

July 25, 1978

Transcript, Meeting of East German leader Erich Honecker and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Crimea, 25 July 1978 (excerpt)

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Summary:

Brezhnev and Honecker discuss the tense status of Soviet-American relations and the current situations in China and Southeast Asia.

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REPORT ON THE MEETING
BETWEEN SED GENERAL
SECRETARY E. HONECKER AND
L. I. BREZHNEV IN THE CRIMEA,
25 JULY 1978

Brezhnev: [Welcoming remarks; report on domestic issues]

The defense of the country is important. The strengthening of the country's defensive capabilities still requires our continual attention. Unfortunately, it is not possible to reduce military expenses significantly for now. NATO, especially the USA, is heating up the arms race. We must take care of our security and the security of our allies. The production of modern weapons is a heavy burden on the economy. But we view the strengthening of our defenses as a national as well as an international duty.

Allow me, L.I. Brezhnev said, two words on the trials against Shcharansky and Ginzburg. As you know, in the West a true witch dance has been staged over these two traitors whose hostile activities were inspired by subversive imperialist centers. The matter went far beyond the importance of the miserable roles which these people actually played. Actually this was an attempt of reactionary circles to test our strength, and we have vigorously demonstrated that any attempts to intervene in our affairs, to blackmail us, and to drive the matter, under the pretext of protecting human rights, to the point of creating a legal opposition against the Socialist order, are doomed to fail. I think, he [Brezhnev] said, that this should teach them once and for all.

As always, we have many concerns with regard to international affairs. The situation in the world has not developed badly in the last one to two years. On the one hand important results have been achieved under the conditions of detente, on the other hand we are experiencing an open activation of imperialist forces in their attempts to roll back the position of socialism in the various regions.

Soviet-American relations illustrate this. Speaking frankly, Leonid Ilyich said, the state [of U.S.-Soviet relations] leaves a lot to be desired. Although Carter has moderated his tone after the decisive rebuff we gave him, for now there is no reason to assume that he is willing to eliminate the principal matter which has caused the turn for the worse in our relations. I am speaking above all of the arms race heightened by Washington which is at the same time delaying the negotiations on arms control, and the continuing campaign for the so-called "human rights."

At the center of attention at the meeting which recently took place between A. A. Gromyko and C. Vance were questions relating to a new agreement on the limitation of strategic arms, especially the question of new types of ballistic missiles. Should there be any [agreement on limitations] or not, and if so, to which [weapons] should they apply? The Americans tried this time again to handle the matter in a way that would assure them the possibility of developing missiles in which they have an interest without regard for our interests. We, by contrast, were willing to renounce on a mutual basis the creation of new intercontinental ballistic missiles for the entire term of the agreement. Since the Americans, however, still did not agree to this, they were asked directly whether they would agree to mutually acceptable solutions on all other questions on the basis of our proposals if we met them with regard to the question of new ballistic missiles.

Vance could not respond immediately and promised to do this later. But he said our position with regard to the solution of the remaining questions was indeed "very interesting." Carter in his press conference with [West German Chancellor Helmut] Schmidt later characterized the meeting between A. A. Gromyko and C. Vance as

"constructive and useful." For now it is, of course, difficult to say what the final American response will be. But it is clear that in any case we still are facing a battle.

On the whole one can say that a settlement in the relations between the USSR and the USA is not to be expected anytime soon. Carter is wavering and apparently is listening to the forces for which detente goes against the grain, although he seems to be aware that it is necessary to search for agreements with us on the cardinal question of war and peace.

Another tendency within the policy of the American administration has recently become more powerful. I am talking about their efforts to play the "Chinese card." The question now is not simply a normalization of relations between the USA and China, but actually attempts at a rapprochement on an anti-Soviet, anti-Socialist basis. This coincides with the efforts of the Chinese to use the "American card" in the fight against the USSR and the other countries of the Socialist community.

The other day we carefully analyzed the policy of the Chinese leadership in the C[entral] C[ommittee] and arrived at the conclusion that it is increasingly reactionary and aggressive in all directions. I am talking above all about the frank statements by Beijing in support of the plans of the revanchist circles in the FRG on the unity of Germany which de facto means the incorporation of the GDR.

No less telling are the public contacts by both sides with [Franz Joseph] Strauss, [Helmut] Kohl, and other rightist West German politicians.

Since it became an impediment to the implementation of their great power ambitions in Southeast Asia, Vietnam is now under massive pressure by the Chinese leadership. We are taking measures in order to support energetically our Vietnamese friends. These include various measures, among them military ones. It is good, Erich, he said, that during your visit to Hanoi the treaty of friendship and cooperation between the GDR and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam [SRV] was signed. I can tell you confidentially that [deleted] was recently with us, and besides other questions we also dealt with the possibility of a Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty.

In one word: we cannot desert Vietnam. It is our internationalist duty to strengthen and express our solidarity with this Socialist brother country and grant it comprehensive help, among other things via the COMECON [Council on Mutual Economic Assistance], an equal member of which the SRV has just become.

One of the main methods developed by Washington as well as Beijing is the differentiated approach to the Socialist countries as well as the attempts to drive a wedge between them and to bring them into confrontation with the Soviet Union. For this purpose they are actively taking advantage of the nationalistic deviations of such politicians as [Romanian leader Nicolae] Ceaucescu and make various promises. It is difficult to say something about his behavior. Basically he is a traitor. The devil knows what else he might possibly do. In this connection L. I. mentioned a saying by Stalin on the problem of treason. In one word: we, Erich, draw the conclusion that we have to stick together even more and coordinate even further in proceeding in the international arena. Our leadership is convinced, Erich, that the new course of the CC of the SED in international affairs, your actions in an effort to accomplish a common line of the Socialist community, are being implemented with continued vigor.

[Brezhnev then discussed questions related to bilateral USSR-GDR relations]

Honecker:[expressed agreement with Brezhnev on state of international affairs, bilateral relations]

Initialed: E [rich]H[onecker]