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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

VLADIVOSTOK SUMMIT

Q: Mr. President, how would you assess the results of your Vladivostok meetings with General Secretary Brezhnev?

A: My meeting with Mr. Brezhnev was a very helpful, very useful and constructive meeting -- the talks went well.

The meetings permitted the Soviet General Secretary and me personally to review the range of relations between our countries and the range of international issues of common concern. We reaffirmed the commitment of both the United States and the Soviet Union to continue to work for improved relations, to build on the progress already made and to continue the search for peace.

The Joint US-Soviet Statement on limitation of strategic offensive arms marks an important advance in the SALT negotiations and -- as I said in my remarks at Andrews Air Force Base Sunday evening -- a good agreement in the interests of both the United States and Soviet Union is now within our grasp.

US-SOVIET RELATIONS

Q: Detente with the Soviet Union has become a controversial issue, both in the press and on the Hill. Could you comment on the general state of US-Soviet relations and on the proposition that the Soviets have made real gains under detente while we have gotten little in return?

A: The effort to achieve a more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union expresses the continuing desire of the vast majority of the American people for an easing of international tensions while safeguarding our security. I am committed to continuing to work for better relations with the Soviets in the belief that it is in our real interests and in the interests of a more peaceful world.

Now, there is no question that the Soviet Union obtains benefits from detente. How else could Soviet leaders justify it? But the essential point surely is that detente serves American interests as well. On the global scale, in terms of the conventional measures of security, our interests, far from suffering have generally prospered. In many areas of the world, the influence and the respect we enjoy are greater than was the case for many years. Real detente -- the course I am committed to -- does not involve gains at U. S. expense.

Continued effort to engage the Soviets in a relationship characterized by mutual restraint and accommodation is an

absolute imperative in the present world situation.

Equally imperative, of course, are the needs to maintain a strong defense posture and close ties with our traditional friends. The task before us is to conduct US-Soviet relations in a way that will protect our own security and other interests, benefit other nations of the world, and progressively deepen the commitment of the USSR to mutual restraint, accommodation and increasing cooperation as the governing principles of our relations.

In this context, I believe the prospects for major progress are good insofar as they depend on our actions. I have informed the Soviet leaders that it is my intention to continue the course of Soviet-American relations charted in summit meetings in Moscow and Washington, in agreements reached by our two governments, and in the general spirit of cooperation that has been established. I am firmly committed to that course. My Administration will approach negotiations with the USSR with utmost seriousness and determination to achieve concrete and lasting results -- results in the best interests of the United States and in the interests of improved international stability. Personally, I am hopeful that the Soviet Union shares these objectives and will continue to work in earnest with us in this approach.

SALT

Q: The SALT guidelines for future SALT negotiations which you and General Secretary Brezhnev have agreed to have been characterized as a "breakthrough" in the negotiations. Could you describe the impasse which existed and the events leading up to this "breakthrough."

A: As you know, President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev had agreed in July that a new agreement on strategic arms should cover a period of 10 years. A number of issues had been standing in the way of progress. In particular, there was the difficult question of resolving the Soviet advantage in numbers of strategic delivery vehicles and our advantage in numbers of MIRVed missiles. We considered several ways of dealing with this problem and just prior to Secretary Kissinger's October trip to Moscow I sent a message to General Secretary Brezhnev proposing a possible solution. The Soviets provided an initial response to this proposal during Secretary Kissinger's visit. There was a further exchange just prior to the Vladivostok meeting so that when we sat down to discuss this issue in Vladivostok both sides were well informed on each other's positions. The outcome of the Vladivostok meeting was a set of guidelines for the negotiations in Geneva. These guidelines resolve the issue of the aggregate number of strategic delivery vehicles and the aggregate number of MIRVed missiles permitted each side.

SALT

Q: Are we now assured of a 10-year agreement limiting strategic offensive arms or are there other major issues yet to be resolved?

A: There are of course many technical complexities yet to be resolved. In particular, there is the problem of negotiating provisions which will insure adequate verification of the limitations on the MIRVed missiles. However, I think that the prospects for concluding a 10-year agreement by the time the General Secretary visits the United States this summer are good and we will make a major effort to that end.

Such an agreement will mean that a cap has been put on the competition in strategic arms. This is an essential first step toward significant reductions in strategic arms. As indicated in the joint statement issued at Vladivostok, both sides are committed to further negotiations with a goal of reductions.

SALT

Q: Could you provide some perspective on the guidelines that will go to the SALT delegations when the negotiations resume? For example, which provisions of the Interim Agreement will be included in the 1985 agreement?

A: General Secretary Brezhnev and I agreed that the provisions of the Interim Agreement will remain in force until 1977. After the lapse of the Interim Agreement, both sides will be permitted equal numbers of strategic delivery vehicles. Both sides will also have rights to equal numbers of MIRVed missiles. The Interim Agreement provisions limiting heavy missiles will be carried over to the 1985 agreement.

SALT

Q: Why did the Soviets fall off their demands for withdrawal of compensation for US forward-based systems?

A: I don't want to speculate about that too much. Perhaps the Soviets realized that with the intercontinental weapons at the disposal of our two countries, the so-called forward-based systems did not really pose any serious additional threat to them. In fact, as you know, most of those weapons are intended to support our theater forces rather than to perform strategic attack missions.

SALT

Q: Why are you keeping the numbers in your agreement with Mr. Brezhnev secret? Am I right in thinking that the reference by Senator Thurmond and by the New York Times to "less than 2500" means that both sides will keep about the same number of forces they have now?

A: We did not have an agreement with the Soviets to make the numbers public at this time. But we expect to have further contact with them and we will then see if we can agree on publication. We want to be certain that whatever becomes public is agreed to by both sides so that there is no unnecessary misunderstanding. For this reason I am not in a position to answer your second question at this time. The numbers have been made available confidentially to the Congressional leaders and to the senior officials of the government who deal with SALT and defense issues.

RESIGNATION OF PRIME MINISTER TANAKA

Question: Now that Prime Minister Tanaka has resigned, hasn't your whole visit to Japan been a waste of time?

Answer: I do not think my trip was a waste of time.

First of all, my visit to Japan was the first visit there by an American President in office. It opened a new era in the relations between our two countries. That aspect of the visit is not at all affected by any changes in the leadership of Japan.

Second, the Japanese Government is a consensus government in which the Prime Minister represents not just himself but the leadership of the majority Liberal Democratic Party. Prime Minister Tanaka's successor will come from that same party. I therefore have every reason to believe that the conclusions reached in the discussions between myself and Prime Minister Tanaka will remain valid under a new Japanese Prime Minister.

DISCUSSION OF VIETNAM IN VLADIVOSTOK

Q: Was Vietnam discussed during your meeting with Brezhnev?

A: We discussed in general terms a number of such subjects related to maintaining peace throughout the world.

REASONS FOR TRIP TO ASIA

Q: At a time of domestic inflation and recession, why ^{did} you go abroad? Would it not ^{have} ~~make~~ more sense for you to stay home and deal with our problems here?

A: Many of the problems that we have at home are not just American problems but global problems, and we need the cooperation of other countries in order to solve them. For example, we need to collaborate with other industrialized nations like Japan in order to prevent the international financial system from collapsing under the strain of higher oil prices. It is important for me to get personally involved in these discussions in order for other countries to have a clear understanding of our commitment to joint action.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to become so obsessed with own problems that we forget our international obligations. We still have to sustain our alliances and to affirm our commitments, as I did in Korea, if we want to keep the peace for which we paid so high a price.

SOVIET EMIGRATION

Q: Are you satisfied that the Soviet Union is living up to its commitments with respect to the emigration of Soviet Jews? Did you raise with the Soviet leaders our concern for others wishing to leave the USSR, as for example, Valentyn Moroz? (FYI: Moroz is an imprisoned Ukrainian dissident on whose behalf there has been considerable public and Congressional correspondence.)

A: The Soviet Union of course considers the question of emigration of Soviet citizens to be an internal matter. I believe the Administration's position on this question reflects the views of all Americans. The exercise of fundamental freedoms, including the freedom to emigrate is a human right to which we attach great importance. The position of the United States in this regard is well understood by the Soviet Government. In my opinion, there has been considerable progress in this area during the past several months, and I am hopeful -- and expect -- that this progress will continue.

US MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN PERSIAN GULF

Q: Earlier this week, an American aircraft Carrier entered the Persian Gulf with two destroyers. Does this mark a new US policy towards that area? Are we trying to emphasize our determination not to be intimidated by the oil-producing cartel?

A: The aircraft carrier Constellation entered the Persian Gulf for a brief period on routine deployment, coming from a regularly scheduled naval exercise then taking place in the Indian Ocean. This was in keeping with our policy - stated last year - that we would make more frequent naval deployments into and from the Indian Ocean. Within this context, the Constellation's visit is a routine exercise.

US ARMS POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA

Q: Pakistan has been pressing for a liberalization of our restrictive arms policy in South Asia. During the South Asian trip, did the Secretary tell Pakistan that the US would lift or liberalize the embargo?

A: Our objective in South Asia is to see that area move towards long-term peace and stability. We will determine our particular policies within this framework, so that our policies will contribute to, rather than upset, South Asian stability and contribute to meaningful progress towards long-term regional relationships resting on the independence and integrity of each state in the area. No decision has been made to revise our current policy, but that policy remains under continuing review.

US POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA

Q: Secretary Kissinger has just concluded a major trip through South Asia, the bulk of which was spent in India. Is the US "tilting" back towards India?

A: We seek good relations with all states in South Asia and we support efforts by those states to build a long-term future for South Asia as a peaceful, stable and prosperous area. In that spirit, Secretary Kissinger travelled to the area for discussions on ways in which our relations can be further strengthened and given new meaning. In the case of India, our relations have been improving and the Secretary took time there to discuss ways in which we can jointly establish a mature and sound basis for the long-term relationship between the US and India without diminishing our relationships with other countries in the area. Likewise, his visits to other of the nations afforded an opportunity for an exchange of views aimed at further strengthening relations with all of the South Asian states. I might add that I have been gratified by the progress made by the South Asian nations themselves over the past three years in reshaping and improving their own relations. We applaud those efforts and hope they have further success.

U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH ASIA

Q: Some reports from South Asia suggest that famine conditions are developing there. Are you planning to seek new and larger aid programs?

A: I certainly recognize the magnitude of human problems in South Asia. Secretary Kissinger's trip offered a chance for discussions on ways in which the US could be helpful within the limits of our resources. We will continue to do everything we can in a cooperative effort with all states in the area to help meet the human needs in South Asia.

U.S. AID TO VIETNAM

Q: Why do we continue to provide so much aid to South Vietnam? Does not this just allow the war to go on and the destruction continue? By cutting aid to South Vietnam, won't we be able to force President Thieu to make a political settlement? Are we violating the Paris Agreement by continuing to provide military assistance to the Thieu Government? With inflation so rampant at home, shouldn't we now drastically cut aid to Vietnam?

A: First of all, it is the Communist side, not the GVN, that is continuing the war by refusing to implement the cease-fire:

-- The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese have refused to contribute to the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) budget and have never assisted the ICCS in implementing the cease-fire.

-- They have walked out of the talks in Paris and they have boycotted the talks in Saigon.

-- They have refused to let us search for any of our MIAs.

South Vietnam has repeatedly called for a complete implementation of all political provisions of the Agreement with a fixed date for elections. The Communist side has refused even to discuss these proposals.

If by cutting our aid and political support we force the GVN to accommodate the Communists while the Communists are blatantly violating the Agreement, it will undermine the political stability of the GVN side and could lead to a Communist takeover.

If we leave the South Vietnamese without sufficient means to defend themselves, this may convince Hanoi that it can win a military victory and lead to a renewed offensive.

In my meetings with the bipartisan leadership, I have asked the Congress to assure there are substantial levels of assistance for Vietnam. On the military side, we have asked for minimum amounts to assure adequate replacement of equipment on a one-for-one basis, as provided in the Paris Agreement. Congress has recently approved assistance which is, I believe, inadequate to provide for all Vietnamese needs if South Vietnam's enemies continue to press their attacks. I intend to discuss with the leaders of the Congress how we can provide the assistance necessary and help in the vital reconstruction process to give South Vietnam an opportunity to build a viable, self-sufficient economy. Over the long run, that would mean less American aid.

OUR OVERALL POLICY IN VIETNAM

Q: After all we have been through with Vietnam over the past ten years, it is still a major issue in the country. What is your policy in regard to Vietnam, what obligations do we still have there and what actions do you plan to take over the next two years?

A: Our basic objective in Vietnam is to make the peace agreements work and thus give the Vietnamese people a reasonable chance to decide their future for themselves. Those agreements were reached after considerable effort. They represented, and they still represent, a major contribution to world stability. We want to see them carried out.

The North Vietnamese have illegally sent over a hundred and sixty thousand men into South Vietnam since the cease-fire along with large quantities of new supplies. It is quite proper for us to provide enough economic and military assistance to help our friends defend themselves and reconstruct their economy. We are no longer doing the fighting, but our aid is essential for those who are. It is also essential in demonstrating to the Vietnamese and the rest of the world that we are reliable and responsible allies.

VIETNAM

Why Do We continue To Support President Thieu?

Q. There have been a number of recent reports from South Vietnam indicating that several popular demonstrations against President Thieu have taken place. Other reports outline the corruption and undemocratic repressive measures which pervade his administration. Still others state that it is Thieu who refuses to make the necessary accommodations with the Communists to bring about a genuine peace. In the face of all of this, why do we continue to support President Thieu? Would it not be more in our interest now to endorse a more moderate man who can really bring peace?

A: President Thieu is the head of the constitutional government in South Vietnam seeking to maintain the independence of this country. That is why we support him and his administration.

Under difficult circumstances -- a continued high level of infiltration from the North and heavy attacks by enemy forces in many areas -- South Vietnam's achievements have been truly remarkable.

For example:

-- One of the largest and most successful land reform programs in history has been carried out.

-- Hundreds of thousands of war victims and refugees have been resettled.

The South Vietnamese government has made several requests for consultations with the Communists -- all of which the Communists have rejected. The Communist side, not President Thieu, is mainly to blame for the absence of a peaceful settlement.

QUITO MEETING ON CUBA

Q: Would you comment on the outcome of the recent meeting of Foreign Ministers in Quito and their inability to resolve their differences regarding Cuba policy? Doesn't this show the ineffectiveness of the OAS? What about criticism that the U.S., by failing to support termination of the sanctions, contributed to the failure of the conference?

A: In Quito the parties to the Rio Treaty voted on a resolution calling for termination of the Organization of American States (OAS) sanctions against Cuba. There was insufficient support among the parties for formal approval. I do not interpret this as an indication of weakness or ineffectiveness of the OAS system. It is simply part of the decision process. We continue to believe that the OAS system plays a vigorous and important role in inter-American relations.

The U.S. made clear its belief that each nation should vote in accordance with its own interests as it perceived them. I believe that both our vote and our constructive attitude throughout this process have demonstrated our firm respect for the right of each nation to make its own determination. We expect the other members, in turn, to respect the position of the United States. Obviously, there continue to be differing views on the Cuba question, and a number of countries did not feel they could support the resolution presented at the meeting. It would clearly be inaccurate and unfair, just because a consensus was not obtained, to label the conference a "failure." I do not believe this is true in any sense.

CAMBODIA - U. S. MAJOR POLICY AIMS

Q: What are our policy aims in Cambodia? Why are we still actively involved there? When do you see this involvement ending?

A: Our major goal now is to see a negotiated settlement in Cambodia. The war there has gone on far too long. The other side has failed in its efforts to take Cambodia by military means. We believe negotiations should take place now. The Cambodian Government has recently called for unconditional talks and we fully support this move. Until there is a settlement, we will continue to support and assist our friends.

Q: What will the U.S. do if the Phnom Penh Government loses its UN seat?

A: We do not expect the present, legitimate government of Cambodia to lose its seat in the UN. In any case, U.S. support for Cambodia will continue as before.

MEETING WITH WILSON

Q: In recent weeks you have met with a number of foreign leaders, initially in Washington and recently in the Far East. In the next three weeks you will be meeting with the leaders of West Germany, Canada and France. Yet, there is no indication of any plan to meet with British Prime Minister Wilson. Do you intend to meet with him soon?

A: I attach considerable importance to continuing consultations among all the leaders of the West. I have been in direct contact with Mr. Wilson several times during the last several months and, as you may recall, met with Mr. Callaghan, the British Foreign Minister, in late September. I look forward very much to meeting with Prime Minister Wilson when a mutually convenient schedule can be arranged, hopefully in the near future.

CHILE - COVERT OPERATIONS - 40 COMMITTEE

Q: You have expressed your support for CIA and covert operations such as those in Chile. Do you intend to "destabilize" other governments in the future? Will the 40 Committee continue to operate?

A: The U. S. had no role in the coup in Chile; we did not encourage or support the coup. Our efforts were designed to support the democratic process in Chile and to preserve media outlets. So while I reject your characterization of what the government did in Chile, there may be occasions in the future, as there have been in the past, where the national interest may require that some action be taken in support of our foreign policy which it would not be appropriate to announce publicly.

The 40 Committee is a component of the NSC system. It provides a forum to review and evaluate sensitive operations. I can assure you -- and I have discussed this with the leaders of Congress and CIA Director Colby -- that all such actions are subject to critical review and careful control through the NSC system and approved by me. They use funds provided by the Congress, and are reported to the committees designated by the Congress to review these operations.

Future covert operations, if required, will be authorized only to protect our national security and only then when other means will not accomplish that necessary objective. I am satisfied that our current procedures will ensure that this will be done.

U. S. POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA

Q: Mr. President, you recently returned from a meeting with the President of Mexico at which you discussed a range of subjects, including hemispheric affairs. What is your view of U.S. policy toward Latin America and what can we expect in the coming year in this area of foreign policy?

A: Over the past year, the U.S. has been giving renewed attention to its relations with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Together we have been working to broaden and deepen our relations, and important progress has been made toward establishing a frank, open dialogue and regular consultations on a broad range of subjects. Periodic conferences of the Foreign Ministers have been established to facilitate this development. Also, I have met in recent months with a number of leaders from the Hemisphere, and most recently with the President of Mexico, to discuss regional matters and to hear the views of these leaders on subjects of interest or concern to them. I expect this process to continue.

We have also made significant progress toward resolving some longstanding bilateral problems in the region over the last year and we will be continuing our efforts to resolve remaining problems. I am sure that with a continuing spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation, our efforts to resolve such issues through negotiation and mutual compromise and to strengthen further Hemispheric relations will be productive. I assure you the efforts of my Administration over the coming years will be directed toward this end.

UNITED NATIONS

Q: The United States has opposed several recent United Nations actions, the attempt to expel South Africa from the United Nations which we vetoed in the Security Council, the moves against Israel in UNESCO, and the vote on observer status for the PLO. Does your Administration contemplate less support for the United Nations?

A: As have all my predecessors since its founding, I support the United Nations. In the quarter century since its inception the United Nations increasingly served world peace and security. There have been instances recently in which we have taken issue with the majority in the UN but that in no way denotes lack of support for the United Nations and its mission.

ETHIOPIA

Q: What is the United States Government's reaction to the executions last week in Ethiopia?

A: We have had traditionally good relations with Ethiopia and are naturally watching the situation closely. It would be premature to speculate further on the course of events there.

US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS

Q: How do you assess the current state of US-European relations?

A: Since I entered the Congress in 1949, I have believed that it is important for the United States to have a strong alliance with NATO and Western Europe. This policy has paid -- and continues to pay -- sizable dividends to all members of the Alliance.

The Atlantic Declaration signed in Brussels this summer provides a fresh affirmation of the NATO Alliance by its members and marks a renewed spirit of unity and common purpose in the West. I intend to continue efforts to broaden and strengthen the partnership the Declaration symbolizes.

In recent weeks, I have met with a number of Allied leaders -- the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France and West Germany, and the Presidents of Italy and Portugal. In the near future, as part of these continuing meetings, I will meet with the President of France, the West German Chancellor and the Canadian Prime Minister.

In all of these meetings, I have stressed and will continue to stress the importance of close consultations on matters of mutual interest. I have emphasized that the nations of the West face major challenges -- financial, energy, security -- that will require our best common efforts if we are to meet them successfully. I am optimistic that jointly we can meet and overcome the problems that confront us.

NATIONAL DEFENSE

Q: What are your views on national defense?

A: Our interests are best served by maintaining a strong national defense. Peace can only be built upon the clear ability and will of the American people to protect our interests whenever they may be threatened.

A strong defense is our principal deterrent to aggression. This is crucial not only to us, but to our allies as well, since we bear the main burden of maintaining the security and survival of the Free World. Our Defense posture is a fundamental underpinning of our alliances, and reinforces the will of our allies to make our common defense work. Moreover, our military strength underwrites our diplomatic strength. It insures that negotiation is the only rational course, and thus lays the groundwork for achieving, through negotiation, a relaxation of tensions with our adversaries and an enduring framework for peace.

Each Administration and Congress since the Second World War has supported -- on a bipartisan basis -- the maintenance of our military strength. I intend to continue to support a strong defense posture, and I believe the Congress will continue to do so also.