydrogen bombs.

The Romanians proposed to include in the treaty a commitment by the nuclear powers not to ever, under any circumstances, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the non-nuclear participating states.

At first sight, what's wrong with that? But let's consider the nature of this amendment^[6] in its essence. Notice, comrades, that it entails a commitment not to use nuclear weapons with regard to all non-nuclear states, i.e. including those, whose territory hosts nuclear weapons of other states. This means that the Soviet Union would be committed not to use nuclear weapons, for instance, against West Germany, whose territory hosts the main nuclear arsenal, which Americans have in Europe. We could be attacked from the FRG's territory and we - if the Romanian amendment were accepted - would not be able to carry out a retaliatory nuclear^[7] strike.

Understandably, the Warsaw Pact countries cannot agree to this. The Romanian delegation was told about this directly by all the other participants of the meeting in Sofia.

We proposed a different solution to this question. That is: simultaneously with the conclusion of the non-proliferation treaty the Security Council passes a resolution, which clearly states that aggression with the use of nuclear weapons or the threat of such aggression will create a situation whereby the Security Council and, first and foremost, its permanent members, who are in possession of nuclear weapons, will have to immediately act in accordance with their duties under the UN Charter. In other words, the aggressor will not remain unpunished if he carries out a nuclear strike on non-nuclear countries, which had signed the non-proliferation treaty.

It is not necessary here to dwell on other Romanian amendments. It is enough to say that they are in the final account directed at sabotaging the conclusion of the treaty on nuclear non-proliferation. Characteristically, the Romanian amendments are remarkably close in their content to the "amendments" currently being proposed by Bonn. This in itself is a judgment on the Romanian position. We frankly told the Romanian comrades about all of this.

At the Sofia meeting all delegations called upon the Romanians to put forward a coordinated position and to complete the task of concluding the treaty in the nearest future. However, the Romanian comrades refused to coordinate their actions and immediately introduced their amendments to the Eighteen Nations Committee.

A situation arose where the Romanian actions threatened to ruin any solution. This would mean that the countries of the Warsaw Pact cannot jointly define a position even on such an important question as nuclear non-proliferation. This could not be allowed. Therefore, after detailed discussion of the situation with all but the Romanian delegation, the following agreement was reached:

First. The general communique of the PCC meeting should calmly say that there was

a discussion of an important political question concerning nuclear non-proliferation, and the participants expressed their views. One could obtain the Romanian delegation's signature under such a text.

Second. Taking into consideration the Romanians' statement that they would put forward their special position to the Eighteen National Committee in Geneva, it was necessary for all other PCC participants - the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia - to make a joint statement and clearly express their common opinion on this question, to stress the importance of its speediest resolution and the full support of the treaty draft proposed by the Soviet Union.

This was how it was done. This eliminated the excuse for our enemies to talk about the "failure" of the PCC meeting and at the same time clearly showed the isolation of the Romanians with their special position on the question of non-proliferation.

As for the positions of the socialist states that are not parties to the Warsaw Pact, judging by everything, the non-proliferation treaty will currently not be signed for different reasons by the DRV, DPRK, and Cuba.

We carefully weighed all these circumstances at the Politburo before making the decision on our position and came to the conclusion that, despite the aforementioned difficulties, the conclusion of the treaty will give great advantages to socialist states and will help in strengthening universal peace.

At the moment the draft treaty has been submitted for consideration to the UN General Assembly, which will convene in the nearest future. Resistance of the treaty's opponents will probably increase at this stage even more. We, for our part, are taking measures in order to neutralize as much as possible the resistance to the treaty. Our ambassadors overseas have been given the relevant instructions. The most important countries were sent special representatives of the MFA [Foreign Ministry] of the USSR.

Our aim is to unite all forces that stand for nuclear non-proliferation. This has great significance for the future of the entire human kind. Indeed, what does it mean to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as the treaty foresees, for, say, a quarter of a century or even longer? This means to substantially reduce the possibility of imperialists starting wars, including nuclear [wars], and here we are talking about the period that will witness further fundamental changes in favour of socialism.

We hope that the CC [Central Committee] members will support the position adopted by the Politburo on this question.

[1] Crossed-out in the original.

[2] Added by hand in the original.

[3] Added by hand in the original.

[4] Crossed out in the original.

[5] Added by hand in the original.

[6] Added by hand in the original.

[7] Added by hand in the original.