

**March 6, 1968**

**Record of Conversation between L.I. Brezhnev and  
N. Ceausescu on 6 March 1968**

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**Summary:**

Brezhnev starts the conversation by asking if Ceausescu is in agreement about supporting the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Ceausescu responds by saying that the draft could still improve by including a guarantee that countries without nuclear weapons will not be attacked by nuclear states and clarifying controls over nuclear weapon production.

**Credits:**

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**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

CLASSIFIEDRECORD OF CONVERSATION

of Cdes. L.I. Brezhnev and A.N. Kosygin with Cdes. N. Ceaușescu and I.G. Maurer in Sofia<sup>[1]</sup>.

6 March, 1968

(15:00-16:00)

L.I. Brezhnev. What is going to be our course of action? Are we going to present a unified front or are we going to waste our time arguing over each point?

A.N. Kosygin. The way we choose to conduct our affairs [now] will determine the approach to all our work in the future.

L.I. Brezhnev. We just recently arrived and have not had an opportunity to meet with anyone. I did want to, but other comrades arrived late. However, all of us had preliminary consultations. We believe that at this time everyone approves the agreement which has been reached in respect to the draft non-proliferation treaty. We are not giving up on those objectives which you are naming in your [proposed] amendments, i.e. disarmament and other issues.

If you in principle believe that the nuclear non-proliferation treaty is beneficial for all socialist countries, then [we have] one approach. Then we have to develop a coordinated stance which will allow us to get the treaty signed.

If, however, you have a different approach, then this changes things. Then we are talking about different things.

Would it be possible at this time, since all of us apparently acknowledge that the treaty cannot be signed in any other form, to do it the following way: to take into account your proposals and make them a subject of a discussion at the next high-level PCC session? These proposals could become the basis for the discussion of the next stages of the struggle for nuclear disarmament, for the ban and liquidation of nuclear weapons. Based on these proposals we could come forward with a new initiative, and step by step achieve new successes in our common struggle.

N. Ceaușescu. I would like to provide a short answer to L.I. Brezhnev's question.

We have already stated that we believe the signing of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to be beneficial. We also proceed from the belief that the current draft is a step forward, and has an improved format compared to what it was a year ago in Geneva. However, there are a number of ways to improve the draft treaty without changing its substance and nature.

On the issue of disarmament. The new draft provides that this issue will be addressed at a later stage. We, on our part, want to more clearly formulate the issue of the disarmament and propose to convene a conference in 5 years and review what have been done in this area. We understand that the issue of disarmament is complex, and that it takes time to solve, but all we want is that discussions are held on this issue, that conversations take place. We want to convene in 5 years and see what have been done on this issue.

How we, the socialist countries, will act during these 5 years - we can agree on this later. We are not saying that the disarmament has to happen now, but only that this issue should be discussed again in 5 years. We do not want to predetermine ways and forms of solving this issue now, but we think that we can improve the provision of the treaty that deals with this important issue.

On the issue of guarantees, all we want is that the countries who choose not to have nuclear weapons, are guaranteed that they will not be attacked by nuclear states. I know that there was a thought expressed in Geneva to provide those guarantees through the Security Council. We are not raising issues here that cannot be solved. The only thing we are thinking about is to propose such language that can provide these guarantees in conjunction with the Security Council. If these guarantees are provided in the non-proliferation treaty, then they will have bigger weight. This being said, what we mean is that the United States are currently threatening to use nuclear weapons, and we would like the guarantees against the nuclear blackmail to be provided in the text of the treaty itself. All these issues do not turn the provisions of

the treaty upside down, but on the contrary, they make it stronger and add authority to it.

We have to try to put all these proposals [up for a vote]. Maybe they will not go through. However, we are not putting acceptance of our proposals as the condition of our joining the treaty. This does not mean that if they are not accepted, we will not sign the treaty. But we have to put these proposals forward.

On the issue of control. What we propose does not contradict the substance of existing provisions. All we propose is to clarify that the only object of control would be the activities connected with production of nuclear weapons. Our proposals do not prevent the control, and they are aimed at improving the draft treaty.

Recently we sent our representative to the U.S., and he met with Rusk. We told the Americans that we do not want to worsen the treaty, but to improve it keeping in mind the interests of socialist countries. We demanded improving the text of the current draft. If we do not succeed at getting it improved, then we will consider what is better - to have the treaty or not to have it. We do not see any reason to give up trying to improve the treaty. And we believe that it can be improved. It is possible that we are mistaken, but in this case please help us understand that we are really wrong. We believe that when we put forward a proposal to sign the treaty to our Central Committee and the Great National Assembly, and when doing so we tell them that we have made every effort to improve the draft treaty, we and other socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, we will then be able to say that as of today we have been able to succeed in getting the specific wording that we propose. If we do not have that belief, that we did everything possible, then it will be difficult for us to talk about this to our people. We are proposing our amendments because we want to sign this treaty and want to make this as good as possible. Otherwise we would not care at all.

If you look at our amendments, you will see that we are not insisting on our wording, but strive to achieve only one objective - to improve the text of the treaty.

It is not necessary to accept our wording word-for-word. Our proposals could be reworded as long as their spirit is preserved.

I.G. Maurer. We also mean another aspect of this. We understand that this issue should be resolved as soon as possible. We believe that the discussion of our proposal will not delay the reviewing of the draft. Our confidence that it is possible to improve the treaty comes for the fact that the current draft treaty [already] represents an improved version compared to the previous one, as well as from our conversations with the government officials of many countries. Let us strive to improve the treaty as much as possible.

N. Ceaușescu. Why give this opportunity to Sweden or some other country, instead of socialist countries? We are not insisting that these proposals are submitted as proposals of Romania. If we are able to agree, then we will not object if these proposals are submitted on behalf of the PCC. We want to be among the countries who will sign the treaty.

L.I. Brezhnev. Formally, it looks like what you are proposing should not warrant any objections. In principle, such suggestions are certainly correct. We ourselves have been fighting for the same provisions which you are speaking about. However, what would it mean now, at the final stage, when the Committee of the Eighteen is getting ready to submit the draft treaty for the consideration of the General Assembly, to submit the proposals which, as practice has shown, are impossible to get through now? Can we count on the acceptance of these proposals at the final stage? Most probably putting forward these proposals would mean disrupting the pending consensus with respect to the non-proliferation treaty. How else should one view submitting proposals which will definitely be rejected? What are we directing our efforts at?

So you, Cde. Ceaușescu are saying that, if your proposed amendments are not accepted, then you can put them aside at this stage. But one can see ahead of time that your proposals are not going to be accepted. After all, we cannot put forward some demands, do it in all seriousness, and then withdraw them. One should not make this into a joke: [first] say something and then take it back...

A.N. Kosygin. If we keep submitting proposals and then withdrawing them, then the

credibility of our proposals will be weakened.

L.I. Brezhnev. Yes, we cannot say something and then withdraw it. We fight for our positions in all seriousness, and we submit proposals that last more than a day. And if it so happened that we agreed with your amendments, then we would consider ourselves obligated to fight for them till the end. And this, in essence, would mean undermining the major work that has been conducted in the past two years. Who would thank us for this? I suppose, West German militarists would be grateful to us. And all of our efforts, efforts of a number of socialist countries and the peace-loving forces from around the world, would be wasted. This is specifically what we cannot understand in your position with respect to the treaty.

The issue of guarantees to non-nuclear countries. We are all very well aware that there are no nuclear weapons on your territory and on the territories of a number of other non-nuclear states. However, there are such weapons, weapons of American origin, on the territory of Western Germany. If the issue of the use of nuclear weapons comes up, then, based on the logic of your proposals, the nuclear powers will not be able to deliver a [nuclear] blow to the territory of the FRG. How can we allow such an exception for a state known for its militaristic and revanchist tendencies? How can the Soviet Union and its allies agree to this? Of course not. And this is exactly where the substance of the issue is. You should not at all think that we are against the Romanian proposals because they were put forward by the Romanian comrades. We are guided by the substance of the issue.

We have discussed this issue many times at the Politburo. Our principled position is well known: we are for the disarmament, for the ban on nuclear weapons and for destroying its stockpiles under very strict international oversight. We will readily meet you halfway if you propose that socialist countries go to the U.N. with new proposals on this issue. We will be willing to support any initiative aimed at an actual disarmament and the suspension of nuclear weapons production.

We are well aware that obtaining nuclear weapons by Bonn is fraught with danger. Western Germany's policies represent a major threat to the peace and security in Europe, and that means to the whole world. No other European country wants to go to war at this time – neither France, nor Italy or any other capitalist country. This is not only our belief, everyone knows this. In our European policy we unwaveringly fight for strengthening peace and security in Europe, and the pointed end of this fight is naturally aimed at the West German revanchism. You yourself know perfectly well what type of policy the FRG pursues, how and why the remilitarization of Western Germany is going at such a fast pace, and what the framework of the military alliance between the FRG and the USA is. Therefore you cannot not see the meaning of our fight for signing the non-proliferation treaty.

We are communists, and we are strong in our unity. We have to present a united front in our efforts to see to the end the cause which we have been fighting for together in the recent years both at the U.N., and in the Committee of the Eighteen. The draft nuclear non-proliferation treaty has been developed through unrelenting struggle against the opponents of this cause. When reconciling the [proposals for] the current draft, we were regularly consulting with other socialist countries, including with you as our friend and ally.

It would be good if the current PCC session became a demonstration of the unity of the Warsaw Pact countries, and of our joint support of the draft nuclear non-proliferation treaty. We could right now, at the PCC, agree on continuing our joint activity, our efforts for disarmament, and for reduction of nuclear weapons' production and their banning. For example, we could issue a directive to our ministries of foreign affairs to prepare in the next 4-5 months a broad program of efforts related to these issues, including of work directed at assembling a Europe-wide conference of heads of states to discuss issues of European security, etc. Let the PCC, the Warsaw Treaty Organization, become the initiator of the new, important proposals. We could put on the record at the current session that the ministers of defense and the ministers of foreign affairs of the Warsaw Pact countries are tasked with collectively developing proposals related to our joint actions both at the General Assembly and at the U.N. Security Council. Unanimous, coordinated decisions by the PCC on these issues will strengthen the prestige and the standing of

the Warsaw Pact.

We are ready to continue the efforts, ready to continue the pressure on the U.S. and the FRG, but at the same time we understand that in order to achieve actual results we need time, we need to continue mobilizing the world public opinion, and to rally the peace-loving forces around the world.

If now, at the final stage of developing the treaty, we start putting forward unsustainable proposals, not only will we not achieve the improvement of the draft, but we will disrupt the signing of the treaty altogether. Instead of demonstrating our solidarity and unity, there will be an unpleasant argument at the high level in the PCC, which will in no way serve the interests of our common cause.

A.N. Kosygin. The issue of non-proliferation was put on the agenda at your initiative. It seems that when you put forward this proposal, it was not your intention to kill the whole issue. All member-states of the Warsaw Pact agreed to discuss this issue based on the desire to work out coordinated solutions. Otherwise what would be the reason to put this issue up for discussion at the session?

According to your statements, in principle you want to sign the treaty, but you are putting forward your proposals to see whether they will be accepted. You are saying, let us try one more time. If they are accepted – good, if they are not accepted – you will sign the treaty in its current form. But then it makes one wonder: is it prudent to jeopardize the credibility of socialist countries by putting forward undoubtedly unsustainable proposals? Isn't it better to determine ahead of time, what can be accepted and what cannot?

As far as we understand, our viewpoints are identical on the key issues of the treaty. The question then becomes what tactic to employ, what is the best way to ensure the signing of the treaty? We believe that at this time the maximum possible outcome has been achieved, and that the support of the proposed draft by the socialist countries will promote the credibility of all socialist countries. A major work has been conducted, as a result of which the draft treaty acquired its current form. The work was conducted not only by the Soviet Union, but also by Romania and by other socialist countries. Do we really want to back down on the key issues and give up on the results of this work by sowing discord at the PCC session?

The world is currently divided into two parts: into the forces of war and the forces of peace. The forces of war are represented by the militarist circles in the U.S., the FRG and in other imperialist countries. These forces want to sabotage the signing of the treaty. The forces of peace headed by the socialist countries are doing everything possible to have this treaty signed. Those who oppose this treaty, with or without meaning to, close ranks with the forces of war. Sometimes, even if one is driven by good intentions, one can find himself in a company that does not share his values. If we cannot reach an agreement at the PCC [session], whose hands will this play right into – the forces of peace or the forces of war?

We do not have a difference of opinions with you regarding the continuing struggle for peace, disarmament, and banning of nuclear weapons. So let us determine what currently the pressing issue is, and what can be done moving forward, and task our foreign ministers and ministers of defense, as Leonid Ilyich suggested, with preparing specific proposals on these issues for their discussion at the PCC in six months. The banner of peace and security of nations will still remain in our hands, and we will be holding this banner firmly [in our hands] supported by the unity of all countries-members of the Warsaw Pact.

There is only one alternative to this. You do not agree, but others agree. If we differ in our opinions, and there is no unanimity between us, this will only make the Nazis in Germany and the extremists in the U.S. happy.

You are not taking into account the fact that there are tremendous forces in the U.S. who oppose the treaty. One can say that this treaty is hanging by a hair there, because the government is being pressured by the forces who are trying to aggravate the situation and cause a war.

On the other hand, if we have a productive meeting, and agree on the support of the current draft treaty, then it will be beneficial for the forces of peace and progress.

We cannot stop, even for a second, fighting for peace and for strengthening security. If the non-proliferation treaty is signed, it will mean one more step forward in our

struggle. We have to find a common ground on this important issue, and this is exactly the reason we are appealing to you.

N. Ceausescu. Please understand that we are driven by the desire to accomplish a treaty which will most closely correspond to the interests of all socialist countries, and serve the cause of disarmament.

The article about the disarmament should be edited better so that it contains the provision about calling a conference in 5 years. At this conference [the participants] will review what was done in this respect. This time can be used for developing a solution for the disarmament issue. This is exactly what we want. We are not demanding that all of these issues are resolved within this timeframe. But such an obligation would become a weapon in the future struggle for the abolishing of nuclear weapons. We have to find the wording that would help this.

As to the oversight over the nuclear powers, I understand that you might have objections. However, we must find a formula that would satisfy everyone. [This way] the world public will support you to a greater extent, and we will succeed in getting this issue the attention it deserves. You are saying that at this time it is difficult for the PCC. But we are not suggesting that this proposal is approved as a resolution of the PCC, since there are people here who are against it. But we have to fight for the solution of the issue of control.

A.N. Kosygin. You are calling on us to [join] the struggle, you are saying that we should fight. We have fought for a long time, and we know what struggle is. We do not need to be called upon to do this. We fight not in word but in deed, we do not use broad statements. But one has to understand that if one tightens the screw to the limit and then continues trying to tighten it even further, then one might strip the thread.

L.I. Brezhnev. It looks like we cannot agree. Everyone remains steadfast in their positions.

I.G. Maurer. We are convinced that what we are doing is beneficial. The efforts which Romania undertakes by introducing amendments, are not going to be futile and will not delay the signing of the agreement. Therefore we should try to improve the text of the treaty.

Note: Due to the start of the PCC session, the conversation was interrupted.

The conversation was written down by:

N. Rembiyevskiy

Ye. Samoteikin /signature/

[\[1\]](#) The participants of the meeting did not review the record of the conversation.