

July 28, 1979

Transcript, Meeting of East German leader Erich Honecker and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Crimea, 27 July 1979 (excerpt)

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Summary:

Brezhnev reports to Honecker on international affairs.

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Minutes of the Meeting between SED General Secretary E. Honecker and L. I. Brezhnev in the Crimea, 27 July 1979 (dated 28 July 1979)

Brezhnev:

[Welcoming remarks; comments on domestic situation, FRG-GDR relations]
And now on international questions.

We have comprehensively informed you on the results of the recent meeting with President Carter. I would like to emphasize that our politburo appreciates the support which the GDR and the other brother countries have given to the results of Vienna. I would put it this way - at the meeting in Vienna we accomplished the reestablishment of the direct dialogue between the USSR and the USA at the highest level. And even more - we managed to give a positive impulse to the entire complex of Soviet-American relations. All this is, of course, very important.

We did not have any illusions: there are quite a few dark moments in our relations with the USA. The negotiations were, frankly speaking, very difficult and this not only because of their intensity. The largest difficulties were connected with the nature of the questions with which we dealt, with the differences, yes, even with direct contrasts between our views.

As you know, it is not our habit to avoid difficult questions. The Middle East, Southeast Asia, the situation in Southern Africa, the relationship between the USA and China - on all these questions I explained our basic point of view. With great determination I conveyed to Carter our opinion on the wrong theses of American propaganda with respect to the "Soviet threat" as well as with respect to the "violation of human rights" in the Socialist countries. Carter's situation, as the recent rearrangement in Washington proved, is not easy. A bitter battle over the coming into force [ratification] of the SALT II-Treaty is now being waged. If the treaty failed in the Senate, this would be, I think, a political catastrophe for Carter. But it would also be an extremely severe blow to the international prestige of the USA.

You will of course understand that, by and large, the prospect of the failure of the treaty is not desirable for us. But even in such a case, we will probably not lose politically because then the entire world will recognize who is consistently seeking disarmament and who is working in the opposite direction. But we all should try - in the framework of our means - to make sure this important matter will have a different end.

And now to the European matters. Here obviously much depends on proceeding with our initiatives in the field of disarmament which we have taken at the meeting of the [Warsaw Pact] Political Consultative Committee in Moscow and later at the meeting of the Committee of Foreign Ministers in Budapest.

The reaction to our proposal has been a bit vague. The NATO countries seem to have acknowledged the positive direction of the efforts of the Warsaw Pact countries but an audible "yes" was not to be heard. It is good that currently the necessary link is being established at the level of foreign ministries between the European conference on military detente as proposed by us and the European meeting [of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)] in Madrid in 1980.

If our proposal on the conclusion of a treaty on the non-first use of nuclear weapons as well as other kinds of arms is accepted, it would, I must say, constitute a tremendous advantage for the cause of detente. By the way, I have also talked about this with Carter. We have proposed to him a declaration to the effect that both sides would forego the first use of either nuclear or conventional arms against the other side or its allies. Initially Carter declared that he would agree and said that one could

try to arrange for an agreeable formula. But later the Americans put on the reverse gear. But one has to understand that after all we wrestled six years over the conclusion of SALT II.

The Chinese problem still demands greatest attention.

The nature of Chinese foreign policy revealed itself in China's aggression against Vietnam. The Chinese are now negotiating with the Vietnamese comrades but they are conducting the negotiations in a way that it becomes obvious that they do not want a normalization of relations but Vietnam's capitulation. Moreover, there is a real danger of new Chinese provocations against Vietnam. One has to take that seriously. This obliges all of us, of course, not to weaken in the slightest manner our support and our help for the Vietnamese people as well as for the peoples of Laos and Cambodia. There are more than enough problems and extremely difficult problems. Let's take the "refugee" matter. The enemies of Vietnam have undertaken everything in order to make use of this problem to create a bad image of Vietnamese policy. To be sure, they did not manage to turn the Geneva conference into a trial of Vietnam. But obviously the matter cannot be put to rest. The Vietnamese friends are facing a great political and propagandistic job. We all have to support them in this task.

Now briefly on our imminent negotiations with the Chinese about which you have learned from the newspapers. One cannot expect quick progress in the Soviet-Chinese dialogue. The negotiations with China will require great patience, circumspection, and exact calculation of each of our steps.

That having been said, I think it is important for all of us not to relent in our opposition against China's policy which runs counter to the cause of peace and international security.

A few words on the Middle East. The fact that the question of prolonging the terms for the presence of UN special forces on the Sinai Peninsula does not appear any more on the agenda of the Security Council undoubtedly constitutes a success for our common line. Hence the attempts to bless Israel's separate agreement with Egypt directly with the authority of the UN failed. And that was exactly what Cairo, Tel Aviv and Washington persistently tried to achieve. But now the UN special troops have to be withdrawn.

With respect to international questions, Erich, I would like to briefly touch upon the situation in Africa.

Recently we have had quite active contacts with representatives of the progressive African states. To generalize these talks and the observations made by our comrades, and our CC comrades as well, the task of politically strengthening the independent African countries is still in the forefront. But the problem of our economic relations with these states is already posed in its fullest extent. It is important and valuable that we vigorously oppose colonialism and racism. But the task which we have to meet together has larger dimensions. It is necessary to involve the African countries to a larger degree in cooperation with us in the economic field. This will be of advantage to us as well as the Africans. Your trip through a number of African countries, Erich, proved very useful. We highly appreciate your efforts in support of the progressive forces in Africa.

[concluding remarks]

Honecker: [report on domestic Issues]