

Excerpts From The March 21 Address

By Leonid Brezhnev

The following is excerpted from the March 21 Speech of Soviet party chief Leonid Brezhnev, delivered to a trade union congress in Moscow.

There are still influential circles in the capitalist world who are interested in destroying the constructive international dialogue. Reactionary forces of the old world do not at all want to be reconciled to the growth and consolidation of the new.

They do not, for example, want to be reconciled to the free and independent policy of Africa and Asia.... The latest examples of this are the interference by NATO countries in the internal military conflict in Zaire and the new campaign of slander against the Peoples Republic of Angola. This is also indicated by the foul murders which in the last few days took as victims President Marien Ngouabi of the Peoples Republic of the Congo, and (Lebanese leftist leader) Kamal Jumblatt. The Soviet people hotly condemn these murders.

With no less vehemence, operations are being conducted against the socialist world.... Our enemies would like to find at least some forces opposing socialism inside our countries ... invent some sort of ersatz, and by lying publicity create the appearance of an "internal opposition" in the socialist countries. Precisely for this reason, a ruckus has been organized around the so-called "dissidents" and an outcry raised all over the world on the "violation of human rights" in the socialist countries....

...Persons who have broken away from our society actively come out against the socialist system, take the road of anti-Soviet activity, violate laws and, lacking support inside the country, turn abroad, to imperialist centers of subversion. Our people demand that such so-called public figures be treated as opponents of socialism, as persons acting against their own motherland, as accomplices and sometimes agents of imperialism. Quite naturally, we have taken and will take measures against them as envisaged by law....

Concerning Soviet-American relations ... the situation is defined by three basic factors, I would say. The first is the sound foundation provided by the important treaties and agreements on cooperation in various fields concluded in 1972-74. The second is a certain state of stagnation. The American side at first explained this in terms of the election campaign, but the first two months of the new administration do not seem to reveal a striving to overcome that stagnation. And the third factor is the existence of a great objective potential for further development of equal and mutually beneficial cooperation for the good of both countries and universal peace.

I want to mention several specific and, as we see it, fully reachable tasks. First, the completion of preparations and the signing of the new agreement on limiting strategic offensive weapons, already agreed upon in the main in 1974, and further movement forward on this basis for mutual reduction of armaments with

strict observance of the principle of equality and equal security of the sides involved.

Furthermore, there are the following: possible joint initiatives of the USSR and the USA in the area of banning and liquidating the most dangerous lethal types of chemical weapons and other measures to restrain the arms race...; the broad development of mutual trade and economic ties on the basis of removing discriminatory barriers...; finally, coordinate action of our countries to attain a just and firm settlement in the Middle East.

...But there are also circumstances which directly contradict the further improvement and development of Soviet-American relations. One of these is the escalation of a slanderous campaign about a fabricated "military threat" from the USSR.... A second is the direct attempts of official American bodies to interfere in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union.... I repeat again: we will not tolerate interference in our internal affairs from any quarter and under any pretext. A normal development of relations on such a basis is, of course, inconceivable.... In a few days the U.S. Secretary of State Mr. Vance is coming to Moscow. We will see what he will bring with him. Everyone, of course, understands the importance of how Soviet-American relations develop. We would like these relations to be good-neighborly. But for this it is necessary to have a certain level of mutual understanding and at least a minimum of correctness.

Of course we are certain that the interests of the peoples of both our countries and of maintaining universal peace will win out and that in the long run, relations between the USSR and the USA will work out. The whole of the matter is when this will happen, and how much time will pass before then, during which it would have been possible to do a lot of useful things.

We omit Brezhnev's very brief summary of Soviet bilateral relations with Western European countries, from which he proceeded to preview the second European security conference, scheduled for this June.

...We consider that the main content of the Belgrade meeting ought to be concern for peace and security in Europe, and the development of cooperation among European peoples. Not just to sum up what has been accomplished already, but to agree on some concrete recommendations and proposals on questions of further cooperation — this is how we view the main tasks of the meeting in the Yugoslav capital.

The Middle East is another region which continues to attract attention. In recent weeks, there has been a heightening of diplomatic activity there. It would appear that the renewal of the Geneva Conference is gradually becoming more likely. This course of events can only be welcomed.

But the conference in Geneva, of course, is not an end in itself. The most important thing is that it have fruitful and just results. It goes without saying that working out

the conditions of peace in detail is above all the affair of the conflicting sides themselves. The Soviet Union, however, as co-chairman of the Geneva Conference and a state immediately adjacent to the region concerned, has its own opinion regarding the main principles and directions of the future peace settlement.

We consider, in particular, that the final document (or documents) on peace in the Middle East ought to be based on the principle of the impermissibility of acquiring territory by means of war and the right of all states of this region to independent existence and security. Of course, the inviolable rights of the Palestinian Arab people should be ensured, including its right to self-determination and creation of its own state.

We consider it beyond any debate that the documents on peace should provide for withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the Arab territories occupied in 1967. This withdrawal could be carried out not all at once, but by stages — over several months, for example — in a strictly defined period. The relevant borders between Israel and its Arab neighbors participating in the conflict, should be clearly defined. These borders should be declared finally established and inviolable.

We proceed from the standpoint that from the moment of completion of the withdrawal of Israeli troops, the state of war between the Arab states participating in the conflict and Israel will cease and peaceful relations be established. All sides will accept mutual obligations to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability and political independence from one another, and to resolve their conflicts by peaceful means.

On both of the established borders, there could be created — with the agreement of the states concerned, of course — demilitarized zones, without unilateral advantages for anyone. Within these zones would be located, for some clearly defined period, either extraordinary armed forces of the U.N., or U.N. observers.

Obviously, the final documents of the conference should also contain an article on the freedom of passage for the ships of all countries, including Israel (after termination of the state of war) through the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba, and a statement by Egypt on the passage of ships through the Suez Canal, which is entirely under Egyptian sovereignty.

Implementation of the conditions of the peaceful settlement could, in our opinion, be guaranteed, if the agreeing sides wish, by the U.N. Security Council, or possibly by individual states such as the Soviet Union, the United States, France, England. The guarantor states would have their observers in the U.N. contingents in the appropriate zones.

Such, comrades, in the briefest summary form, are our preliminary ideas on the possible basis of a just peace in the Middle East. We are not forcing them on anyone, but considered it useful to speak out about them, just as, it goes without saying, we will be prepared to become acquainted with the ideas of others.

We have already spoken about how, in connection with a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, the relevant states could consider the question of helping stop the arms race in this region. In general, the problem of international weapons trade obviously merits an exchange of opinions.

Brezhnev recalls the history of the SALT talks and says that success in limiting nuclear proliferation is dependent on good will and trust.

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I will give a concrete example. Four years ago, negotiations began about the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe. About the *reduction*. It would seem that nothing could be more logical and natural than for the participants in these talks to refrain at least from increasing their armed forces in the given region, for the duration of the negotiations. The USSR and its allies have repeatedly proposed exactly this. For several years we have not increased the combat strength of our armed forces in Central Europe. How have the NATO countries reacted to our example? They have continued to build up their armed forces.

What should we do now? Should the Soviet Union follow the example of the Western powers? But this is a negative example, and frankly speaking, we would not like to follow it.

We are prepared, right up to the achievement of an agreement on reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe, not to increase the number of our troops in this region. On the condition, of course, that the NATO forces will not grow either. Accept this proposal, respected negotiating partners, accept it as a first real step on the path of reducing armed forces. No one will lose from this, while the cause of peace and security of peoples will only gain.

Hindsight

India, and its ruling Congress Party, have been a cornerstone of Soviet policy in the "Third World" for many years. The Soviet Union's government daily Izvestia commented March 22 as follows on the defeat of the Gandhi government:

...Summing up the first results of the elections, local observers are remarking that the loss by the Indian National Congress of significant numbers of the places it had gained in the National Assembly after the 1971 elections is not coincidental. Mistakes and excesses in the implementation of measures arising from the laws passed after the introduction of the state of emergency in 1975 took their toll. Agrarian reform proclaimed by the leadership of the Congress Party came to a standstill because of the opposition of the landed gentry. The leadership of the Congress Party antagonized part of the working class by cutting back wage increases.

In left circles they are pointing to the negative role played by the disunity of the democratic and patriotic forces in the elections. The leadership of the ruling party, unlike in past elections, refused cooperation with the Communist Party of India in the majority of states. This played into the hands of the bloc of opposition parties, the Janata Party, which had defied the National Congress.

It is indicative that the candidates of the Congress Party were most successful where there existed pre-election agreement between the Congress and the Communist Party of India or where, without official agreements, the CPI actively supported progressive candidates from the Indian National Congress.

The Response To Brezhnev

After Leonid Brezhnev spoke March 21...

Jimmy Carter was reported by Senator Alan Cranston (D-Cal) to have remarked to a group of Congressmen: "Some people are concerned every time Brezhnev sneezes." Carter found "hopeful signs" in Brezhnev's words, Cranston said.

The New York Daily News March 22 banner-headlined: "Brezh to Carter — STAY OUT OF SOVIET AFFAIRS" and "Stay Off Our Turf."

The New York Times Moscow correspondent Christopher Wren took the occasion to review the recent history of the dissidents' campaign and Carter's support for it. Wren wrote: "While Moscow's response to Mr. Carter showed evident pique, it was also calibrated to avoid going too far. 'Given their feelings of inferiority toward the United States, the Russians in their panic and fury did a good job of restraint,' a Western diplomat said."

Cyrus Vance, U.S. Secretary of State, declared upon hearing of Brezhnev's speech: "I hope it will not inhibit our conversations when I go to Moscow. There is nothing more important than making progress towards reduction of nuclear arms. I hope very much we will find a constructive attitude on the part of the Soviet Union when I get to Moscow."

The New York Times followed Carter's remark with an editorial headlined "The Sneeze from Moscow," advising Brezhnev's anger be ignored, and a backup op-ed by James Reston, called "Gesundheit!", and observing that "Leonid Brezhnev, now 70 years of age, is probably the last of the Soviet leaders who will retain memories of the two World Wars, and...he wants to finish his career with an arms accord in Washington next October. This is what Secretary of State Vance will be testing in the Soviet capital next week."

The Christian Science Monitor (Boston) editorialized March 23: "Mr. Brezhnev's prestige is on the line...his comments on human rights were explicitly blunt, (but) he did not foreclose the possibilities of moving forward on the most crucial areas of Soviet-American relations...The Russians are clearly eager to break what they call the 'stagnation' in relations."

Al Ahram, the semi-official Egyptian daily, said that Brezhnev introduced "new elements which are not at all under discussion" in regard to the Middle East. The paper suggested that Brezhnev was preparing to reestablish Soviet relations with Israel, but not saying so, and said that the questions left open in the speech "require a quick answer and clarification from the Soviet Government."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry issued a statement greeting Brezhnev's failure to mention the Palestinian Liberation Organization in connection with a possible reconvening of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East.